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Scholarly Comments on  
Academic Economics

# Econ Journal Watch

## Scholarly Comments on Academic Economics

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# Why the Oberholzer-Gee/ Strumpf Article on File Sharing Is Not Credible

Stan J. Liebowitz<sup>1</sup>

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

The most influential article on the effect of piracy (file sharing) on the sound recording industry appeared as the lead article in the *Journal of Political Economy* in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Its authors, Professors Felix Oberholzer-Gee and Koleman Strumpf—referred to here as OS—performed a regression analysis using data from 2002 and concluded that piracy had no impact on record sales, even though the birth of file sharing coincided with what in hindsight can be described as a financial near-collapse of the sound recording industry (worldwide sales down 60–70 percent in real dollars). The financial decline, along with the lack of any other empirically plausible cause of the decline, has led almost all current industry participants and most researchers to conclude that piracy has been the primary if not the complete cause of the decline,<sup>3</sup> although many industry critics, who are well represented in the academy, still cling to the notion that piracy was not a significant cause of the decline and often cite the OS article as support for that view.

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1. University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, TX 75080. The author wishes to thank the Center for the Economic Analysis of Property Rights, at the University of Texas at Dallas, for financial support, and Jonathan Lee for access to his data. No other entity or person has paid for this research. The author often consults on media topics and has been paid to testify as an expert witness both for and against the sound recording industry.

2. According to Google Scholar, Oberholzer-Gee and Strumpf (2007) has received more citations than any other paper on piracy in the economics literature of which I am aware. According to Web of Science (in May 2016), it was the fifth-most cited paper that the *Journal of Political Economy* published in 2007.

3. Most of the decline took place before 2008, when there was no credible alternative explanation for the decline. For a summary of the empirical studies on this topic see Liebowitz (2016a), which concludes that the average academic study found that piracy was responsible for the entire decline in industry sales through the time periods studied in those articles.

The OS analysis was notable for using data from an actual pirate server in its main analysis, although it also included several secondary “quasi experiments” using other data (OS 2007, 33–38). This comment focuses on issues related to the primary OS data and analysis. A straightforward replication of OS’s work is not possible because OS have not made their data from the pirate server public, in spite of having promised to do so.<sup>4</sup> I should also note that I have elsewhere replicated their secondary tests using publicly available data, and those replications found results very different than those reported by OS (see Liebowitz 2016b).<sup>5</sup>

My examination here investigates the small bits of their main data that they have made public—summary statistics, estimated coefficients—and also investigates the logic behind their analysis. I conclude that irregularities in their data, conflicts between their evidence and their hypotheses, and a flawed research design prevent the OS analysis from being an informative research work.

A brief word on the method used by OS will be useful. OS obtained download data from a very small (.01 percent market share) centralized file-sharing system, covering a 17-week period at the end of 2002 (that is, September through December). OS extracted the American downloads and matched them to songs from a sample of generally successful music albums over the 17 weeks. Extracting the information from server logs and matching them to music albums required ingenuity and effort on OS’s part.

Comparing the weekly sales of albums to the number of unauthorized downloads of the songs on those albums suffers from a well-known simultaneity problem because the popularity of a song influences both its sales and downloads. In an attempt to overcome this problem, OS chose a dazzlingly recondite instrument for downloads—the number of German pre-university students on school vacation each week during the 17-week period of their analysis. The variable representing the number of German pre-university students on school vacation is referred to in this paper by the abbreviation NGSV, which stands for Number of German Schoolkids on Vacation. After performing their regressions, OS concluded, in contrast to most of the literature, that piracy had no impact on record sales.

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4. At a public forum in 2004, Strumpf stated an intention to make the data available “as soon as the legal environment quiets down” (search the text at this [link](#) for “soon”). Four years after that promise, OS claimed to have signed a non-disclosure agreement, although when reporters asked to see the agreement, OS were unwilling to provide it (see Häring 2008; Glenn 2008).

5. In 2007 and 2010 I submitted to the JPE comments regarding different aspects of the OS paper (and placed them on SSRN). Both comments were rejected, in my opinion incorrectly. As the research community has increasingly shown an interest in replication, evidenced in the growth of sites such as Retraction Watch and PubPeer, and with the addition of some new results, I thought this might be a propitious time to resubmit these comments to outlets that have expressed a positive view of replication. The current paper contains material in common with the 2010 comment, and a second paper, Liebowitz (2016b), contains material related to the 2007 comment.

The reasoning behind the use of the NGSV instrument for downloads is not difficult to follow, but the logic requires several assumptions, some of which are never tested by OS. First, German K–12 students are presumed to provide a large number of files to American pirates. OS provide minimal support for this claim, instead providing evidence that the entire German population provides a relatively large number of files to American pirates. Second, OS assert that German students are more likely to keep their computers attached to file-sharing networks during school vacations than on days when they attend school, but OS have never provided any evidence in support of the assumption and it remains untested. If the home computers of German students instead were continuously hooked up to file-sharing services, German school vacations could not have had any impact on American pirates.

With these two assumptions, OS argue that German school holidays increase the computer usage of German kids who are also pirates, increasing the availability of their music files to American pirates. This extra availability of German school-kids' files is supposed to greatly enhance the ease of American piracy, and therefore its amount, so that if American piracy had an impact on American record sales this impact would be found by econometrically examining the influence of German school holidays (instrumenting for American downloads) on American record sales. If German school holidays (working through American downloads) do not affect American record sales (as OS found), OS would (and did) conclude that American piracy does not affect American record sales. That, in a nutshell, is the OS methodology.

The plan of my critique proceeds as follows. First, I demonstrate that the OS measurement of piracy—derived from their never-released dataset—appears to be of dubious quality since the aggregated weekly numbers vary by implausibly large amounts not found in other measures of piracy and are inconsistent with consumer behavior in related markets. Second, the average value of NGSV (German K–12 students on vacation) reported by OS is shown to be mismeasured by a factor of four, making its use in the later econometrics highly suspicious. Relatedly, the coefficient on NGSV in their first-stage regression is shown to be too large to possibly be correct: Its size implies that American piracy is effectively dominated by German school holidays, which is a rather farfetched proposition. Then, I demonstrate that the aggregate relationship between German school holidays and American downloading (as measured by OS) has the opposite sign of the one hypothesized by OS and supposedly supported by their implausibly large first-stage regression results.

After pointing out these questionable results, I examine OS's chosen method. A detailed factual analysis of the impact of German school holidays on German files available to Americans leads to the conclusion that the extra files

available to Americans from German school holidays made up less than two-tenths of one percent of all files available to Americans. This result means that it is essentially impossible for the impact of German school holidays to rise above the background noise in any regression analysis of American piracy.

## The implausibility of OS's download data

The novelty of the OS article lies in its authors' access to a dataset that consists of downloads from actual pirate servers during the final 17 weeks of 2002. The use of a dataset based on actual downloads, everything else equal, is preferable to using proxies for downloads, such as Internet usage or downloads reported by respondents to surveys. But actual pirate downloads suffer from a strong simultaneity bias with album sales, and using albums as the unit of analysis, as OS do, brings its own potential pitfalls.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, it is clear that for OS's project to have any validity, their download data must be an accurate representation of actual U.S. piracy behavior. OS (2007, 7) acknowledge this point by stating that "an important question is whether our sample [of pirate downloads] is representative of data on all P2P networks," and they send the reader to an appendix of an earlier version of their paper for more details, where they had stated:

Our inferences about the effect of file sharing on record sales would be invalid if we had an unrepresentative sample of downloads. ...

[W]e considered whether our most popular downloads were also common in other file sharing networks. To do this, we compared the top ten downloads each week in our data with the concurrent list from <http://www.bigchampagne.com>. BigChampagne generates their own weekly top lists.... Over our seventeen week sample period, two-thirds of our top ten downloads also appear in the BigChampagne top ten list.<sup>7</sup>

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6. Using albums as the unit of analysis creates a potential fallacy of composition. The impact of downloading on individual albums may be very different than the impact of downloading on the entire industry, particularly if downloading provides publicity about individual albums that affects their relative market shares. Extra downloading of an album that, say, puts it on top-100 download charts, might increase the market share (and possibly the actual sales) of the album even if downloads as a whole are negatively related to album sales as a whole. If so, an analysis based on albums could provide very misleading results even if all the data and analyses were pristine (see Hammond 2016 for a more complete discussion).

7. The quotation comes from Appendix A of the June 2005 version of their paper ([link](#)). OS use several approaches to verify the similarity of their download data to the rest of the piracy universe, but mainly examine whether their rankings of downloaded albums is similar to other rankings of pirated songs, not whether the weekly changes in downloads are similar to those in other data sources. In one instance they

Although there is both a time series component and a cross section component in their panel data, OS's attempt to check on the reasonableness of their download data appears to be largely limited to the cross section element (across albums) as indicated by their focus on the similar list of top albums between the various piracy networks. Their results, however, are also dependent on the time series component of the data.

In an early version of their paper, OS provided the aggregate weekly number of American downloads from the servers.<sup>8</sup> These weekly downloads were aggregated from the 260,889 American pirate downloads that OS culled from their full set of worldwide downloads over the 17-week period, from their target servers.<sup>9</sup>

Before examining OS's download data, it is useful to think a little about the likely characteristics of weekly American pirate downloading, based upon what we know about consumption of entertainment products. In other words, what kind of weekly trends in downloading might we expect, at a national level, over these 17 end-of-year weeks?

By way of analogy, weekly television viewing, the leading entertainment activity of Americans, is fairly constant throughout the year, perhaps deviating 5 to 10 percent above or below its mean during the year, and generally being lowest in the summer.<sup>10</sup> Aggregate music radio audiences generally have very little change during the year.<sup>11</sup> Given these general facts, if a researcher were to create a dataset purporting to represent national statistics, but with large weekly fluctuations in radio listening or television viewing, say several hundred percent or more, we would have every right to be suspicious of the data.

Alternatively, music piracy activity might be thought to be particularly related to sales of music albums. Record sales are basically flat during the first nine or ten months of the year. The variability within those months appears to be greater than is the case for television and radio, however.<sup>12</sup> A large increase in record sales

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compare *availability* of songs, not downloads, by week for a limited number of weeks, which cannot be used to verify their download data.

8. These data appear in Table 3, "Downloads and Matched Songs," in the first public version of the OS paper, dated March 2004 ([link](#)).

9. OS then try to match these American pirate downloads to the songs in a sample of 680 albums, chosen because they were successful enough to make it onto a Nielsen SoundScan chart of leading albums (by genre) over the final 17 weeks of 2002. The process of matching downloads to albums reduces the number of pirate downloads to 47,709, eliminating more than 80 percent of the downloads (see OS 2007, 8–9). OS's main results are based on these 680 albums over the 17-week interval, providing about 10,000 album-week observations (the quantity of downloads and sales of a given album in a given week).

10. Monthly television ratings are usually lowest in the summer. See the information available [here](#).

11. See, e.g., the figure "Listening Patterns" in Arbitron's "Radio Today" report for 2004 ([link](#)), which shows virtually identical time spent listening by season in 2002–2003.

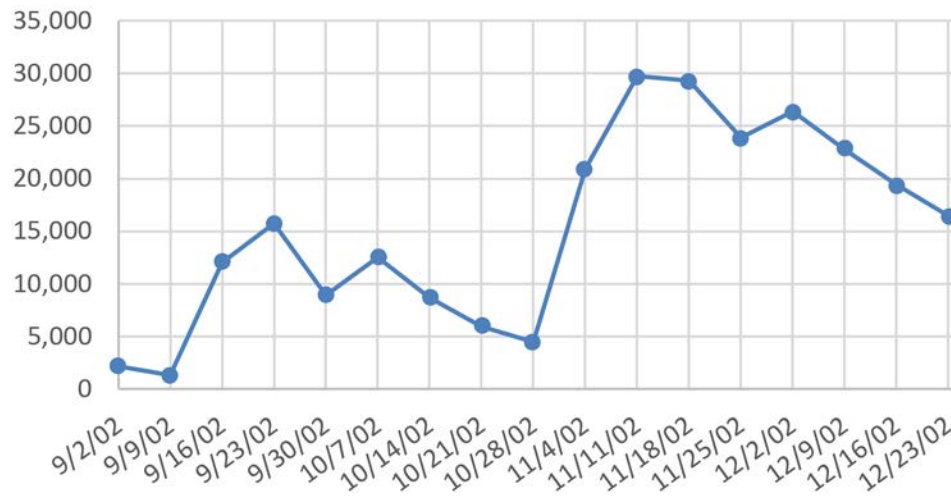
12. During 2003–2005, ignoring the months November and December, average monthly changes were 16 percent, with the highest individual monthly change being 32 percent, according to Nielsen Soundscan.

regularly occurs during the Christmas holiday season, where sales increase to about double the normal level in the weeks before the holiday.<sup>13</sup> Even in OS's sample of album sales during these 17 weeks, the largest weekly change if you exclude the run-up to Christmas is 11 percent, and the largest weekly change including all weeks is 41 percent.

With this as a backdrop, what should we expect for pirate downloading during the last 17 weeks of the year? It is difficult to come up with reasons for important weekly trends during the first half of this period. It is likely to depend on the number of new hit songs, which is often random, although major albums are often released during the Christmas selling season. But perhaps downloads might be expected to decline during the Christmas season since music albums are often holiday gifts, and many potential gift recipients are not pleased to receive a present consisting of pirated music. All in all, there seems little reason to expect major weekly changes in quantity of pirate downloads during most of these 17 weeks.

Does the weekly OS data conform to these general expectations? Absolutely not. We find amazingly large weekly variations, unlike other media/entertainment trends. Figure 1 provides the details.

**Figure 1.** OS American pirate downloads



Data source: Table 3 in March 2004 working paper version of “The Effect of File Sharing on Record Sales: An Empirical Analysis” ([link](#)).

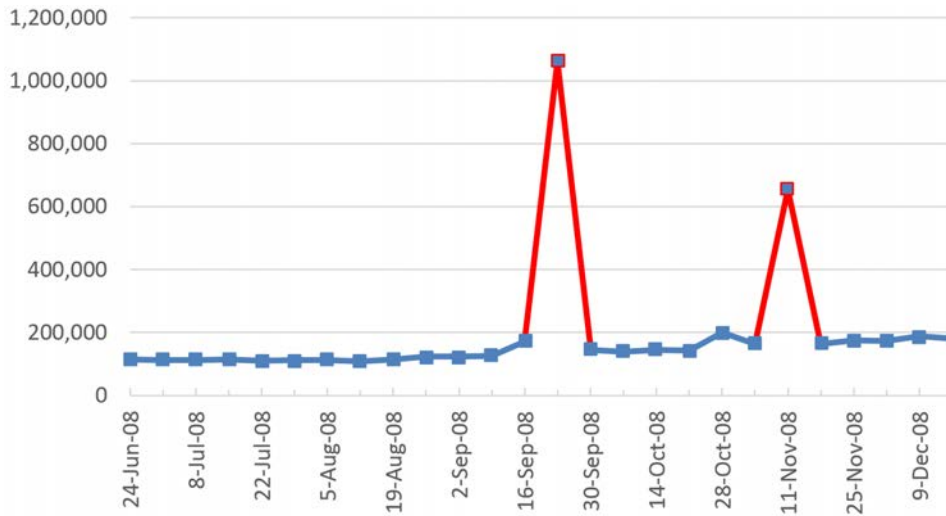
Relative to other weeks in the sample, the number of downloads is extremely low during the first two weeks. In fact, downloads in the second week are less

13. It is well known that sound-recording sales peak at Christmas in the U.S., and Nielsen SoundScan monthly aggregated data show this result as well.

than nine percent of the average weekly number for the entire period. From the second week to the fourth week, downloads jump 12-fold. From the ninth to the eleventh week downloads jump over six-fold. From the second to the eleventh week downloads jump 22-fold. These are remarkably large jumps that seem unreasonable for an activity undertaken throughout the country by tens of millions of Americans.

The OS piracy data not only have suspicious jumps, but they also do not match the variation in other measures of piracy. For example, Jonathan Lee (2016), using weekly download music album data from a pirate system for the last half of 2008, finds that “file sharing activity is fairly constant.” Figure 2 represents the fairly smooth downloading activity on the system he was following, during 2008, but I draw attention, using the color red, to two peaks in the data that occurred because the rules of the network changed in a way that artificially enhanced downloading during those weeks.<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 2.** Lee’s weekly pirate downloads

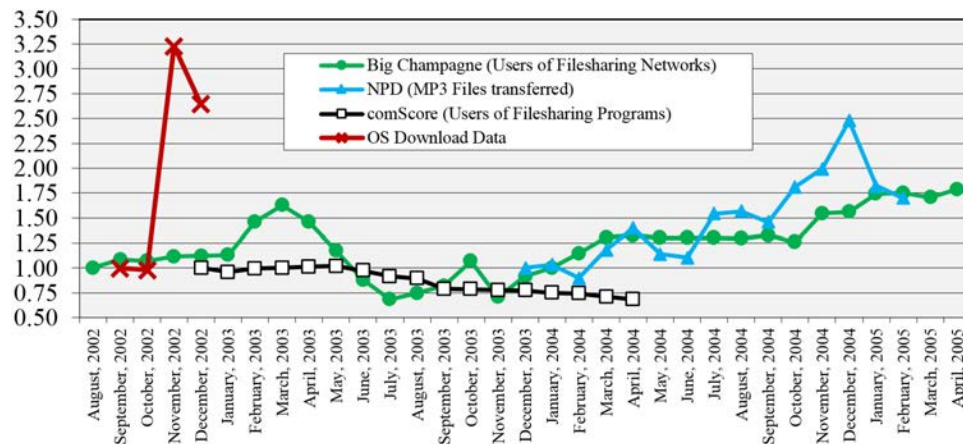


14. Mr. Lee generously offered to provide his data upon request, and I thank him for that and for providing a detailed explanation of their construction. The red peaks reflect changes in the rules of the system that Lee was following. During certain weeks ‘freeleeches’ were allowed where downloaders could download as much as they wanted without having to follow the uploading policy that this pirate server imposed on its users and without reducing their ‘buffers’ or ‘ratios.’ In those weeks when ‘freeleeches’ were allowed, there were temporary spikes in downloading that Lee believes were due to these changes in the tracker’s rules and which provided the exogenous instruments used in his analysis. Even these spikes (of 300 percent and 500 percent), which reflect only the temporary conditions on this one pirate system, are not as large as some of the weekly changes found in Figure 1.



We can also compare the OS data to monthly measurements of file sharing, as done in Figure 3 (a modified version of Figure 2 in Liebowitz 2006). Each of the three data sources has its first month normalized to 1, and then the later months are all normalized relative to the first month. The OS data, for the four months of its existence, are in red.

**Figure 3.** Various measurements of file sharing



The data source that is contemporaneous with the OS data is BigChampagne (mentioned by OS in the quote above) which measures the number of pirates who are online. Data from comScore measures the number of pirates. Neither comScore nor BigChampagne display anything like the extreme variability found in the OS data. In fact, the monthly change in the OS data, from October to November, is more than 50 times as large as what the BigChampagne data show for the same month and about seven times as large (in percentage terms) as the largest month-to-month change in three years of BigChampagne data. The changes from November to December are not even the same sign.

Data from NPD, which started measuring the number of pirated mp3 file transfers in late 2003, have their largest absolute monthly change (from December 2004 to January 2005) of 43 percent.<sup>15</sup> By way of comparison, the largest monthly change in OS data is more than five times as great. The OS dataset, therefore, appears *sui generis*, even though, as OS state, the dataset needs to be representative of all American downloading if it is to be the basis for useful results. With the entire OS research enterprise being built upon the downloading data, this finding should be a cause for concern.

15. Using the lower value as the base year.

The OS download data in the charts above are taken from OS's tables listing the *full* American download numbers. In other words, these are the American download numbers *prior* to OS's attempt to match American downloads to American sound recordings. Thus these highly dubious numbers are not due to the elimination of many observations that occurred in OS's matching process, nor to any quirks from their particular selection of matched albums.

## **The mismeasured and astonishingly influential German school holidays**

Another canary in the OS coal mine—remember, their data set is not publicly available—is their average value of NGSV, the number of German schoolkids on vacation. This is the instrument that OS have chosen to break the strong simultaneity that exists between the pirating of songs and sales of those songs.

In table 5 of OS's article, it is reported that the mean value of NGSV is 9.855 (million). Meanwhile, the maximum value, occurring during Christmas, when *all* German schoolkids are on vacation (as shown in OS's Figure 1), is 12.491. The straightforward implication is that during this 17-week period the average share of students on vacation is 79 percent!

This school system sounds like the realization of a lazy student's daydreams. What kind of school system must this be where students spend most of their time on vacation? Can Germany really be so lax with regard to requiring K–12 students to attend school? These numbers are worth a second look.

Of course, the German school system is not a vacation fantasyland. My calculations, based on publicly available German school data, indicate that the average share of students on vacation in those 17 weeks was actually 18 percent, not 79 percent.<sup>16</sup> My calculations are based on reports, by week, listing which German states have school vacations, and how many students are in those states. The reader can examine the raw weekly vacation values in my Figure 4, found in the next section.

Since there are only 17 weeks, there can be only 17 weekly observations for NGSV. But because OS use a pooled cross-section time-series analysis, the average value of NGSV in OS's Table 5 is based on 10,093 observations. Each album-week observation is supposed to include the value of NGSV for that week, along with other variables. Note that a fully balanced panel of 17 weeks and 680 albums

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16. Interestingly, the mean value in OS's Table 5 is also inconsistent with the weekly values shown in OS's Figure 1. The NGSV shares in their Figure 1, although very close to mine, are still a little too high compared to my estimates.

would provide 11,560 observations. Could missing album-weeks in the OS sample have caused the measured mean of NGSV to take on its very strange value, due to an unbalanced panel? The answer is ‘no.’ There is only one week where NGSV is greater than OS’s 79 percent average and that is the week of Christmas, when 100 percent of students are on vacation. It is mathematically impossible for 1467 missing observations to have raised the actual 18 percent average value to a level anywhere near OS’s reported 79 percent. The most that would be possible would be to raise the average NGSV to 21 percent.

It appears, therefore, that there is something very amiss with the OS NGSV numbers that were used in their regressions. With the NGSV values used in the regressions being too large, on average by a factor of four, there is no telling what the impact might be on the regression estimates since we have no idea how these measurements correlate with the correct values. Add this to the fact that the measurement of American downloads is suspicious, and perhaps it is not such a surprise that the coefficient relating the two seems so unreasonable, as I now describe.

In the first stage of their instrumented regressions, OS regress NGSV, along with a small number of other variables, on their measure of American pirate downloads. The results, reported in their Table 7, show a significant *positive* relationship between NGSV and American downloads. OS state:

The first-stage estimates imply that a one-standard-deviation increase in the number of children on vacation [that is, NGSV] boosts [American] weekly album downloads by slightly more than one-half of their mean, an effect that is statistically significant and economically meaningful. (OS 2007, 23)

OS draw the correct inferences from their statistics, although their use of the term “economically meaningful” is somewhat too modest. It is important to note the full implication of this remarkably large coefficient on NGSV. A one-standard-deviation change in NGSV represents a mere 29 percent of German schoolkids.<sup>17</sup> When this 29 percent share of German students goes on vacation, the large positive coefficient implies an increase in American downloading of 54 percent from its mean (and in Model 5 of their Table 7, the coefficient is three times as large!).

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17. From OS’s Table 5, the standard deviation of NGSV is 3.6 million, and the total number of students (the maximum value, which is also the total because in week 17 all students are on vacation) is reported to be 12.491 million, meaning that the standard deviation change in NGSV is equivalent to 29 percent of German schoolkids. I should note that OS are including all German K–12 students, which greatly exaggerates the number of German students who are likely to be engaged in music piracy. I discuss this in more detail in footnote 30.

But this positive coefficient also implies, given the summary statistics in OS's Table 5 (including their incorrect average value of NGSV), that when NGSV drops from its average value to zero, American downloads drop by an amount that is 150 percent of the average number of downloads. Since we are dealing with a drop of 150 percent when 100 percent is the most that downloads could actually drop, zero downloading would be an implication (unless other factors were increasing downloads by more than 50 percent). Thus American downloading would be expected to drop to zero in 7 of the 17 weeks of the study, when all German students are in school. That result seems counter to all understanding of actual American piracy (including OS's own dubious data), none of which finds American piracy frequently dropping to zero.

If the correct average share of NGSV were used, instead of the grossly inflated average reported by OS, weeks where all the German students were in school would no longer bring American downloading to a complete halt, but large drops would still be implied. The difference between all students being at school or being home would cause American piracy to change by a factor of four.<sup>18</sup> In other words, American downloading would be almost 300 percent higher on days when all German students are at home compared to days when all German students are at school. American piracy should also soar by several hundred percent in late July and early August (weeks not in the OS dataset), when most German students are on summer vacation. Yet in their first 'quasi-experiment' elsewhere in their paper, using other data, OS claim to have demonstrated the very opposite empirical result—that American piracy *falls* in the summer even though German students are on vacation.<sup>19</sup>

Although it is difficult to believe that American downloaders could be so strongly impacted by NGSV as implied in the OS regressions, it is even more difficult when we consider the choices available to American pirates. The OS results imply that American pirates do not bother replacing the no-longer-available pirate files of vacationing German students with the other 99 percent of pirate files available from those pirates who are not German students.<sup>20</sup>

Before closing this section, I want to note a possible suggestion that the implications of the strong coefficient in the first-stage regression, which surely

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18. Given the first-stage coefficient on NGSV (.671), when the share of NGSV changes from zero to 100 percent, American downloads (in OS's sample) change by 8.38 units per album-week. The average number of downloads (from their Table 5) is 4.36. Starting from a mean of 18 percent for NGSV, I add 82 percent of the 8.38 variation to the mean for when NGSV is 1 and subtract 18 percent of 8.38 for when NGSV is 0.

19. The claim is found on page 36 of their article. Using BigChampagne data, I have demonstrated (Liebowitz 2016b) that OS's putative empirical confirmation of this claim is incorrect.

20. I will demonstrate below that German K-12 student vacations influence considerably less than 1 percent of worldwide pirate files accessed by Americans.

seem unreasonable, might be an artifact of the download data being heavily skewed toward the more successful records, just as record sales are heavily skewed.<sup>21</sup> Contrary to this suggestion, skewness does not seem likely to be responsible for these extreme results.

For example, we could reduce the skewness by eliminating the large number of observations (album-weeks) with zero or very few downloads, and the extreme results will still hold, albeit they will be somewhat less extreme. First, imagine removing two-thirds of the observations with the lowest downloads, which seems likely to remove all the observations with zero downloads. Although it is likely that the regression coefficient on NGSV would rise, let's be conservative and assume that it remains constant. In this case, the average number of downloads rises to 13.1.<sup>22</sup> But the implied difference in American downloads between when all German kids are in school and when none are in school is still a very large 72 percent.<sup>23</sup> Even removing 95 percent of the observations leads to a difference in American downloads of 39 percent.<sup>24</sup>

In these highly restricted samples, predicted changes in American piracy due to German school vacations are still large enough that they should be able to swamp other economic forces causing short-term changes in American piracy. In order to believe OS's results, it must be the case that American piracy is the tail being wagged by the German school holiday dog. It should be even more difficult to accept OS's powerful positive relationship between NGSV and American piracy, based on individual albums, when the overall weekly changes in American piracy are shown to be *negatively* related to NGSV, which is the subject of the next section.

## OS's aggregate data conflict with their hypothesis and results

The hypothesis underlying OS's analysis is that when German kids go on vacation they run their home computers for more hours per day, increasing the available files to American pirate downloaders. This implies a *positive* association

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21. This skewness is why, when OS generalized their results to the entire industry, they should have given greater weight to more successful albums than to less successful albums. Blackburn (2006), in his analysis of similar data, spends considerable effort trying to avoid duplicating OS's oversight.

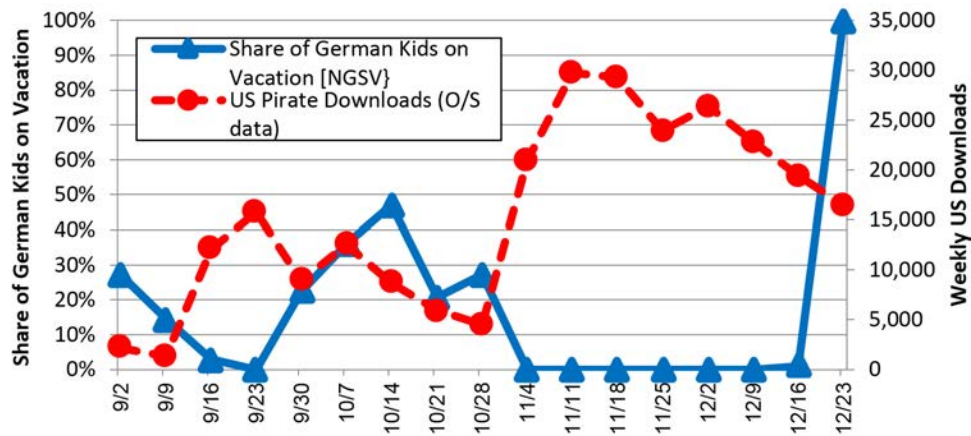
22. Assuming that all the removed observations have zero downloads implies that the average of the remaining one-third of the observations have an average that is three times as high as the original average.

23. For this calculation, as well as the next, I use the same procedure as discussed in footnote 18.

24. In a response to the editor of the *Journal of Political Economy*, OS stated that the 95th percentile observation had an average download value of 23.

between NGSV and American downloads, and an enormous positive relationship is what they found in the first-stage regressions, as just discussed. But let's bring this hypothesis to the weekly data, which are represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. NGSV and U.S. downloads, 2002



The German students on vacation (NGSV) are represented by the blue line and triangles, with the weekly values on the left axis. In early September, some students are still at the end of their summer vacations, with autumn vacations taking place in late September, October, and very early November, after which school vacations come to an end (until Christmas).

The red dashed lines with circles illustrate the number of U.S. downloads in the OS dataset, with the values on the right hand axis (this is just Figure 1 again). It is fairly obvious that the greatest amount U.S. piracy occurred in November and December, although that is also when NGSV was at its lowest point. Weeks when German students are on vacation are not associated with greater amounts of U.S. downloading.

Instead, the data provide a *negative* correlation:  $-0.71$  (significant at the one-percent level) between NGSV and American downloads if the Christmas week is excluded, or  $-0.37$  (not significant) if the Christmas week is included. Further, even including the polynomial time trend used by OS in their panel regressions, there is a negative relationship between these variables (significant at the one-percent level for the full sample). These negative correlations are the very opposite of the premise underlying OS's use of NGSV, and the opposite sign of their coefficient on NGSV in their first-stage regressions.

We must ask whether it is mathematically possible, short of an error, for NGSV and aggregate U.S. piracy to be negatively related while at the same time NGSV and the piracy of individual albums are positively related. The answer

appears to be ‘no,’ because there does not appear to be any fallacy-of-composition issue here. The weekly change in aggregate piracy (downloads) is merely the sum of the weekly change in piracy of individual albums, and since there is no cross sectional variation in NGSV, the sign of the aggregate relationship should be the same as the summed signs of the disaggregated relationships (weighted by downloads). It appears, therefore, that either there is an error in the OS data or else in OS giving equal weight to all albums in their regressions.<sup>25</sup> These dueling signs are also not due to different controls, because some of these first-stage regressions control for no other variables.<sup>26</sup>

Note the importance of this result. The reasoning that OS offer for using NGSV as an instrument is that high levels of NGSV are supposed to lead to high levels of American piracy, and the relationship is supposedly strong enough so as to measurably affect American record sales (if piracy reduces sales). Yet, over the 17 weeks of aggregate OS data, the result is the exact opposite—NGSV is negatively related to the quantity of American downloading.

## **The Princess and the Pea, or why the plan of OS’s paper could not have worked**

Exclusive of the problems already discussed, NGSV could only be a practical instrument for American downloading if its impact were large enough to rise above the background noise. The results of OS—specifically the large coefficient and small standard error on NGSV in the first stage—imply that the impacts of NGSV on American piracy rise well beyond the background noise. In this section, I demonstrate that the actual number of files that vacationing German pirates make available to Americans is extremely small, far too small, indeed, to have any measurable impact on American piracy. The analysis is based on simple logic, arithmetic, and, once informed by facts, common sense, thereby avoiding the complexity of econometric issues.

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25. Because the aggregate measure of piracy implicitly weights albums with many downloads far more than albums with few downloads, it is possible, if the many albums with low downloads have those downloads increased when NGSV increases, that unweighted regression results such as those reported by OS might provide misleading results about the overall relationship between NGSV and downloads. The problem with OS giving equal weight to all albums in their regressions was discussed in footnote 21. This weighted/unweighted explanation is different than a fallacy-of-composition effect, discussed in footnote 6.

26. In some first-stage regressions (see model III, Table 7 of the December 2004 version of their paper ([link](#))), OS control only for album fixed effects and a polynomial time trend. In Table 7 of their published paper, Model 2 also includes the U.S. MTV rank, but the coefficient on NGSV is essentially unchanged (.671 versus .670) with the inclusion of this variable (OS 2007, 24).

I refer, in the heading to this section, to Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Princess and the Pea." For those who don't remember the story, a prince wanted to marry a princess, and one way to recognize a real princess was whether she could (magically) feel a minuscule pea under dozens of mattresses. I mention this because the variation in NGSV that might impact American downloaders is extremely small, rather like the pea in the fairy tale.

An example indicates the nature of the problem I am suggesting. Assume you know a large extended family in Germany that listens to American music and is heavily engaged in making pirated files of American music available on file-sharing networks. Assume also that you know when this family has its file-sharing software running and when it does not. Even if the extra files made available by this family, when its file-sharing software is running, make it technically easier for some dozens or even hundreds of Americans to download files, no one would believe that this small number of additional files could have a measurable impact on overall American downloading, or on the sales of sound recordings in America. That is because the impact of these extra files would be swamped by the behavior of millions of other pirates, in America and elsewhere. The noise from everyone else, which is in the vicinity of a million times larger, would overwhelm the signal from this particular family.

That is why OS emphasize how important German files are to American downloaders. OS wish to convince the reader that the impact on American piracy from German school vacations can make it through the overall noise and be detected in their regressions. But OS do not investigate the actual number of pirate files affected by NGSV. Instead, OS provide an estimate of the share of American pirate files supplied by *all Germans throughout this time period*. The analysis below demonstrates, however, that the number of files controlled by German student-pirates affected by school holidays is orders of magnitude less than the estimate suggested by OS.

OS's analysis, therefore, assumes that NGSV is a boulder, upon which any sleeping individuals would be acutely aware of their discomfort, even with many mattresses under them. But when NGSV is really pea-sized, OS's econometric apparatus would need to be like the princess, (magically) capable of detecting an extremely small object that is heavily insulated and far away.

The rest of this section examines the factors influencing the impact of NGSV on American downloaders. First, I demonstrate that German files are over-represented in the OS sample. Next, the portion of German pirate files controlled by German secondary-school students affected by German school holidays is shown to be quite small. Further, the typical school holiday in the OS data affects only a small portion of German students at any one time. Finally, the extra files made available by a student being on vacation is estimated to be only a portion of



the files normally made available. The net result of these multiple factors is that changes in NGSV should change the number of pirate files available to Americans by less than two-tenths of one percent, a vanishingly small impact on the number of files available to Americans. In order to demonstrate how robust this conclusion is, I try, whenever a choice is available, to take the option that is more favorable to the OS analysis.

## Germans are overrepresented in the OS database

Based on their 2002 sample, OS claim that American pirate downloaders received 16.5 percent of their files from German file sharers, a value reproduced in the first column (second row) of my Table 1, which also contains related statistics about the German and American populations. The second column shows that OS report German pirates to account for more than 13 percent of all pirates in their dataset. Note as well, as shown in the bottom row, that OS report that Americans download 2.7 times as many files from other Americans as from Germans and that there are about 2.3 times as many American pirates as German pirates.

These are surprising measurements because in 2002 the U.S. had a population between 15 and 29 years of age that was four times as large as that of Germany,<sup>27</sup> a broadband penetration rate that was 1.7 times higher than in Germany ([link](#)), and a higher Internet penetration rate ([link](#)). If anything, we might expect the number of U.S. pirates to be more than four times as large as the number of German pirates and for American pirates to download from other Americans at least four times as frequently as they download from Germans (ignoring time zone and repertoire differences, which should only enhance this expectation).

**TABLE 1. Statistics related to file-sharing activity in the United States and Germany**

	(1) [OS dataset] Origin of Files Americans Downloaded*	(2) [OS dataset] Share of World File Sharers*	(3) 2003 Share of World File Sharers**	(4) 2002 Share of World Internet Users*
United States	45.1%	30.9%	55.4%	27.4%
Germany	16.5%	13.5%	10.2%	5.3%
Ratio U.S./Germany	2.7	2.3	5.4	5.2

\*Source: OS (2007, Table 2). \*\*Source: OECD (2004, 190).

That expectation is supported when we look at data based on entire populations instead of OS's tiny servers. The OECD (2004, 190) reports that American pirates were more than five times as numerous as those in Germany, as shown

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27. Population statistics come from an OECD [database](#).

in column 3.<sup>28</sup> And, in data cited by OS (2007, Table 2), the CIA found that in 2002 American Internet users were more than five times as numerous as those in Germany, as shown here in column 4.

What is the implication of the OS data likely having a large over-representation of Germans relative to Americans? It means that the importance of German files to American pirates would be considerably less than that reported by OS. To correctly gauge how many German files provided to American pirates are going to be affected by changes in NGSV, we would need to scale the share of Germans to a more realistic level. Given that the OS data seems to overweight Germans relative to Americans at about a 2:1 ratio, we can merely cut the estimated share of German files used by Americans in half. This implies that the full population of American file sharers, as opposed to those captured in OS's sample, are likely to download about 8.3 percent of their files from Germans, not 16.5 percent.

### Schoolchildren as a fraction of German file sharers

Even 8.3 percent is a large enough number that it would not be surprising if changes in the file-sharing activity of those 8.3 percent could measurably influence the file-sharing activity of Americans. But how many of those 8.3 percent of German pirate files are actually controlled by German kids on school vacation? OS conduct no examination of the share of German files that can be attributed to German *students*, although that would seem to be a crucial factor in the analysis they propose.

Although I was unable to find estimates of the file-sharing population distributions for Germany, I was able to find such distributions for the U.S. and France. The U.S. and French numbers, although they measure slightly different relationships,<sup>29</sup> are fairly similar to each other and I presume also similar to those from Germany. Table 2 provides these data.

The numbers in Table 2 clearly indicate that secondary school students (ages 12–17), the only age group in this table that would be affected by secondary school holidays,<sup>30</sup> are not the main users of file-sharing networks. In the U.S., individuals

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28. OECD's measure of file sharers is based on data from BigChampagne.

29. The U.S. numbers are based on the share of the *population* whereas the French numbers measure share of *Internet users*. The U.S. share of Internet users engaging in file sharing is higher than the numbers in Table 2, and similar to the French numbers. But the share of Americans using the Internet in 2002 was about double the share in France (OECD, 2004, Figure 4.1), so if compared in terms of the share of population, the U.S. likely would have larger shares in all age groups than France.

30. When OS provide statistics on the number of schoolchildren, they include all children in school. This grossly overstates the number of potential child pirates, since it is unreasonable to believe that five-year-olds, or seven-year-olds, or even most 10-year-olds were engaging in music piracy of songs of interest to American pirates. For one thing, only 20 percent of German primary school students (up to age 10) were

between 18 and 29 years of age are equally likely to use these networks, and there are more individuals in this age bracket than there are in the 12–17 bracket. It is also probable that the highest level of use in the U.S. would be among those aged 18–24, who are often in college or university, although the U.S. data are not broken down in that way. In France, individuals aged 18–24 are seen to have the most intense use, although the average member of the 18–39 age group is more likely to use file-sharing networks than are secondary students.

**TABLE 2. File-sharing usage by age group**

U.S. October 2002; % of population <sup>*</sup>		France June 2003, % of Internet users <sup>**</sup>	
12–17	41% <sup>***</sup>	12–17	31%
18–29	41%	18–24	47%
30–49	21%	25–39	31%
50–64	8%	40–59	22%
65+	3%	60+	11%

<sup>\*</sup>Source: PewInternet.org spreadsheet ([link](#)); October 2002 results for Question ACT35 multiplied by Q6. <sup>\*\*</sup>Source: OECD (2004, 195). <sup>\*\*\*</sup>Pew numbers usually only include those above 18 years of age; an OECD document (2004, 194) provides a 2001 Pew value for the percentage of file shares among of Internet users aged 12–17, that being 53 percent, which I adjust here (using Internet use rates for 18-29 year-olds) to the base of the overall population, not just Internet users.

It is not difficult to use these numbers to approximate the share of files controlled by those 12–17 years of age. Because it is likely the case that the age groups with the highest file-sharing usage are also those with the greatest intensity of file sharing, I assume that the intensity of piracy for an age group is proportional to its participation rate.<sup>31</sup> I also assume that the overall age distribution is uniform, though in Germany this would over-count younger Germans relative to the actual distribution and is beneficial to the OS story.<sup>32</sup> In the U.S., I exclude all pirates over the age of 50, expecting that they more than balance any pirates in Germany who are less than 12 years of age. In France I do the same thing for pirates over the age of 60.

With these assumptions, secondary students would control 18 percent of pirate files in in the U.S. and 13 percent of those in France. I will take an average of these two numbers to represent the share of files controlled by secondary school

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taking English as a foreign language in 2002 ([link](#)), so their interest in English language songs was likely very limited.

31. Given that the French statistics are based on percentage of Internet users (not population), this tends to overemphasize the importance of old pirates in France because older age groups in France are less likely to use the Internet in the first place.

32. The German population is skewed toward middle-age individuals. For example, per OECD ([link](#)), there were 46 percent more Germans aged 30–39 than aged 10–19 in 2002.

students in Germany—15 percent. Approximately one out of seven pirated files downloaded from Germany by Americans, then, is likely to come from secondary school students.

One other very simple factor ignored by OS is that students go to school only on weekdays. Thus, if file sharing were uniform across the days of the week, school holidays would affect only five-sevenths of days when piracy might occur. Of course, since file sharing is likely to be higher during the weekend when everyone has more free time, this assumption of a uniform distribution overestimates the share of weekly files impacted by school holidays and is thus beneficial to the OS hypothesis.

In sum, school holidays affect only the 15 percent slice of the German file-sharing population representing secondary students, and it does so on only 71 percent of the days in a week, leading to a potential reduction in German files due to German school holidays of 10.6 percent, or about one-tenth of the pirate files of all Germans available to Americans in a week.

Because we had already calculated that all Germans provided about 8.3 percent of the files used by Americans on file-sharing networks, we can now more precisely say that over a period including weekdays and weekends, the pirate files controlled by German secondary students that are potentially influenced by school vacations are about 0.9 percent (8.3 percent times 10.6 percent) of the worldwide pirated files available to Americans.

### **How large is the typical supply ‘shock’ due to school holidays?**

Figure 4 demonstrated that, for those weeks where some students were on school vacations, the share of kids on vacation was on the order of 20–40 percent, with an average of 25 percent for all weeks with non-zero vacations.<sup>33</sup> Since the vacation times are adjusted by the German government to avoid peak-load vacation travel problems, as noted by OS, it is not surprising that the share of students on vacation in any one week is not very large. But this also means that the ‘shocks’ brought about by the NGSV variable are only about one-fourth of what you would expect if all the students went on vacation at the same time.

If, as reported in the previous section, German students potentially at school only provide 0.9 percent of all pirated files, and if only one-fourth of the students

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33. This calculation includes several weeks with very low vacation shares but excludes the Christmas week because that is a national holiday, not a school vacation in the sense that OS use them. Including zero vacation weeks drops the average share of students on vacation to 18 percent. If weeks with a share of students on vacation below three percent are dropped the average is 28 percent.

are affected in an average week when school vacations (as opposed to national holidays) take place, then the size of the typical German vacation shock on the availability of pirate files to Americans would be about one-fourth of 0.9 percent, or 0.23 percent.

### **How do school holidays affect files from German schoolkids?**

When German secondary students experience school holidays, how does this change the number of files that they make available to American downloaders? After all, we are not really interested in the number of files controlled by German students. Instead, we are interested in the *change* in the number of those files made available to Americans when German students go on school vacations. That is the number that we would need to know in order to measure the influence of German vacations on American downloading.

OS do not delve into this subject—they merely assume that the German students' computers are on for longer periods of time because the students are not at school. They ignore the possibility that these kids might take a trip with their families during this period or that the computers might be left on all the time. The key assumption that OS make is that during school holidays German schoolkids have their computers on all day and that the kids turn them off when they go to school. Since, on a typical school day, kids are at school for fewer hours than they typically sleep each night, I suppose we should likewise figure that kids turned their computers off when they are sleeping.

Assume that the baseline day when schools are open looks like this: students get up to go to school at 7 a.m. without turning on their computers, and arrive home at 1 p.m., the typical time for school to end in Germany. The students then keep the computer on until bedtime, assumed to be 11 p.m. In this case, the computer would be on for 10 hours during school days.

Now take the case where the students are on vacation. Let's assume they sleep in until 9 a.m. and then keep the computers on until bedtime, which we assume is now 1 a.m. The computers would be on for 16 hours, as opposed to the original 10 hours, for a 60 percent increase.<sup>34</sup>

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34. Moreover, I ignore consideration of when those extra download files from German kids are available to American pirates, to the benefit of the OS thesis because the fit is not a good one. Four of the six extra hours of German file availability occur during the German hours of 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., when German kids would otherwise be at school. But these hours correspond to 2 a.m. through 6 a.m. in the U.S. Central Time Zone. Virtually no American pirates are going to be awake at those late-night times. So four of the six extra hours are of virtually no value to American pirates.

A 60 percent change in the availability of German students' files seems like a fairly substantial number, and it is, but it is *less* than the number of files they normally make available to Americans. To arrive at the number of additional files made available to Americans due to German school vacations, we need to multiply 0.23 percent, the share of pirate files impacted by vacations, by 60 percent, the change in file availability during vacations. The result is 0.14 percent.

### **In perspective: NGSV's impact on American file sharing**

Returning full circle, we began with OS's claim that, in their sample, German files represented 16.5 percent of pirate files downloaded by Americans. Evidence from sources measuring the entire market, however, indicated that Germans were overrepresented in OS's sample by a factor of 2, leaving 8.3 percent as a more reasonable estimate of the share of American pirate downloads taken from German sources. We then examined the likely share of German pirate files controlled by German secondary school students (15 percent), and also noted that weekends are not affected by German school holidays. Taking account of these two factors led to a conclusion that the pirate files of German schoolkids that could be affected by German school holidays represented slightly less than 1 percent of the files taken by American pirates. And then, since we are only interested in the *extra* files available to Americans due to German secondary school vacations, it was necessary to examine the share of German students at any one time affected by school vacations. The share of German students impacted by the average vacation was about 25 percent, so the files that Americans might download from German schoolkids that could be influenced by German students on vacation was reduced to slightly less than one quarter of one percent. The final consideration was measuring the presumed increase in availability of files when German students are on school vacation compared to when they are not on vacation. We concluded that this increase could be in the vicinity of 60 percent. Since the total files that could be affected by German vacations were, again, slightly less than 0.25 percent, a 60 percent increase means the bottom-line increase in pirate-file availability to Americans caused by a typical German school holiday would be 0.14 percent. And that calculation incorporates several assumptions that would inflate the value.

Let's try to put this resulting percentage, roughly one-seventh of one percent, into more intuitive contexts.

First, OS claim that the average download time for a music file in their sample, counted from the download request to the completed download, was 1,496 seconds, or about 25 minutes.<sup>35</sup> If the extra German files from the German holi-

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35. Calculated from OS's (2007) Table 6, sum of items in the last row, for the first three columns.

days increased the speed with which Americans could find and download songs in proportion to the increased quantity of file availability, the savings in time would be about 2 seconds out of the original 1,496 seconds. It seems inconceivable that American downloaders could even perceive a change this small without the careful use of a stopwatch. Surely, common sense tells us that if the additional files from German school vacations cannot even be noticed by American downloaders, then the change cannot seriously affect Americans' downloading behavior. Nor does it seem possible that the change could rise above the background statistical noise, nor impact American record sales.

Alternatively, we can view this 0.14 percent as a share of the 320 million Americans, a share which would be 445,000. This is equivalent to a small-sized city, such as the Shreveport-Bossier City MSA. Do we really believe that if a tornado shut down Shreveport for a week, this event would be detectable in weekly national U.S. record sales figures where the *smallest* weekly change over these seventeen weeks, using OS's data, was more than twenty-six times as large? Or could we believe that piracy activities of a city of this size could *dominate* the piracy behavior of the entire U.S.? Could we even believe that it could have a large enough impact on American downloading to be measurable, when more than 99.8 percent of the other pirates throughout the world are making their files available to Americans?

Finally, there is one last point to be made here. OS find that NGSV strongly reduced the time it took for Americans to download files, just as they found it strongly influenced American downloads. But their measure of download time is not an independent data source—it comes from their dataset, viz., the same publicly unavailable dataset that contains their data on download counts. Whatever is causing the erroneous reported relationship between NGSV and the number of American downloads is most likely also causing an erroneous reported relationship between NGSV and the completion time of American downloads.

## Conclusion

This paper has investigated Professors Oberholzer-Gee and Strumpf's influential article on the impact of piracy on record sales. By closely examining their results, the snippets of data they have made public, and the logic behind their analysis, it was possible to discover numerous problems with their published results.

First, their data purportedly measuring American downloading, upon which their entire edifice stands, demonstrates a level of weekly variability that is inconsistent with other measures of American downloading and also is at variance with

reasonable expectations about the likely weekly variance. If the downloading data are defective, then the rest of their main empirical work would be invalid.

Second, their claimed results imply that German schoolkids are almost always on vacation, which is factually incorrect, and their measured impact of German schoolkid piracy on American piracy is unbelievably large, implying that American piracy is virtually controlled by German school vacations.

Third, although their panel regression results imply a powerful positive impact of German schoolkids on American downloading, their aggregate weekly data reveal a strongly negative relationship between American downloading and German schoolkids on vacation, an inconsistency that seems to imply some sort of error.

Fourth, and most importantly, their chosen instrument, the number of German schoolkids on vacation, is shown, though a careful analysis of raw data, to be of a vanishingly small size. The minuscule size of their key instrument implies that it would be impossible to measure its impact on American pirates or American record sales, given normal background noise.

Based upon this analysis, and additional issues that I have raised elsewhere (Liebowitz 2016b), I believe that the OS article and its conclusions can be deemed unreliable. Because OS have not fulfilled their promise to make their data available, it is not possible to know the exact causes of their inconsistent and unbelievable results.

## Appendix

Underlying data for Figures 1–4 can be downloaded [here \(.xlsx\)](#).

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# Incentivizing Exports in Academic Planning: The Rise of South Korea and Lessons for Underdeveloped Nations

Daniel Schwegendiek<sup>1</sup>

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

Thomson Reuters's Web of Science (WoS) core indices, including the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), Arts & Humanities Citation Index (A&HCI), and Science Citation Index (SCI), have become important in academic life. One of the central distinctions between journals is that between inclusion and non-inclusion in WoS. It is not easy for a journal to get itself included in WoS; there is an exclusivity about it. If the journal is included, then the citations *from* that journal are recorded in the WoS citation system (all such citations are recorded, not only those *to* WoS journals). In a service called Journal Citation Reports, Thomson Reuters uses its WoS system to create statistics about WoS journals, such as the journal's "impact factor." A journal that is included in WoS can quickly signal that by publicizing its impact factor. Whether a journal is included in WoS is a strong focal point in categorizing journals and has become a central convention in academic life.

The WoS has become important in several global university rankings. Among these are the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), published since 2003, the Times Higher Education–Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings (Times Higher Education–QS World University Rankings, also known as the THE-QS World University Ranking), published from 2004 to 2009, and

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the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE World University Rankings), which have been published since 2010 (THE and QS, which previously published the Times Higher Education–QS World University Rankings, ended their collaboration in 2009). By publishing in a WoS journal, a scholar both improves her individual scholarly performance and raises the global ranking of her institution.

The importance of these world university rankings can even be seen in the distribution of green cards and dual citizenships in some developed countries. For instance, highly skilled foreigners in Denmark or the Netherlands qualify for green cards depending on the recent ranking position of their graduate degree-granting university (Rauhvargers 2013, 23), and these ranking positions are influenced by the WoS publications by faculty. In the case of the Netherlands, only applicants receiving a graduate degree from a university ranked in the top 200 according to acknowledged rankings such as the ARWU or THE World University Rankings can be given a green card (*ibid.*). Nations such as South Korea have even directly made SSCI, A&HCI, and SCI publications by the individual a major qualification criterion for granting to that individual dual citizenship as a highly skilled worker.<sup>2</sup>

The ranking of universities has become similar to ranking nations by their per-capita GDPs. Not only are academic rankings such as the Times Higher Education–QS World University Rankings or ARWU used as international benchmarks, which was the main reason for their emergence in the mid-2000s, but the WoS is nowadays considered a goalpost by higher-education planners. These rankings were instrumental in enacting higher education reforms in some of the most developed nations such as Germany or South Korea, whose institutes were ranked devastatingly low (Schwekendiek 2015). For instance, in 2004 the inaugural Times Higher Education–QS World University Ranking had the best German university (the University of Heidelberg) ranked only 47th, while the best Korean university (Seoul National University) was ranked 119th. In comparison, other universities in continental Europe and East Asia were ranked much higher, including higher education institutions from Switzerland and Japan positioned in the world's top 15.

These poor rankings did not go without a response. In the case of Germany—of which I am a citizen, by the way, though I live at present in South Korea—political decision makers invested about 1.9 billion euros from 2006 to 2009 into a so-called excellence initiative (Sondermann et al. 2008, 11). The basic idea was to enable its universities to “compete with higher education institutions such as Harvard and Stanford” (*ibid.*, 10). Despite good intentions, German universities have not risen in the rankings, as pointed out by Berkeley economist Barry Eichen-

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2. See for example the page “우수인재 추천권자 및 평가기준” on South Korea’s E-government for Foreigners website ([link](#)).

green (2014) in a recent interview with a popular news magazine: “After all, Germany still does not have a university in the top 50 in the world.” On the contrary, despite spending 1.9 billion euros, average rankings of German universities even seem to have declined: The mean ranking of all German institutes consistently included in the THE-QS top 200 in each year from 2004 to 2009 fell from 90 in 2004 to 108 in 2009. Meanwhile Korean universities rose dramatically, from an average ranking of 140 in 2004 to 58 in 2009 (Schwekendiek 2015)!<sup>3</sup>

How did South Korea jump 82 spots within just a few years in the THE-QS Ranking? And, what lessons can be learned by higher education planners in other nations? Before addressing higher education reforms in South Korea, this paper will address the nation’s economic development in the 1960s, as methods used to pull South Korea out of poverty were strikingly copied to boost universities in the 2000s. The key to both the economic and educational rise of South Korea has been a system of quantified targets. In manufacturing, quantified targets pertained to the exports of goods to overseas markets, and quantitative targets in education pertained to the publication of articles in WoS journals.

To understand why South Korea was in need of such a system—quantitative and externally measured, not a murky peer-review system—one has to understand the culture of corruption prevalent in South Korea, in government and in academia.

## **Corruption and colonialism: A history of pre-divided Korea**

In this section and the next I give considerable space to historical description—too much space, some have told me. But the historical descriptions help us understand the cultural, moral, and institutional conditions that shaped the constraints within which South Korea’s export-oriented strategies emerged. The historical description helps us appreciate those strategies as creative, perhaps even praiseworthy, given the constraints of having to actually govern a country. Readers familiar with South Korean history may wish to skip this section and the next.

Korea had been credited as one of the oldest independent nations in the world until losing its independence in 1910, being colonized by Japan from 1910 to 1945. Prior to annexation, Japan defeated rival powers China, in the First Sino-

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3. Note that investigating South Korea’s or Germany’s performance after 2009 becomes complicated because the THE-QS Ranking was discontinued as the two companies split and published their own respective rankings afterwards (QS World University Ranking and THE World University Ranking), both of which differ methodologically from the original THE-QS Ranking.

Japanese War (1894–1895), and Russia, in the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). It was an era of high imperialism. In 1905, Japan made two secret diplomatic agreements: with the United States acknowledging America's control over the Philippines in exchange for acknowledgment of Japan's control over Korea, and with the United Kingdom acknowledging British hegemony in China in exchange for acknowledgment of Japanese hegemony in Korea (Seth 2010, 32). Korea was conquered in the diplomatic arena, and it lacked a modernized military to fend off imperial powers (Park 2007). Japan easily annexed Korea in 1910 without even having to go to war.

The Japanese used the Korean peninsula as an agricultural hinterland and natural-resource base, serving to feed Japan's population, support Japan's industrialization program, and later support Japan's wars. The Japanese developed heavy industry in the mountainous North of the peninsula, building chemical factories, hydroelectric power plants, and mines. The South, flatter and warmer, had traditionally been the rice belt; there, the Japanese introduced new plant seeds, initiated motorization of the agricultural sector, developed deep-sea fishing, introduced chemical fertilizers, and improved drainage and irrigation. All these measures drastically boosted production and productivity in colonial Korea. In stark contrast, the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910) suffered from a severe economic and political crisis in the nineteenth century (Jun and Lewis 2006; Palais 1991), even before imperial powers began to put pressure on Korea's traditional economy. For instance, irrigation facilities were not maintained, from increased corruption of Joseon bureaucrats (Jun and Lewis 2006, 248). Aristocratic titles were forged or even sold by elites (Hart 2001, 62–64). The Japanese improved the physical infrastructure in Korea, even though it was purposed to exploit the Korean peninsula rather than aid development. Indeed, while the late Joseon dynasty underinvested in vital infrastructure (Jun and Lewis 2006), the Japanese collected stones from all Korean households several times per year, using the stones to build infrastructure such as dams, streets, bridges, and irrigation facilities (H. Kang 2001). Many bureaucrats in the late Joseon dynasty were not interested in improving overall living conditions but instead filled their coffers by overcharging the populace. Some of these public scandals triggered peasant revolts, such as the case of the tyrannical rule of the magistrate of Kobu county in 1894 (Nahm 1993, 159).

On the other hand, technological transfers and economic investments made by the Japanese should not be overestimated. Even if production and productivity improved in Korea, the Japanese exported most of the product. For instance, while rice production improved 1.4-fold in colonial Korea from the early 1910s to the mid-1930s, rice exports from colonial Korea increased eight-fold during that period (Song 1990, 40). Japanese colonizers also extracted wood, gold, and minerals from the Korean peninsula, making Korea a supply base for Japan. Fur-

thermore, many Koreans were coerced to work for the Japanese. Korean women were forced to work as 'comfort women,' coerced and abused by the imperial army. Korean men had to work as soldiers fighting for the Japanese in World War II. The price for Korea's modernization was therefore immensely high.

However, corruption that plagued the late Joseon state declined remarkably during colonial rule. In fact, the Japanese abided by the laws they decreed and were transparent in their imposed measures. For instance, the Japanese police detained Koreans who allegedly protested against Japanese rule. Since the Japanese had a law in which any suspect could be detained for only 29 days following arrest, they simply released him or her only to re-arrest immediately after leaving the building (H. Kang 2001, 47). Japanese inspectors could repeat this procedure again and again, clearly abusing the system while still adhering to the laws they implemented. Rather than breaking the rules through bribery or the forging of documents as in the late Joseon dynasty, Japanese colonizers simply bent the laws they made. These legal changes would then give Japanese entrepreneurs or farmers significant advantages over their Korean competitors. The system was unfair and biased towards the Japanese, but corruption and forgery scandals were hardly heard of during colonization of the Korean peninsula.

During World War II, Japan joined the Axis powers Germany and Italy. The opposed Allies held several conferences, at the peak and particularly at the end of World War II, in which they discussed how to deal with the Axis powers after the war. In 1943, the U.S., UK, the Republic of China, and the Soviet Union agreed that Korea should become independent "in due course" (J. Lee 2006, 5ff.). The Allies also agreed that Korea should be placed under a multilateral trusteeship.

The Axis powers were defeated in Europe by May 1945, but the Japanese continued fighting in the Pacific theater. In August, the Soviet Union launched an invasion in the Far East to engage the Japanese troops stationed in Manchuria and Korea. The Soviets did not meet much resistance from the Japanese and began to advance rapidly from the northern toward the southern half of the Korean peninsula. The American military was off in the Philippines at that time, and thus could not play a role in the liberation of Korea. Fearing that the Soviets might seize control of the entire Korean peninsula in a few days, the Americans spontaneously suggested to Stalin that his troops halt at the 38th parallel, a cartographic line roughly dividing the Korean peninsula into two equal halves (J. Lee 2006). Stalin accepted America's suggestion, and this way only northern Korea was occupied by the Soviets. Korea was placed under a temporal trusteeship, with the Soviet Union occupying the North and the United States the South. The occupation was set for a period of up to five years.

After World War II, the Soviet Union started effectively to annex territories it occupied during and after the war by leaving its troops there and manipulating

elections at gunpoint. The emergent Cold War necessitated a solution to the Korean peninsula issue. The United Nations (UN) decided to make Korea independent earlier than expected by conducting free elections on the peninsula. The regime in northern Korea boycotted the elections and declined to acknowledge the newly founded Republic of Korea (ROK), widely known as South Korea. In the meantime, the North held its own elections and established the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), commonly known as North Korea, just a few days after the foundation of the ROK. In this manner, the two Korean states emerged in 1948, and they continue to exist today, even despite the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s.

The sudden and unexpected rupture of the peninsula along the 38th parallel combined with the retreat of the Japanese left both Koreas in chaos. Korea was geared as a supply base for Japan, so the colonizers had not set up any machine tool industry there and had refrained from training Korean engineers and technicians. Without the Japanese, most factories and machines were left idle and unrepaired. Since the North inherited Japan's heavy industry, South Korea was practically cut off from energy, raw materials, and vital inputs for its agricultural sector such as chemical fertilizers. Worse yet, the retreating Japanese sabotaged and deliberately destroyed much of the infrastructure built in Korea, including mines, factories, and even small- and medium-sized enterprises, in order to prevent seizure by the Allies. And further: Upon arriving on the Korean peninsula, the Soviet army dismantled many remaining factories—which were then state-of-the-art technology—and transported them to Russia. These measures completely halted the production of chemical fertilizers, in turn hampering agricultural production. The Japanese also took most vehicles, including motorized boats, back to Japan or simply left them unrepaired in Korea. In-shore fishing grounds were completely depleted while offshore fishing grounds were fully stocked but inaccessible without equipment (McCune 1950).

Agriculture and the economy generally collapsed, triggering a food crisis. Only one in three Koreans were living in the North, as opposed to two in three in the South, which meant that the North had fewer mouths to feed. Moreover, millions of Koreans who had been forced into Japanese projects in China, Japan, Sakhalin Island (now Russia), and elsewhere now returned to South Korea or fled from North Korea to the South, dramatically increasing food demand there. North Korea was able to address its crisis by establishing a strict and centralized food rationing system. On the brink of mass starvation, the South was relieved by massive food and fertilizer donations by the United States and the United Nations.

During the post-colonial chaos there was a surge in corruption and mafia groups. Previously only Japanese held advanced positions. In a human-capital vacuum, any Korean with special abilities including English was highly valued.

Koreans hated the Japanese for their brutal colonial rule. They also hated their former Korean collaborators, many of whom (or their children) were rewarded by the Japanese by being allowed to attend higher education institutes under colonization. As South Korea lacked qualified let alone politically 'clean' personnel, capable advisers and leaders were scarce. The U.S. was not prepared to govern the South since there were only a handful of Americans, mostly missionaries, who spoke Korean. The first governments ruling from 1948 to 1961 were considered to be corrupt, despite being elected democratically (E. M. Kim 1997, 99). Corruption and personal favors became rampant at all administrative levels (Lie 1998, 112).

Extreme poverty combined with feckless bureaucrats arguably led to a resurgence in the culture of corruption that had plagued the late Joseon dynasty. "Since independence in 1948," writes David Kang, "Korea has seen a seemingly endless flow of corruption scandals bring down scores of elites. Among those who have served time in jail or been exiled are former presidents..., members of many presidential staffs, and a slew of military officers, politicians, bureaucrats, bankers, businessmen, and tax collectors" (2002, 1–2). Personal favoritism was commonplace at all administrative levels, low and high, and the educational sector was no exception. The following testimony illustrates how an average Korean was treated at school during his childhood: "Students got special awards if their parents handed white envelopes of money to teachers, and my parents didn't do that ... I knew corruption was going on. Teachers would hit me in front of the class for saying things about it. I remember one classmate whose family was very rich. He had a private tutor and was always getting 100 percent on his papers because the teacher gave the tutor all the questions in advance. Once, I got 100 percent and he got only 85 percent on a math test, and the teacher had the whole class retake the test the following day, so that he got 100 percent ... I never saw the kids whose parents brought all the white envelopes getting hit" (E. H. Kim and Yu 1997, 155).

And the story gets worse. In 1950, thanks to technical support from its ideological allies, North Korea invaded the South in what is known as the Korean War. The war further devastated the Korean economy and destroyed all remaining infrastructure. The South Korean capital Seoul was conquered and destroyed four times in the course of the war. The U.S. used carpet bombing and napalm against the North, completely destroying many cities. Poor and hungry refugees, war widows, and orphans were prevalent all over the peninsula. The Korean War ended in a truce in 1953, and the two Koreas technically remain at war today. After the war a demilitarized zone close to the 38th parallel was established.

As a result of the chaotic post-colonial period and the destructive Korean War, both Koreas were among the poorest nations in the world. International experts at that time predicted an agrarian future for South Korea characterized



by low economic growth, while forecasting a bright economic future for many of today's underdeveloped nations such as the Philippines (D. Kang 2002).

But, defying expectations, one of the Koreas rose, by 1996, to status as an OECD nation.

## Incentivizing exports in economic planning

In 1961, from dissatisfaction with the chaotic government in South Korea, military general Park Chung-Hee launched a coup. Park witnessed how the Japanese had, in just a few years, developed the Korean peninsula and Manchuria into booming industrial centers (C. S. Lee 2012). More importantly, Park fought in the Korean War and thus had experience in leading a large organization; he was competent in “planning, programming, budgeting, and evaluating” large projects under time pressure (C. H. Lee 1995, 28). Furthermore, all important ministers appointed by Park after his coup were also high-ranking military, such as generals and colonels (S.-J. Kim 1971, 162–163). In this manner, the military system of rigorous planning and evaluation infiltrated the entire Korean government and economy, and that mentality persists today, including in higher education.

In economic planning, one of the main methods used to counteract rampant corruption was a quantitative reward system. As previously mentioned, there was a lack of experts after the Japanese left South Korea. Ideally, appointed ministers and advisers would have been educated or experienced bureaucratic leaders in their fields. However, as the Japanese had held most key positions in the past, Park lacked access to competent personnel to oversee and evaluate projects. As an illustration, in 1943, eight of ten technicians and engineers were Japanese (Sakong 1993, 2), and, during colonization, the few Koreans who actually received training in technical subjects mostly held lower positions. Koreans with doctoral degrees were almost non-existent. The Japanese also held all key educational and administrative positions in Korea. Additionally, Japanese colonizers had prohibited emigration of Koreans to the United States (particularly to Hawaii), and thus there was a lack of overseas expatriates who could have been recruited to return to support the Korean economy. As a result, appointments for many important public institutions were subject to personal networking rather than being based on qualifications and technical competence.

Yet the military government was strongly determined to increase the economic development of South Korea. Already in the 1950s, Park became frustrated with the elite's corruption and incompetence, which, according to him, were to blame for the misery of the Korean people (D. Lee 2015, 42). When Park toppled the government in 1961, it was the first successful coup in Korea since the founding

of the Joseon dynasty in 1392, which according to Chong Sik Lee (2012) clearly demonstrated his strong determination to reform the country. In reaction to Korea's culture of corruption, the military government aimed to develop Korea by utilizing an impersonal, transparent rule-based system, using hard statistical numbers. Since the military government was experienced in "planning, programming, budgeting, and evaluating" large projects under time pressure thanks to important experience gained during the Korean War (C. H. Lee 1995, 28), hard statistical numbers would be a common denominator all military-cum-government leaders could agree upon. In practice, statistical numbers were a substitute for the qualitative experts that South Korea lacked. Using such hard numbers, in the 1960s Korean entrepreneurs were incentivized to manufacture goods in any industry in which they could produce the quantified results.

But which quantified results? Here we come to a key reform that made possible a system that would escape internal corruption by linking to external markets. The new military government initiated a paradigm shift from import substitution to export orientation. This meant that Korean entrepreneurs had to increase exports rather than continuing to cater to the domestic market. While many other underdeveloped nations pursued import substitution at that time, South Korea's sudden shift to export orientation must be analyzed in light of North Korea's economy, which grew considerably faster than South Korea's after the Korean War. Thus, according to the military government, the only way that South Korea could have won the economic race with its ideological enemy in the North was to boost production through exports. Moreover, from a political perspective, the United States largely disapproved of military strongman Park, who rose to power through a coup and then started to gradually abolish democracy and restrict civil rights. The previous government in South Korea had been highly dependent on American aid, and the new military government sought to shift towards export orientation as a measure to reduce the economic and political leverage of the United States. Though some scholars might also view export orientation as problematic as import substitution, it should not be forgotten that South Korea was facing a heavily militarized North during and after the Korean War. Rapid economic and technological growth was a matter of survival.

The priority on exporting did not reflect a wider commitment to free markets and free trade. Along the lines of Friedrich List's infant-industry argument, the Korean government established high tariffs and even import bans (for instance, of completed machines) so that, according to the argument, Korean companies could mature. Since the military government lacked experts, it considered for receipt of government support any producer who could demonstrate impressive export data. To monitor and evaluate Korean exporters, all Korean embassies were systematically instructed to collect trade data and submit them back to their home

country. The government established very ambitious export targets. Only companies that fulfilled these quantitative targets were rewarded, while those failing to meet export quotas within the specified timeframe no longer received government support. This quantitative bar ensured that certain ‘dead-wood’ types of free-riders and rent-seekers would effectively be filtered out, thereby mitigating the problem of personal favoritism and corruption while also solving the issue of inadequately qualified experts and generally reducing administrative costs. Indeed, even if South Korea had enough trained experts to evaluate companies in a qualitative peer-review system, the committee members would have been simply bribed due to Korea’s culture of corruption. Thus, the quantitative export system prevented extensive undermining by underperforming entrepreneurs.

Important in this transparent, quantitative system was the critical foreign consumer, in the United States, Japan, Europe, and elsewhere, who purchased Korean import goods such as textiles, footwear, and wigs in the 1960s. In the 1980s, as Korean companies shifted towards exporting electronics and cars, foreign consumers again showed a propensity to buy Korean products. Constant feedback from foreign consumers, their buying and abstention from buying, helped to mitigate the follies, corruptions, and foolishness of the government’s planning approach. For instance, some Korean car models lost their paint after a couple of days when subjected to intense sunshine, and some other models suffered suspension damage due to differences in local roads (M. O. Kim and Jaffe 2010, 212). Rather than denying the problems or bickering over blame, the Korean exporting companies immediately applied a special paint or reinforced the suspension systems to satisfy buyers overseas. Needless to say, without an export-orientation system, the quantitative planning system of the government would have failed, as is the case for North Korea primarily catering standardized goods of poor quality to the people in the DPRK. Though South Korean companies were monopolists or oligopolists domestically, they had to compete fiercely for market shares overseas by finding new niches and improving the quality of their goods.

Exporting Korean companies were rewarded, whereas many of those failing to do so went out of business. Beginning in 1962, entrepreneurs who fulfilled the ambitious export targets were invited by the government to monthly export-promotion conferences, during which these entrepreneurs could talk directly to the president himself. Export success was officially honored. Successful exporters were given access to important ministers, through whom they could ask the government to remove import restrictions on immediate raw materials and even those on completed machines, liberalizations that would in turn further increase exports of their respective goods. As long as Korean companies could meet the goals posted by the government, they were eligible to receive further government support. In this manner, certain Korean exporters grew larger and larger.

This system, of non-experts setting ambitious targets and using incorruptible hard statistics to evaluate important matters, is still prevalent in South Korea. Despite economic liberalization reforms (C. H. Lee 1995) and democratization processes in the 1980s (Choi and Yoon 2016), South Korea is still using this military-style quantitative system in planning. Indeed, this system has been applied to develop higher education in South Korea, which will be discussed next.

## Incentivizing exports in academic planning

From a technical point of view, incentivizing exports in economic planning does not differ much from incentivizing exports in academic policy. If one designates academic articles published in respected international journals as ‘exported goods,’ with the editors, peer reviewers, and readers as critical foreign ‘consumers’ who impel local scholars to maintain certain international quality standards as well as address relatively important issues, then similar schemes for budgeting, planning, and evaluation can be implemented by the government. As a reminder, Korean producers who could not meet the ambitious export targets of the government in the past went unsupported (e.g., by losing tax exemptions or being denied access to electricity discount rates) while those fulfilling and exceeding the quota were rewarded (e.g., by receiving shipping waivers or getting access to government loans). In academia, such a system represents a ‘publish or perish’ regime: The ‘publish’ part is left to academic practices worldwide, while the ‘perish’ part is effectuated by governmental institutions acting as huge players in the academic sector within South Korea.

Ever since the WoS has become a central standard in research as well as international university rankings, the Korean government has by and large made publications in WoS journals mandatory.<sup>4</sup> This is first and foremost a quantitative system, requiring government officials in the Korean Ministry of Education to

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4. Depending on the individual institute and government program, WoS publications are either directly made mandatory or indirectly strongly encouraged by valuing articles published in a domestic journal as only 0.25 to 0.50 of that of an article published in a WoS journal. Also depending on the individual institute and government program, books are not acknowledged at all or are worth 0.50 to 1.50 of an article published in a WoS journal. Furthermore, depending on the individual institute and government program as well as the total number of authors, co-authored articles are worth only 0.10 to 0.70 of that of a single-authored one. In that case, some institutes and government programs give small bonuses (usually about 0.10 points) to scholars with special roles such as being the corresponding author or lead author of a multi-authored paper. Since top universities are competing against each other, the exact publication requirements for promotion and recruitment at specific institutes are commonly not made public but shared only with internal members or selected external job applicants. For some insights on the point system at Yonsei University, see S. K. Kim 2016.

simply count the number of articles Korean scholars recently published in the WoS. Officials then set ambitious targets, such as one single-authored WoS publication per year over a certain period of evaluation (e.g., five years), and those scholars who meet or surpass the quota are rewarded with extra funding, higher income, and most importantly contract extensions, including tenure appointments. Those who cannot ‘export’ their research articles to WoS journals are no longer supported by the government. Similar to Korean entrepreneurs in the 1960s, Korean scholars can freely choose their area of activity as long as their research is published in a WoS journal. This quantitative system allows certain Korean scholars to expand their enterprise, and departments if not whole universities to grow, while minimizing certain forms of rent-seeking, free-riding, and corruption, particularly of the dead-wood variety. This system also does not require external experts with high English proficiency, another major advantage.

Indeed, before the introduction of a transparent and quantitative publish-or-perish system, Korean universities and scholars were severely underperforming (Oh 2007). One possible contributing factor was that Korean academia was no exception to the rule of personal favoritism. In the words of a Korean: “Korean businesses are corrupt. Korean media are corrupt. Korean scholars are corrupt. It doesn’t matter if they are educated or not, whether they went to college or are only high school graduates” (E. H. Kim and Yu 1997, 206).

The personal favoritism that formerly plagued Korean academia can clearly be observed when examining faculty recruitment. As is commonly known, only stellar performers are recruited at American top universities (Goldsmith et al. 2001). These scholars are then supposed to further contribute to the rise of the university and department in the research rankings as well as educate outstanding students. Perhaps one reason for the underperformance of Korean scholars in the past is that incumbent professors simply recruited their own former Ph.D. students.<sup>5</sup> For illustration, as of fall 2011, two-thirds of all professorship appointments were landed this way at Korean universities (McNeill 2011). Indeed, Korean faculty boards preferred to recruit the least active candidate, notably “former students and those who will not compete with them but those who will obey and follow” (Cho 1999). Korean academia was also shielded from international competition. The few foreign scholars who were working at Korean universities were commonly asked two questions by their colleagues: “when did you come to Korea?” and next, “when are you leaving Korea?” (T. Kim 2005). This quite well

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5. Interestingly, Japan’s academia was similarly characterized by “institutional inbreeding” in the 1950s, with an estimated 90 percent of regular professors being former graduates (Bronfenbrenner 1956, 395). An interesting future research question would be to investigate how Japanese scholars and schools could rise to a world-class level by today, as evidenced by the rankings of Japanese universities or over 20 Nobel prizes, despite apparent similar personal biases in faculty recruitment in the past.

illustrates that foreigners were not supposed to earnestly compete with Korean scholars. Moreover, even when Korean universities received a large donation in the range of \$100 million, Korean faculty members would use the funds to build a “‘world class Engineering Building’ with splendid faculty offices and laboratories but [fail] to recruit a single ‘world class faculty’” (Cho 1999). Moreover, many Korean professors in the 1980s did not have a Ph.D., just a master’s degree (Jung 2014, 86), and these were likely not qualified to evaluate candidates according to scholarly standards. Indeed, until the initiation of government schemes such as BK21, WCU, or HK (see below) since the late 1990s, the number of Ph.D. graduates was very low in South Korea. For instance, only 2,742 doctoral degrees were conferred in the pre-reform year of 1990, as opposed to 11,093 in 2003 (Schwekendiek 2015, 371).

The traditional peer-review system of recruitment and promotion failed in Korean academia. Kang (2002, 61) provides further tentative evidence for the degree of internal personal favoritism: “In 1989, almost two-thirds (63%) of the bureaucracy in Korea’s Ministry of Finance and almost half (47%) of Economic Planning Board (EPB) civil servants...had graduated from Seoul National University (SNU). Normally, these statistics are used as evidence of the superior quality of the SNU students. What tends to be less well known, however, is that faculty members at SNU’S Graduate School of Public Administration are often asked to help write the national civil exams ... [This] does provide a clue that not all is as it appears within the vaunted Korean bureaucracy.”

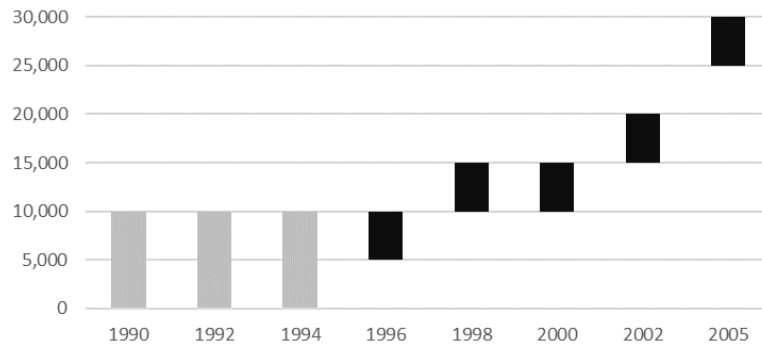
Not only was recruitment of professors in Korean academia questionable, promotion of faculty members was inefficient and not geared at all towards producing research articles in international journals. Indeed, whereas scholars at American universities are commonly promoted based on their publications and citations in WoS journals, if only tacitly (Klein and Chiang 2004a), there were no requirements at all to publish in international journals in order to get promoted from assistant professor to associate professor or tenured professor in Korean academia. Korean universities, similar to Korean companies, basically gave lifetime guarantees to their employees, for Confucian reasons. Although being recruited was difficult in the past, once candidates managed to land a job, international publications were not required to keep it, since “tenure has traditionally been automatic, and evaluation and compensation systems [were] weak” (McNeill 2011).

To put it another way, in the past, Korean academia differed from Western academia in that Koreans placed more emphasis on ‘input’ than on ‘output,’ meaning that personal networks were often more important than one’s actual publication record. As a result, Korean scholars were extremely underproductive. During the 1980s, prior to academic reforms, Korea ranked only around 50th in the world in terms of science papers published (Oh 2007, 707). However, major aca-

demographic reforms were undertaken in the late 1990s. Most strikingly, the Asian financial crisis that nearly bankrupted South Korea in 1997 provided important external momentum for the reforms.

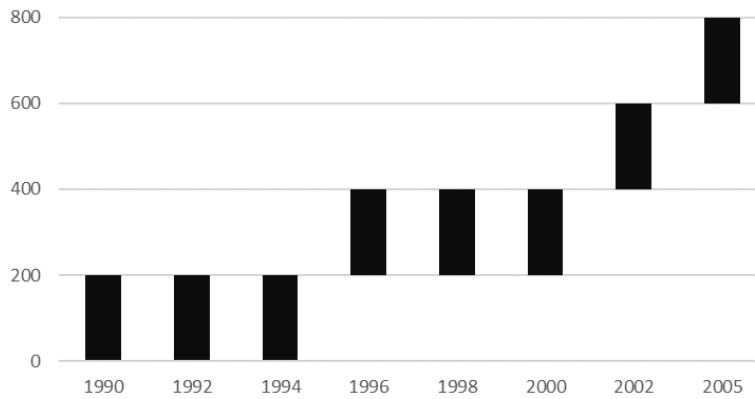
The 1997 crisis affected higher education in three ways. First, in the wake of the crisis, the International Monetary Fund demanded that Korea's Confucian tradition to guarantee jobs-for-life had to end (M. O. Kim and Jaffe 2010, 55). In lieu of an input-based recruiting and promotion system, output or performance levels of individual employees would be evaluated at both companies and large institutions including universities. Figures 1 to 3 indicate that Korean publications in WoS journals rose dramatically starting from the crisis period in the late 1990s. By 2005, the numbers of both SCI and SSCI papers from South Korea had nearly quadrupled over 1990. The rate of A&HCI articles from South Korean researchers started to improve later compared to SCI and SSCI publications, but improved nearly five-fold by 2005 compared to 1990 (Seong et al. 2008). As mentioned above, this remarkable rise under all three indexes can likely be explained by the fact that Korean scholars are much more competitive now.

**Figure 1.** SCI papers published by Korean institutes, 1990–2005



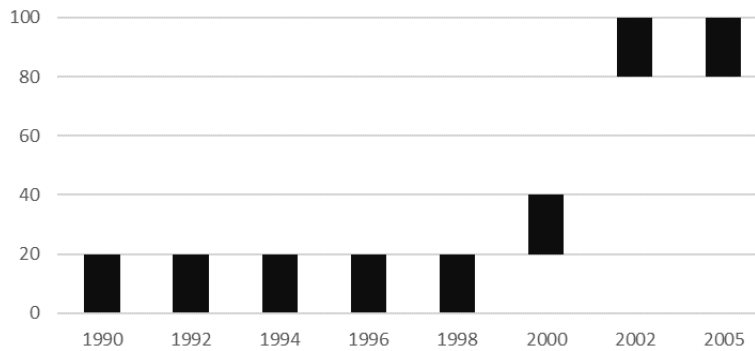
*Notes:* Minimum to maximum ranges in each year are indicated. Data for 1990 to 1994 are inferred. *Source:* Seong et al. (2008, 62).

**Figure 2.** SSCI papers published by Korean institutes, 1990–2005



*Note:* Minimum to maximum ranges in each year are indicated. *Source:* Seong et al. (2008, 100).

**Figure 3.** A&HCI papers published by Korean institutes, 1990–2005



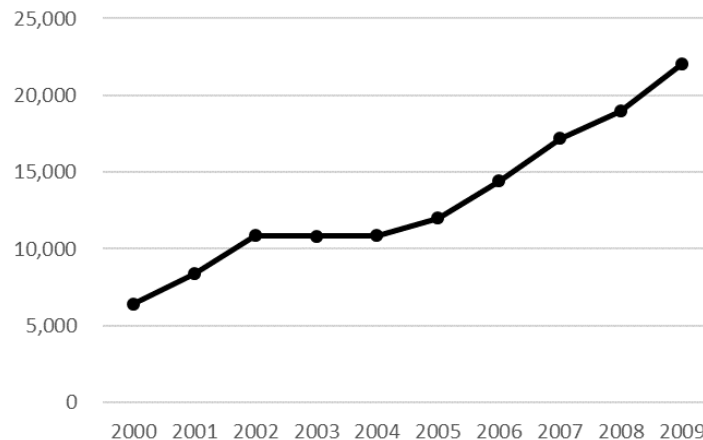
*Notes:* Minimum to maximum ranges in each year are indicated. *Source:* Seong et al. (2008, 101).

Secondly, during the Asian crisis the Korean government began to place more emphasis on the English language, the *lingua franca* of global communication. At the same time, the government de-emphasized ‘luxury’ languages such as German and French. To make young Koreans more competitive and prepare them for global challenges at research universities and exporting companies, the government made English education mandatory in all schools from the 3rd grade, instead of the 7th, as before the crisis (Yi 2002, 30). Suddenly, English teaching programs boomed on TV and radio, and thousands of native English speakers were hired in South Korea (Yi 2002). Figure 4 shows the dramatic annual inflow of foreign language instructors coming to South Korea since 2000. Most of them taught English to Korean children in private cram schools.



More importantly, the Asian crisis provided decision makers a good opportunity to implement English language reforms in academia, too. English had crowded out German as the *lingua franca* used in natural sciences journals as well as human sciences journals by World War II. In 1996, 91 percent of research in the natural sciences and 83 percent of research in the social sciences and humanities were published in the English language (Darquennes and Nelde 2006, 70). However, even Swedes, who commonly have one of the highest proficiencies of English as a foreign language, predominantly publish research in the Swedish language. “Without reformed graduate programmes [and] efforts to make people write papers in English,” writes Daniel Waldenström (2005, 67), Swedish scholars prefer to publish in their local language. In South Korea, big nationwide reforms enacted in the wake of the Asian crisis made it possible to establish English in all education settings, despite massive protest by local scholars. Most reputable Korean universities increased the share of classes conducted in English to 50 percent, and some technical colleges such as the prestigious Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology have 100 percent of classes in English (Schwekendiek 2015). Admittedly, Korean scholars could have simply hired bilingual translators to submit their works for publication in WoS journals. However, the English translation industry in South Korea has been quite underdeveloped, to the extent that even translations of international treaties have been flawed (Fouser 2011). The lack of professional bilingual translators has made it very hard for non-English-speaking Korean scholars to compete. In light of Korea’s aforementioned culture of corruption, the shift to English eliminated many rent-seekers and free-riders since they would not be able to teach or publish at an international level.

**Figure 4.** Inflow of foreign language instructors to South Korea, 2000–2009



Source: Tonggyecheong (2010, 219).

Thirdly, during the Asian crisis, South Korea underwent a paradigm shift away from a materials-oriented manufacturing economy to a knowledge-based one (Hur and Bessey 2013). Although South Korea initiated liberalization starting from the 1980s, the Asian crisis induced the government to again play an active if not proactive role by investing in key infrastructure (Eichengreen et al. 2012, 83). As in most countries, universities are at the forefront of developing human capital and venturing into knowledge-based technologies. However, in the past, even the most prestigious and leading Korean universities were more teaching-oriented than research-oriented (Oh 2007, 708), and in the wake of the crisis the Korean government earnestly began to upgrade Korean universities to international research universities. With the emergence of world university rankings in the mid-2000s, the Korean government injected about \$110 million to get 10 to 15 Korean universities into the top 200 (Weidman and Joh 2008). Numerous massive government programs in the range of billions of U.S. dollars have been initiated since the late 1990s to strengthen individual researchers and research clusters in the natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities.

Eighty-three percent of research and development funding for Korean universities comes from public sources (Seong et al. 2008, 35). Most of the public funding is allocated by government agencies such as the Korean Ministry of Education and the National Research Foundation of Korea. Major government-funded schemes were initiated by Korean presidents who regarded higher education policy as a personal mission. As a response to the Asian crisis in 1997, Korean president Kim Dae-Jung (in office from 1998 to 2003) initiated the Brain Korea 21 Century (BK21) project, which ran from 1999 to 2012. It mainly supported education and research in the basic and applied sciences but did also fund the social sciences and medical sciences. The human-rights lawyer turned president, Rho Moo-Hyun (in office from 2003 to 2008), favored the humanities and arts for personal reasons and also because South Korea ventured into cultural technologies—movies, music, online games—at that time. He initiated the Humanities Korea (HK) program, which supported humanities departments for a period of up to ten years. President Lee Myung-Bak (in office from 2008 to 2013) was challenged by the world financial crisis of 2007, and his vision was to further upgrade South Korean research universities as a way out of future recessions. He initiated the World-Class University (WCU) project (2008–2013), for the purpose of which the government targeted prolific, world-renowned foreign professors in any creative and critical field in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences to come to South Korea. As of this writing, the current president, Park Geun-Hye, in office since 2013, initiated the Brain Korea 21 Century Plus (BK21+) project, which combines the old BK21 project and the recent WCU project under one umbrella. Each of these large schemes is funded by the government in the range of a few billion dollars over the

respective periods. For instance, the BK21 project was funded with a total budget of \$3.5 billion from 1999 to 2012 (Seong et al. 2008, xv).

## Shortcomings in incentivizing exports in academic planning

While this research argues that incentivizing exports in academic planning using WoS journals has mitigated the effects of personal favoritism in South Korea and contributed to the rise of Korean universities, the chosen system of quantified export does have some drawbacks. As the saying goes, you get what you measure.

It seems that the Korean system has led to an overproduction of research papers since Korean scholars are primarily evaluated based on the number of publications in WoS journals. Indeed, since Korean scholars were so underproductive in the past, decision makers put less emphasis on the status of specific journals or the citation count of individual articles published in WoS journals, common markers of the influence of research. Since it is arguably already difficult to publish in any WoS journal, even for Western scholars, the Korean government simply used the three WoS indices per se as quality signals. For comparison, citation count is often an important factor for promotion in U.S. economics departments (Klein and Chiang 2004a). One manifestation of the apparent overproduction of WoS journal articles is that Korean scholars lagged dramatically behind in relative citation counts. For instance, with respect to SCI papers in the mid-2000s, South Korea was ranked 13th in the world in number of publications but only 28th in citations per paper. The average 5-year citation count for Korean SCI papers was only 3.22, as opposed to Swiss papers (ranked first) cited on average 7.14 times or U.S. papers (ranked third) at 6.46. One study on South Korea's prestigious Seoul National University (SNU) revealed that although the number of science publications by SNU faculty members surpassed those of their peers at Stanford University in 2002–2003, the citation count of SNU scholars was only 65 percent of that of Stanford University at that time (Oh 2007).

According to a Korean insider, the low citation counts of Korean scholars are likely due to a lack of original research: “What most, if not all, professors and researchers are doing in Korea is simply repeating what other researchers have done elsewhere in the world—what I refer to as ‘cleaning up’ or ‘janitorial’ works. They are mostly content simply accumulating knowledge ... The sad truth is that [Korea is] without any original research ... I was asked some time ago by one of the *SCIENCE* correspondents as to why Korea spent so much money on research but [lacks] a single world class research outcome” (Cho 1999). It may be that since

Korean scholars are pushed to publish as much as possible in WoS journals, they more conveniently adjust to existing research rather than venturing into completely new research projects (Frey 2003).

As a further illustration of the lack of originality in Korean research, it should be mentioned that South Korea's only Nobel Prize was the Peace Prize awarded in 2000 to then President Kim Dae-Jung for his engagement with North Korea. Japan has several Nobel Prize winners despite having essentially the same language disadvantages. During the Asian crisis, the Korean Minister of Science even had the absurd idea to establish a national institute dedicated to produce future Nobel Prize winners (Cho 1999), without considering the root problems in Korean academia. As a result of the later worldwide financial crisis, a new government-funded research institute, the Institute for Basic Science, has opened in South Korea, with the "big hope is that the country can innovate its way out of a looming economic crisis—and win a Nobel prize in the process" (Zastrow 2016).

Perhaps the main reason for the lack of world-class research from South Korea, as evidenced by its low citation counts, is the incentive system itself. In South Korea, early-career academics are more productive in terms of publications in international journals than late-career scholars (Jung 2014, 98). Since the quantity of international journal papers is more important than the quality in order to gain tenure in South Korea, most early-career scholars focus on maximizing WoS publications.

Another issue is that the WoS system tends to lock scholars into journals included there. True, Korean scholars have great leeway to publish in WoS journals outside their own field or discipline, whereas such publications might not 'count' in many Western contexts (Goldsmith et al. 2001, 218). But the emphasis on WoS journals has many drawbacks.

First, consider the German excellence initiative. It was launched to bring universities to a world-class level, but it did not make publications in indexed (international) journals compulsory. Many German scholars continue to publish books or articles in domestic journals, especially in the humanities and qualitative social sciences, but these forms of publication are 'invisible' publications because they are not evaluated at all in the world university rankings. That may not help raise their status in international rankings, but is humankind not served by scholars addressing those who speak their own language? One legitimate shortcoming of a globally oriented WoS system is that it shunts scholars away from local issues in local languages where they have more local knowledge. That problem looms especially large for the humanities and social sciences, where—let's face it—the vast majority of scholars do not really have much to say to the world at large, but might have something to say to people closer to home.

Second, the focus on the WoS also means that other valid forms of publication such as monographs are undervalued. Particularly, humanists or discursive social scientists may lose from this system, as expressed by a scholar at Yonsei University in South Korea: “In the humanities, it’s very important to publish books rather than journal articles. I mean, journal articles are okay, but they don’t really generate much reputation for the author. But the Yonsei system places very little emphasis on books” (S. K. Kim 2016, 85).

Third, the WoS is a reflection of establishment academia, which some feel has its own biases. Daniel Klein and Eric Chiang (2004b) look specifically at SSCI and complain of slant to the political left, and academia in general is known to lean to the left. Some will argue that, just as Western academia in the twentieth century led many underdeveloped countries in a statist direction, with development planning, import substitution, and socialist ideas and ideals generally, Western academia today could possibly mislead thought, culture, and policy.

Fourth, South Korea’s system gives great advantage to WoS, forgetting that other reputable journal indices exist. For instance, Scopus has replaced the WoS in the QS World University Rankings (2010 to present) after QS and THE split in 2009. While the WoS was taken by the government as a standard in research in the late 1990s, bureaucrats fail to realize that in the meantime Scopus has emerged as a second global standard. The focus on the WoS is making local universities less competitive in areas where other journal indices are strong and perhaps more appropriate.

Fifth, it is doubtful that scholarship should be treated as an economic commodity (Nelson 1959). Since the generation of scientific knowledge is not a market and generates no prices because such knowledge is generally non-proprietary, using a market analogy (i.e., publications in international journals equaling commodities exported) for academic research is perhaps inappropriate.

Sixth, and as a more generalizable criticism, South Korea’s aggressive academic policy might be considered by some scholars as a violation of academic ethics, where researchers are ideally on the “search for truth” in order to “enlighten society” (Polanyi 1945, 1962) rather than being publication machines. The premises for this to happen are a balanced development across scientific disciplines, including even neglected fields, along with decentralized, independent funding (Polanyi 1945; 1962), all of which conditions are perhaps more difficult to meet under the present publish-or-perish system in South Korean academia. In a similar vein, William Butos and Thomas McQuade (2012) argue that destabilizing and distorting effects are less likely to occur under a system of decentralized, competitive funding sources—which is not the case with respect to research in Korean academia which is primarily funded by the government.

## Concluding remarks

One lesson that undeveloped countries can learn from South Korea's university reforms is to utilize a quantitative system in the short term. In particular, undeveloped nations that suffer from 'brain drain' and therefore lack experts to assess the quality of projects might benefit from the Korean model. The system requires no English proficiency on the part of bureaucrats, who primarily cross-check the name of a specified journal in a recent WoS list. Since many of today's underdeveloped nations use French, Spanish, or other languages, a WoS-based evaluation system literally overcomes certain language barriers in higher education administration. The Korean system also mitigates mediocrity in hiring and firing, where stellar performers are generally at a disadvantage since incumbent faculty members do not want to be outperformed (Goldsmith et al. 2001, 87). For instance, about 25 percent of Chinese students who study abroad, many of whom are extremely talented, choose to stay in their host nations. These students do not want to return home in part due to widespread corruption and bias in academia, where mediocrity is rewarded and outstanding performance is punished (Cao 2008). As referees and editors of WoS journals reviewing submitted articles are not likely to be susceptible to bribery, the system also minimizes corruption, which is another common issue in today's underdeveloped nations. The combination of quantitative goal posts and critical foreign consumers keeps rent-seeking at bay and ensures that minimum quality standards are met. Thus, the Korean system can break the vicious circle of inefficient recruitment and promotion at universities in underdeveloped countries.

While using the WoS to incentivize scholars in underdeveloped countries might make sense, the example of South Korea also suggests that it comes with disadvantages, as discussed in the previous section.

The alternatives that are actually practical in a given time and place are always just a few, and each alternative involves big drawbacks and apparent injustices. One thing is certain: In academia, like everywhere else, incentives matter.

Most of the statistical data discussed herein, such as the university rankings<sup>6</sup> or the number of papers published in the SSCI, SCI, and A&HCI, unfortunately

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6. Data of the THE-QS World University Rankings (published from 2004 to 2009) cannot readily be compared to the recent THE World University Rankings or QS World University Rankings because the ranking methodology changed (including for instance new criteria such as "industry income"), ranking weights were altered, or because the journal database changed from WoS to Scopus.

exclude the 2010s. Future research will have to extend the analysis of Korean schools and scholars into the current decade.

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# Faculty Voter Registration in Economics, History, Journalism, Law, and Psychology

Mitchell Langbert<sup>1</sup>, Anthony J. Quain, and Daniel B. Klein<sup>2</sup>

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

Voter-registration information has always been public, but it wasn't until some years after the 2006 implementation requirements of the 2002 Help America Vote Act, and then state-level policy decisions about resultant statewide computerized information, that researchers could access such information via subscription-only online databases, assembled by private-sector vendors, while at home in their pajamas. Prior to such developments, researchers (e.g., Cardiff and Klein 2005) had to make themselves presentable, climb into their cars, and travel from county seat to county seat to look up the information at county offices. The commercial database used by this study is Voter Lists Online's "Aristotle" ([link](#)).<sup>3</sup> These new commercial databases provide political information beyond voter registration, and some databases will, for voters not registered with a particular political party, provide a predicted or 'inferred' party registration. The present study, however, only uses Aristotle's hard information on actual voter and party registration, i.e., we do not use the 'inferred' party registration or any other political information from Aristotle.

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3. One can learn more about such services by reading the Wikipedia entry for "voter database" ([link](#)). Voter-registration databases should not be confused with campaign-contribution databases, such as those maintained by the Federal Election Commission.

Our investigation focuses on the Democratic-to-Republican voter registration ratios among faculty in five fields (Economics, History, Journalism/Communications, Law, and Psychology) at 40 leading universities. It is something of a byproduct. The first author here, Mitchell Langbert, is an academic who does research in the academic field known as industrial relations. He was moved to report on the field, and, to do so, a one-year subscription to Aristotle was purchased, with which he wrote his paper on industrial relations (Langbert 2016). The subscription allowed unlimited use during the 12-month period. Facing a zero marginal rate and a closing window, we figured we'd use the paid-for access, and the present paper is the result. This paper, then, was not motivated by a desire to investigate a particular hypothesis, and its findings, as it turns out, only augment and reinforce well-established findings. Other than indicating that Democratic-to-Republican ratios are even higher than we had thought (particularly in Economics and in History), and that an awful lot of departments have zero Republicans, and that, yes, the ratios are higher at more prestigious universities and lower among older professors and among professors with higher-ranking titles, and that there are some regional effects, the paper does not offer new results of any great consequence.

Whether a state's voter registration information flows into databases like Aristotle is a function of that state's policy regarding the matter, and, in fact, only 30 states allow it. Thus the hard voter registration information, and the present investigation, is limited to those states.<sup>4</sup> The 40 universities we investigated were determined, in early 2016, by starting at the top of the *U.S. News and World Report* list "National Universities Rankings" ([link](#)). The ranking criterion involves a potpourri of variables, including academic peer review, undergraduate academic reputation, retention, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, graduation rate, and the alumni giving rates. It needs to be borne in mind that the *U.S. News* ranking used here is not by any means entirely in sync with established rankings of Economics, of History, etc., in terms of prestige within the field. It should be particularly noted that the two universities found here to have the lowest D:R ratios, Pepperdine and Case Western, do not have Ph.D. programs in Economics and are not among the 76 Economics graduate programs that *U.S. News* ranks. We believe that a ranking based more narrowly on within-discipline prestige would have produced D:R ratios considerably higher than the D:R ratios found here.

In making our set of 40, we got down to the list's 60th university, because 20 preceding universities are situated in, or too close to, states that Aristotle doesn't

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4. The 20 states that do not disclose registration data are Alabama, Arizona, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Washington, Wisconsin, and Virginia.

have data for.<sup>5</sup> Figure 1 lists the 40 universities, listed in order of the D:R ratio for the faculty in the five fields investigated (Economics, History, Law, Journalism/Communications, and Psychology). For example, in ninth place is Columbia University, for which we identified a total of 179 registered Democrats and a total of 6 registered Republicans in the departments investigated, yielding a D:R ratio of 29.8 to 1, which in the figure is rounded to 30:1. (The universities in first and second place had zero registered Republicans; they are specialized technical universities where numbers are small.)

**Figure 1.** The 40 universities by D:R ratio (Economics, History, Journalism/Communications, Law, and Psychology)

Caltech 13:0	Columbia 30:1	MIT 19:1	Lehigh 12:1	Yeshiva 8.6:1
Worc. Poly. 9:0	Princeton 30:1	Yale 16:1	Dartmouth 12:1	Wake Forest 7.6:1
Brown 60:1	Brandeis 28:1	NYU 16:1	Duke 11:1	Penn 6.4:1
Boston U. 40:1	Maryland 26:1	Carnegie Mellon 16:1	Stanford 11:1	Rensselaer 6.0:1
Johns Hopkins 35:1	UC-Davis 26:1	UC-Irvine 15:1	UCSD 10:1	Penn State 6.0:1
Rochester 35:1	USC 26:1	UC-Berkeley 14:1	Harvard 10:1	Ohio State 3.2:1
Northeastern 33:1	UNC 23:1	Cornell 13:1	UCSB 8.9:1	Case Western 3.1:1
Tufts 32:1	Boston C. 22:1	UConn 13:1	UCLA 8.8:1	Pepperdine 1.2:1

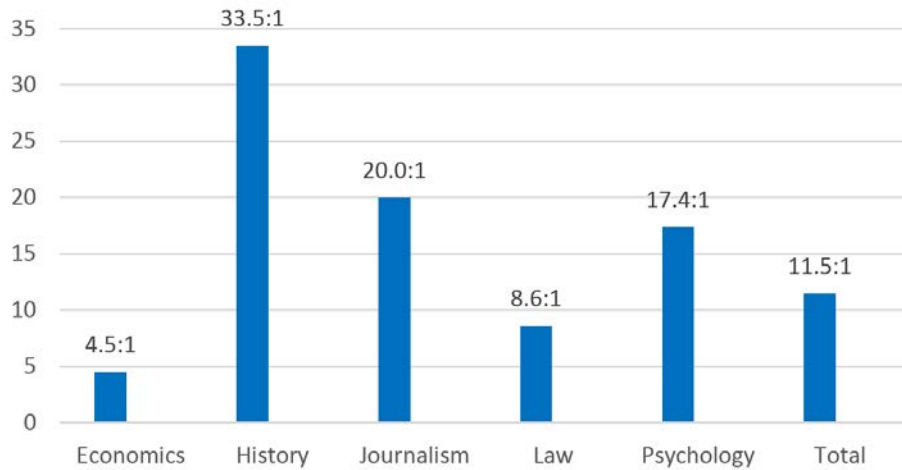
The D:R ratios in Figure 1 are not perfectly comparable baskets. Yale, for example, has neither a Journalism school nor a Communications department,<sup>6</sup> and (as Figure 2 shows), Journalism/Communications is the field with the second-

5. The 20 institutions that were excluded are (1) Northwestern, (2) Chicago, (3) Vanderbilt, (4) Washington University in St. Louis, (5) Rice University, (6) University of Notre Dame, (7) Emory University, (8) University of Virginia, (9) University of Michigan, (10) College of William and Mary, (11) Georgia Institute of Technology, (12) Tulane University, (13) University of Illinois–Urbana-Champaign, (14) University of Wisconsin–Madison, (15) University of Florida, (16) University of Miami, (17) University of Texas–Austin, and the (18) University of Washington—all because their state does not allow the information to go out in such fashion—and (19) Georgetown and (20) George Washington, because they are within 15 miles of Virginia, which doesn't.

6. When a university had both a Journalism school/department *and* a Communications department, we used only the Journalism school/department.

highest D:R ratio. All universities have Economics, History, and Psychology, but only 25 (of the 40) have Journalism/Communications, and only 25 have Law.

**Figure 2.** D:R ratios in the five fields



In all, we looked up 7,243 professors and found 3,623 to be registered Democratic and 314 Republican.<sup>7</sup> The overall D:R ratio is 11.5 to 1. Whether we should think that that figure would roughly line up with the ratio of those *voting Democratic* to *voting Republican*—which is not the same thing as voter registration—for *all* humanities and social science active tenure-track faculty at *all four-year* universities in *all* 50 states depends on a number of factors, including trends in voter registration and affiliation (such as a possible Donald Trump effect), whether the 30 states included here differ from the 20 states *not* included here, and whether the set of fields included here differ from the set of humanities/social-science fields *not* included here. Such factors are to some extent investigated and discussed below. Our sense of it: Because our set includes Economics, because it includes emeritus faculty, and because it includes a few relatively Republican universities, our findings surely indicate that the ratio of voting-D to voting-R for active humanities/social-science faculty at all U.S. four-year universities has gone up markedly over the past ten years—a conclusion consistent with other recent research (see Abrams 2016a). For 2004 such a ratio was estimated at 8 to 1 (Klein and Stern 2005, 264), but now we are comfortable with moving the estimate up to 10 to 1. The reality is that in most humanities/social-science fields a Republican is a rare bird. In fact, registrants either to the Green Party or Working Families Party equaled or exceeded Republi-

7. Only 41 professors were registered to minor parties, including 15 registered Green and 11 registered Libertarian.

can registrants in 72 of the 170 departments (that includes Economics).<sup>8</sup> That is, in 42 percent of the departments, Republican registrants were as scarce as or scarcer than left *minor-party* registrants.

## Our perspective

Americans have an election system in which third parties are damaging to their own cause—that is, a two-party system. We regard both parties as, by and large, horrible. We are classical liberals, which is to say that on most things we lean against the governmentalization of social affairs. Data suggest that humanities/social-science professors who vote Democratic are, on the whole, more inclined towards governmentalization than are those who vote Republican.<sup>9</sup> The data also show that Democratic professors have significantly greater uniformity in their policy views, more of a ‘party line,’ than do Republican professors,<sup>10</sup> and that Republican members of scholarly associations more frequently wind up in careers outside of academia.<sup>11</sup> The data show that there are virtually no classical liberals among Democratic professors, whereas there are some among Republican professors.<sup>12</sup>

As for Democrats and Republicans at large, or beyond academia, either among the general public or among politicians and policymakers, it is our impression that Democrats incline, *more* consistently than do Republicans, toward the governmentalization of social affairs, at all levels of government, in the myriad issues of economic regulation, the size and scope of the welfare state, firearms, school choice, and most nanny-state personal choice issues apart from those that involve sex or drugs. On the other hand, it seems that Republicans incline toward

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8. About these 72 cases: 66 are cases of zero Republican registrants (and usually zero Green or Working Families registrants), and in six cases there is at least one Republican registrant but the number of Republican registrants is equaled or exceeded by the number of Green or Working Families registrants. In only 10 of the 72 cases were there 10 or fewer professors to look up.

9. Positing 18 government interventions, with support/oppose along a 1-to-5 scale, Klein and Stern (2005, 271) find that average score of the 962 D-voting professors in six fields was 2.12 while that of the 112 R-voting professors was 2.69. See also Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, and Woessner (2011, 68–69), showing a huge difference on “The less government regulation of business the better.”

10. See Klein and Stern (2005, 271–274, Figures 5 and 6), which provides visual comparison of the Republican spread and Democratic spread; also, over the 18 policy questions, the sum of the Democrats’ response standard deviations was 17.1, while Republicans’ was 23.1.

11. For example, among surveyed members of American Sociological Association, it is found that 77.8 percent of the D-voting members are employed in academia, as compared to 44.4 percent of the R-voting members (Klein and Stern 2006, 44; see Klein and Stern 2005, 275 for all six disciplines surveyed; the results for History are report below in the present paper).

12. See Klein and Stern (2005, 274, fig. 6); for Economics in particular, see Klein and Stern (2007, 322, fig. 1) and Klein, Davis, and Hedengren (2013, 122, fig. 2).

government restrictions or activism more than do the Democrats on immigration, abortion,<sup>13</sup> same-sex marriage, sex issues, drug prohibition, the size and scope of the military, foreign policy, and privacy issues. To speak candidly, we think that, on the whole, Democrats are, often without being very self-aware about it, *more* deeply enmeshed in bents and mentalities that spell statism than are Republicans, who show more diversity—think of all the species tagged “right”—and allow greater place for the classical liberal tendency. Between the two horrible parties, when push comes to shove, we will usually favor the Republican over the Democrat. Langbert is a registered Republican, and he usually votes either Republican or Libertarian. Quain is a registered Republican, and he usually votes Republican. Klein has not been registered to vote for more than a decade and has never voted Republican.

We think, too, it is unfortunate that academia is so dominated by Democrats and other left-leaners. Even if we regarded the two parties as equally bad, we would see great value in more balance between them, for reasons persuasively elaborated by José Duarte, Jarret Crawford, Charlotta Stern, Jonathan Haidt, Lee Jussim, and Philip Tetlock (2015).

The question of why academia is so dominated by left-leaners is, to our mind, tertiary to the puzzle of why human civilization isn’t more classical liberal. But we confine our remarks to certain mechanisms in academia:

1. Academia is an array of disciplinary pyramids, settlements of which are financed and sustained as departments at a university. In History, for example, the pyramid’s apex consists of the top History departments, which produce most of the Ph.D.s and place them best, producing what Val Burris (2004) called in Sociology the “academic caste system,” but it is the same everywhere.<sup>14</sup>
2. The professor’s political outlook is a matter of sacred values. It is something that usually cannot be separated from the love that permeates a scholarly enterprise. It inheres deeply, enduringly, and inseparably in his moral outlook, personal meaning, selfhood, and spiritual life, and it plays a big role in his thinking concerning good interpretations, good standards, and good judgment in scholarship. Sacredness makes groupthink theory (Janis 1982; ‘t Hart 1994) adaptable to the professoriate (see Klein and Stern 2009b, 81–82).

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13. Of course if aborting an embryo or fetus is the initiation of coercion against an equal human being then the ‘pro-life’ position is the pro-liberty position—a view that one of the present authors in fact holds.

14. For ‘caste system’ findings: in Law see Katz et al. (2011), in Political Science see Oprisko (2012), and in Economics see Klein (2005) and Chen (2014). See also Terviö (2011, 1061), who writes: “Of all the faculty at the top 10 economics departments, 79.6% received their Ph.D. inside the top 10. For mathematics this figure is 58.3% and for comparative literature 63.2%.”



3. Individual careers are most decisively made or unmade (or discouraged from ever being embarked upon) at the departmental level, where decisionmaking is majoritarian and consensus-oriented. Also, when the members of a department vote to give a candidate a job and a salary, that does not necessarily mean that they will also give much love, and a candidate who expects to feel unloved will not find the offer attractive.

Once the apex of the disciplinary pyramid becomes predominately left-leaning, it will sweep left-leaners into positions throughout the pyramid (or, at least, it will exclude vibrant dissenters). At the micro level of a particular university department—no matter where in the pyramid—once it has a majority of left-leaners, it will, in serving, enjoying, protecting, advancing, and purifying sacred values, tend to hire more left leaners (or at least not vibrant dissenters).<sup>15</sup> Prior to Jackie Robinson black ballplayers generally did not turn out for major league tryouts,<sup>16</sup> and today soldiers select themselves out of enemy machine-gun fire; those are harsher and much starker examples of a basic dynamic of self-selection under adverse conditions: Non-leftists naturally tend to select themselves out of academia.<sup>17</sup> All such mechanisms—the disciplinary pyramid, sacred beliefs, majoritarianism at the departmental level, and the consequent selection dynamic—are the central mechanisms that have worked toward uniformity.

If we regard left-oriented belief systems as systematically defective, we might use Irving Janis's pejorative term *groupthink* to describe the mechanisms in question (Janis 1982, 9). In the humanities and social sciences (four-year institutions, nationwide, excluding emeritus), the D:R ratio circa 1970 was say 3.5:1, circa 2004 say 8:1,

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15. Research finding evidence that suggests disfavor (or would imply it given a preponderance of left-leaning judges) toward non-left research, graduate students, academic job candidates, or faculty includes Abramowitz, Gomes, and Abramowitz (1975); Klein and Stern (2005, 273–275); Smith, Meyer, and Fritschler (2008, 87); Munro, Lasane, and Leary (2010); Yancey (2011, 49–83); Inbar and Lammers (2012); Iyengar and Westwood (2015); Gift and Gift (2015). Research that provides evidence that there is little or no such disfavor includes Smith, Meyer, and Fritschler (2008, 87); Rothman et al. (2011, 100–102); Fosse, Gross, and Ma (2014). See also Woessner and Kelly-Woessner (2009, 39–45).

16. On the struggle to integrate baseball, including details on some efforts to secure tryouts for black players, see Wiggins (1983).

17. It is natural to ask how self-selection into academic pursuits would work under fair or neutral conditions. But fair or neutral conditions are very hard to define; we contend that in scholarship and science they will be fundamentally contested and will prove to be inseparable from ideology—most obviously in the humanities and social sciences, but all human intellectual enterprises will reflect moral, social, and political purposes and outlooks, particularly those of the constituents who fund the enterprises (e.g., governments). Moreover, 'fair and neutral conditions' would, presumably, need to extend not only to admission to the 'team' but to all attributes of job and career.

and in 2016 say 10:1.<sup>18</sup> In our view, today the groupthink mechanisms continue to heighten the one-party nature of academia.

The ideological character of academia matters beyond academia. For example: Of the chairs of the President’s Council of Economic Advisors since 1970, four have been from industry or government and 16 have been from the economics departments of nine elite research universities; none has been from a lower-tier institution.<sup>19</sup> Of the six chairs of the Federal Reserve Bank since 1970, three have been from industry or government and three have been from the economics departments of three elite research institutions: Columbia, Princeton, and Berkeley.

## Data and methods

Investigating 40 leading research universities, we chose the following fields:

- **Economics** (present in all 40 universities): We treated only the main, mere “Economics” department (not, for example, Finance departments).
- **History** (all 40 universities)
- **Journalism**: Many journalism programs are embedded in **Communications** departments, and we found that the faculty associated with the journalism program is not readily separated from other Communications faculty. Our Journalism/Communications category (25 of the 40 universities) uses the university’s Communications department (assuming it is present) if *and only if* the university did not have a Journalism school/department.
- **Law** (25 of the 40 universities)
- **Psychology** (all 40 universities)

We included tenure-track professors, that is, those with title Assistant, Associate, Full, or Emeritus. We excluded lecturers, adjuncts, and visiting faculty. We included clinical faculty in Law and Psychology, and named chairs were recorded as

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18. On the two earlier figures, see Klein and Stern (2005, 264; 2009a).

19. The chairmen of the President’s Council of Economic Advisors since 1970 ([link](#)) have been Alan B. Krueger (Princeton), Austan D. Goolsbee (Chicago), Christina D. Romer (Berkeley), Edward P. Lazear (Stanford), Ben S. Bernanke (Princeton), Harry S. Rosen (Princeton), N. Gregory Mankiw (Harvard), R. Glenn Hubbard (Columbia), Martin N. Baily (industry), Janet L. Yellen (Berkeley), Joseph E. Stiglitz (Stanford), Laura D’Andrea Tyson (Berkeley), Michael J. Boskin (Stanford), Beryl W. Sprinkel (industry), Martin Feldstein (Harvard), Murray L. Weidenbaum (Washington University in St. Louis), Charles L. Schultze (government), Alan Greenspan (industry), Herbert Stein (University of Virginia), and Paul W. McCracken (Michigan).

Full professors. There were rare cases of a professor who was joint faculty such that she was integrated in the faculty list at both departments (for example, both Law and Economics) and in that case she was included in both, but we did not include the professor as a member of a second department when the affiliation appeared only on a separate list of the second department's courtesy appointments.

We reviewed each professor's profile on their university's website, noted middle initials, and estimated birth year.<sup>20</sup> The voter registration records, as accessed by us from Aristotle,<sup>21</sup> indicate home address; when it appeared that the professor lived more than 50 miles from campus we sought additional verifying information, such as published information or résumé information that suggests the professor's residence.

For each professor that we identified in Aristotle, we extracted name, birth year, voter registration record, and party of registration. Then, we condensed that data into SAS-compatible Excel input files, which we transferred into a single self-contained SAS file. (For information about the release of our data, see Appendix 2 at the end of this article.)

We are confident that our data is accurate and unbiased. We can never be 100 percent sure that our professor Randall Richardson is the Randall Richardson found in Aristotle, for it is possible that two Randall Richardsons live within a manageable drive from campus, and that there is no information alerting us to a mismatch and that the professor is not registered while the other Mr. Richardson is. Even with middle initials there may be multiple individuals with common names within a reasonable distance from campus.

In Table 1 there is a column labeled "Not Registered." In total, we put 2,120 professors into Not Registered (making 29.3 percent of the grand look-up list of 7,243). That category would include any professor whom we could not identify as registered but who was nonetheless registered.<sup>22</sup> The "Not Registered" category also includes professors whose name generated a multiplicity of matches so as

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20. Birth-year estimation was an important tool we used for identifying and confirming identity. Estimation was usually based on year of graduation as indicated on a CV or in other public information such as college and local newspapers, press releases, websites, and Wikipedia. We subtracted 22 from the year of college graduation to estimate the year of birth. At times, we also used year of graduation from the professor's Ph.D. program to create an age range. We also checked whether information about non-U.S. birth was available, although we did not tabulate this information. Of the 7,243 professors in our sample we were able to ascertain or estimate birth years for 4,684 individuals, or 65 percent. Meanwhile, among the 5,123 professors whom we identified in Aristotle, Aristotle gives birth-year information on 97 percent.

21. One of the 30 states covered in this study, Pennsylvania, does not allow the vendor to upload the data for direct access by subscribers, but rather the information is available by vendor access to the names sought, and then it is provided to the subscriber in tabulated form.

22. This could have happened, for example, if a professor lived either far off elsewhere within the state or in a different state. But certainly in any instances where, say, a Yale professor lived in Manhattan and we could confidently identify his New York voter registration, we would record that.

to make identification indeterminate; we estimate that 15.7 percent of the “Not Registered” category, or 4.6 percent of the grand look-up list, were such cases of indeterminate identification arising from multiple individuals with the name.<sup>23</sup> All told, surely more than 80 percent of the “Not Registered” really are just not registered voters anywhere in the United States. Such individuals include non-citizens who cannot register and citizens who refrain from registering to vote.<sup>24</sup>

One way in which we think our data, if not used carefully, could be a bit misleading is that major research universities tend to reside in ‘blue’ states (that is, Democratic-leaning states); also, we notice an apparent tendency for ‘blue’ states to be more likely than ‘red’ states to have voter-information rules such that their data would be in Aristotle. Except for Vermont, all of the New England states, as well as New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and California—although not Illinois—have laws that enable the voter registration data to flow into databases like Aristotle. The 40 institutions in our sample are from just 11 states, and those are disproportionately blue states. (Further below we report the professors’ D:R ratios by five groups of states.)

In Table 1 the column labeled “Not Affiliated” counts those whom we identified as registered voters but who opted either to join none of the parties or to not disclose his or her affiliation.<sup>25</sup> We found that Not Affiliated constitutes 22.4 percent of the registered voters and 15.8 percent of our grand look-up list.

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23. This estimate is based on 15 universities for which we initially kept a list of indeterminate-identification cases separate from other “Not Registered” cases. For those universities, there were 98 individuals where multiplicity made identification indeterminate, and there were 528 individuals who *for some other reason* could not be coded as registered. Thus we estimate that indeterminate identification constitutes 15.7 percent of “Not Registered” (that is, 98 divided by 626) and 4.6 percent of the grand look-up list (that is, 15.7 percent of 29.3 percent).

24. Incidentally, focused as we are on D:R ratios, we have given thought as to whether identification problems arising from two people with the same name could possibly bias our results—that is, we wondered whether the problem might be more (or less) common for certain ethnic groups, which vary in partisan affiliation. As we pondered this we saw how factors could work in either direction. As for how it might inflate the number of Republicans in our data, suppose we have a professor Randall Richardson, and we find a (single) Randall Richardson, not our professor, whom we mistake for the professor; since it is more likely that that Randall Richardson is a Republican than professor Randall Richardson, that kind of error would tend to inflate Republicans (decreasing our D:R ratios). At any rate, we think that, by virtue of the information available, all such problems were small enough that we suppose that any such bias (in whichever direction it might be) would be small.

25. The exact options that voters have for being affiliated or unaffiliated, disclosing or not disclosing their affiliation, etc., vary across states.

FACULTY VOTER REGISTRATION

TABLE 1. Number of faculty and voter registration by institution

U.S. News rank	Institution	Sample size	Not Reg. <sup>a</sup>	Not Affil. <sup>b</sup>	Dem.	Rep.	D:R ratio	Minor-party
1	Princeton	181	64	25	89	3	29.7:1	0
2	Harvard	243	59	51	121	12	10.1:1	0
3	Yale	290	78	38	164	10	16.4:1	0
4	Stanford	289	75	42	155	14	11.1:1	3
4	Columbia	346	134	24	179	6	29.8:1	3
7	MIT	115	49	26	38	2	19.0:1	0
8	Duke	346	75	71	182	16	11.4:1	2
9	Penn	205	75	18	96	15	6.4:1	1
10	Johns Hopkins	71	28	6	35	1	35.0:1	1
10	Caltech	34	14	7	13	0	13.0:0	0
12	Dartmouth	98	30	30	35	3	11.7:1	0
14	Brown	134	51	22	60	1	60.0:1	0
15	Cornell	227	68	25	121	9	13.4:1	4
20	Berkeley	268	88	26	143	10	14.3:1	1
23	USC	238	79	23	128	5	25.6:1	3
23	UCLA	391	117	55	194	22	8.8:1	3
23	Carnegie Mellon	82	26	6	47	3	15.7:1	0
27	Wake Forest	123	23	31	61	8	7.6:1	0
27	Tufts	75	27	15	32	1	32.0:1	0
30	UNC	317	59	64	186	8	23.3:1	0
30	Boston College	180	60	28	87	4	21.8:1	1
32	NYU	343	130	21	177	11	16.1:1	4
33	Rochester	62	17	8	35	1	35.0:1	1
34	Brandeis	67	19	19	28	1	28.0:1	0
37	UCSB	160	45	24	80	9	8.9:1	2
37	Case Western	107	12	17	59	19	3.1:1	0
38	UCSD	175	63	22	81	8	10.1:1	1
39	UC Irvine	159	43	21	87	6	14.5:1	2
41	UC Davis	205	70	27	103	4	25.8:1	1
41	Rensselaer	43	11	11	18	3	6.0:1	0
41	Boston U.	244	63	59	119	3	39.7:1	0
47	Penn State	246	66	29	125	21	6.0:1	5
47	Northeastern	116	26	23	65	2	32.5:1	0
47	Lehigh	64	17	8	36	3	12.0:1	0
52	Yeshiva	82	25	9	43	5	8.6:1	0
52	Pepperdine	85	22	15	26	21	1.2:1	1
52	Ohio State	367	109	137	92	29	3.2:1	0
57	Worcester Poly.	21	8	4	9	0	9.0:0	0
57	U. of Maryland	244	55	25	157	6	26.2:1	1
57	U. of Connecticut	200	40	33	117	9	13.0:1	1
	Total	7243	2120	1145	3623	314	3,623:314	41
	Percentage/Ratio	100%	29.3%	15.8%	50.0%	4.3%	11.5:1	0.6%
Notes: (a) Not Registered includes noncitizens, individuals who cannot be reasonably identified because of similarities of names and other identifying information, individuals who have moved, and individuals who are not registered. (b) Not Affiliated includes individuals who are registered but not officially associated with a party.								

## Not Registered and Not Affiliated by discipline

In this paper we focus on D:R ratios, but of the 7,243 persons on the grand look-up list, only 54.3 percent were registered either Democratic or Republican. That is, 45.7 percent were neither registered Democratic nor registered Republican. (Again, we reckon that of those 45.7 percentage points, about 4.6 points flow from the indeterminate-identification problem.)

**TABLE 2. Not Registered and Not Affiliated rates by discipline**

	N on look-up list	Democratic	Republican	D:R ratio	Minor-party	Not Affiliated	Not Registered
Economics	1494	449 (30.1%)	99 (6.6%)	4.5:1	7 (0.5%)	288 (19.3%)	651 (43.6%)
History	1841	1,037 (56.3%)	31 (1.7%)	33.5:1	11 (0.6%)	245 (13.3%)	517 (28.1%)
Journalism/ Communications	484	220 (45.5%)	11 (2.3%)	20.0:1	5 (1.0%)	91 (18.8%)	157 (32.4%)
Law	1809	1,064 (58.8%)	124 (6.9%)	8.6:1	6 (0.3%)	248 (13.7%)	367 (20.3%)
Psychology	1615	853 (52.8%)	49 (3.0%)	17.4:1	12 (0.7%)	273 (16.9%)	428 (26.5%)
Total	7243	3,623 (50.0%)	314 (4.3%)	11.5:1	41 (0.6%)	1,145 (15.8%)	2,120 (29.3%)

Table 2 reports Not Registered and Not Affiliated by discipline. The “Not” rates are highest in Economics, with a whopping 43.6 percent Not Registered and 19.3 percent registered but Not Affiliated. One reason that the Not Registered rate is much higher in Economics is that Economics hires more non-U.S. citizens, reflecting, no doubt, that it is generally much more mathematical than the other four disciplines studied here. Another reason, no doubt, is that economists, on the whole, are somewhat less attracted to either of the two parties and are somewhat less inclined toward moral outlooks that make voting a significant matter of personal meaning and selfhood.

Law is the discipline with lowest “Not” rates. Here we offer a number of speculations, which we have discussed with some of our Law colleagues. First, one reason that the Not Registered rate is relatively low is that we were more reliably able to determine identity because of better information on Law professors, both from the faculty websites and from such sources as the *Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory*. However, that would not explain why Law professors have a relatively low

Not Affiliated rate. One possible factor (for both of the low “Not” rates) is that many Law professors have an interest in prospective employment or counsel in government, in the court system (notably as judges) or in administrative agencies, and to play in those games it is usually helpful to declare a team. Another possibility is that one of Law’s chief missions is to train students for the practice of law in the United States, and so it probably hires relatively few non-U.S. citizens because such candidates generally have less background knowledge in American law and institutions. One of our Law colleagues suggested that lawyers are accustomed to viewing reasoning and argumentation as service to an openly declared cause and hence are less squeamish about declaring the causes they support. Another suggested the following: “Anyone who cares enough about law to study it as a vocation self-selects to take more seriously than the ordinary person the institutional responsibilities associated with citizenship.”

Meanwhile, the “Not” rates are fairly high in Journalism. Surely, journalists’ professional interest is often such that it is best not to declare a team, so as to assume a posture of neutrality and impartiality as reporters. And certainly very many journalists will be aware that voter-registration information can be publicly accessed.

The high “Not” rates do not, in our view, leave in doubt our general reading that the ideological profile of the professoriate is very heavily left-leaning. That reading is based on other experience and evidence, notably survey data. Voter registration data is merely one supplementary variable, useful for making comparisons across fields and for tracking trends over time.

## **But what about voting Democratic versus voting Republican?**

It is intuitive to suppose that registered Democrats, when they vote, generally vote Democratic, and likewise for Republicans. But what about the Not Affiliated registered voters? In our data, Not Affiliated is 22.4 percent of the registered voters (and 15.8 percent of the grand look-up list). It is at least possible that they vote Republican at rates much higher than is reflected in the rate of Republican registration.

Considerable survey evidence, however, indicates that any such difference between voter-registration ratios and voting ratios is small. The 2003 survey used in the Klein-Stern papers was sent to six scholarly associations and asked the question: “To which political party have the candidates you’ve voted for in the past ten years mostly belonged?” ([link](#)). The resultant D:R ratios for the question about

voting are generally in line with evidence on voter registration from the same time period. The latter evidence is patchy, and maybe the voter-registration D:R ratios tend to be a bit higher, but there is no pattern of mismatch (see Klein and Stern 2009a). Other surveys also support the general conclusion of no great difference in the two ratios. Neil Gross and Solon Simmons surveyed professors on their preference in the 2004 Presidential election, and they find: “Averaging the figures for social sciences and humanities generates a ratio of Democratic to Republican voters of 8.1 to 1” (2007, 37). Gary Tobin and Aryeh Weinberg (2006, 27) found that, of professors who identified themselves as politically “moderate,” 68 percent voted for John Kerry in the 2004 election and 27 percent for George W. Bush. They also found that only one percent of professors who self-identified as Democratic voted for Bush, while 13 percent of the self-identified Republicans voted for Kerry. Also, a 2010 survey of economics professors, using the same question on voting used by Klein and Stern, found that the D:R ratio was 2.7:1 (Klein et al. 2013, 117), a ratio pretty well aligned with the voter-registration numbers (Klein and Stern 2009a, 16). We are not aware of significant evidence indicating that non-affiliated professors vote Republican at rates higher than the professoriate generally. There might be discrepancy such that the voter-registration ratio is a bit higher than the actual-voting ratio, but if so, we think it is minor.

One could ask the further question: What about the ideological profile of the professors who are not registered at all (or who are with a minor party)? In our study, 29.3 percent of the grand look-up list were Not Registered (and just 0.6 percent were registered to minor parties). It is possible that this group differs ideologically from the professoriate generally, but, again, we do not know of significant evidence to that effect. Surveys using a set of policy questions indicate that classical liberals and conservatives are extremely scarce in humanities and social-science departments, with the exception of Economics (see Klein and Stern 2005, 272 fig. 4, 290 fig. 8).

## **Democratic:Republican ratios by department at each of the 40 universities**

For each department at each university Table 3 reports D:R ratio and, in parentheses, the raw counts when necessary—very often, it was not necessary. Outside of Economics, Democrats utterly dominate. We have come to expect such domination, but still one may be surprised by the situation. Table 3 might be disturbing to students, parents, donors, and taxpayers connected to any of the 40 universities in our study.



FACULTY VOTER REGISTRATION

TABLE 3. D:R ratios by institution and field (raw counts in parentheses)

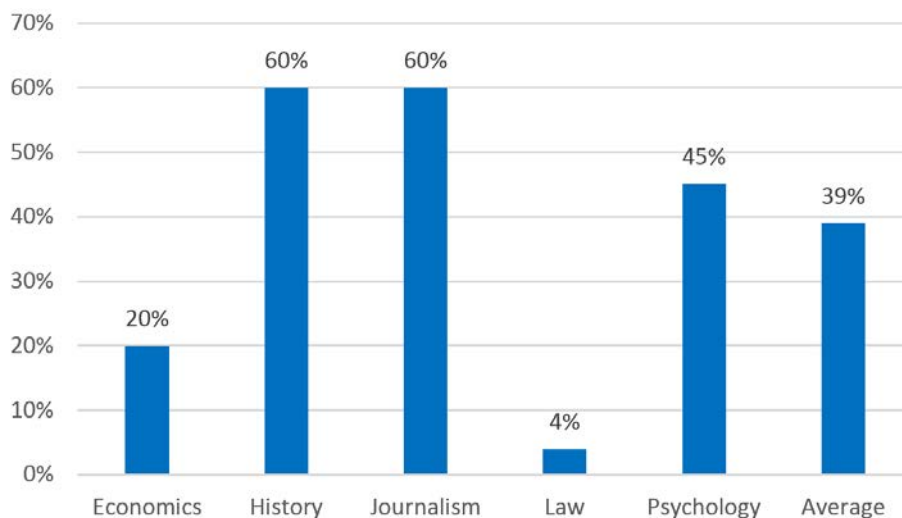
	Economics	History	Journalism/ Comms.	Law	Psychology	Total	N of depts. w/ zero Rs
Princeton	12:1 (24:2)	36:0			29:1	29.7:1 (89:3)	1 of 3
Harvard	2.6:1 (13:5)	26:0		9.6:1 (64:7)	18:0	10.1:1 (121:12)	2 of 4
Yale	25:0	17.3:1 (52:3)		8.5:1 (51:6)	36:1	16.4:1 (164:10)	1 of 4
Stanford	3.1:1 (28:9)	33:0	1:0	11.8:1 (59:5)	34:0	11.1:1 (155:14)	3 of 5
Columbia	15:0	63:0	21:0	11:1 (55:5)	25:1	29.8:1 (179:6)	3 of 5
MIT	5:1 (10:2)	9:0			19:0	19:1 (38:2)	2 of 3
Duke	3.6:1 (25:7)	42:0	0:0 <sup>a</sup>	12:1 (48:4)	13.4:1 (67:5)	11.4:1 (182:16)	2 of 5
Penn	1.7:1 (5:3)	8.7:1 (26:3)	6:1 (12:2)	5.2:1 (31:6)	22:1	6.4:1 (96:15)	0 of 5
Johns Hopkins	6:0	14:0			15:1	35:1	2 of 3
Caltech	4:0	8:0			1:0	13:0	3 of 3
Dartmouth	6:1 (12:2)	12:0			11:1	11.7:1 (35:3)	1 of 3
Brown	11:1	27:0			22:0	60:1	2 of 3
Cornell	5.5:1 (22:4)	16.5:1 (33:2)	12:0	13.3:1 (40:3)	14:0	13.4:1 (121:9)	2 of 5
Berkeley	14:1 (28:2)	26:0	12:0	10.5:1 (63:6)	7:1 (14:2)	14.3:1 (143:10)	2 of 5
USC	7:1	42:0	19:1	35:3	25:0	25.6:1 (128:5)	2 of 5
UCLA	1.6:1 (11:7)	67:1	6:0	8.1:1 (57:7)	7.6:1 (53:7)	8.8:1 (194:22)	1 of 5
Carnegie Mellon	4.5:1 (9:2)	20:1			18:0	15.7:1 (47:3)	1 of 3
Wake Forest	1.7:1 (5:3)	19:0		5.8:1 (29:5)	8:0	7.6:1 (61:8)	2 of 4
Tufts	11:0	9:0			12:1	32:1	2 of 3
UNC	21:1	53:1	19:1	18:1 (54:3)	19.5:1 (39:2)	23.3:1 (186:8)	0 of 5
Boston College	14:0	14:0	5:0	10.3:1 (41:4)	13:0	21.8:1 (87:4)	4 of 5
NYU	2.2:1 (11:5)	44:0	15:1	15.8:1 (79:5)	28:0	16.1:1 (177:11)	2 of 5
Rochester	3:1	16:0			16:0	35:1	2 of 3
Brandeis	6:0	10:1	4:0		8:0	28:1	3 of 4
UCSB	1.6:1 (11:7)	34:1	20:0		15:1	8.9:1 (80:9)	1 of 4

TABLE 3 (continued). D:R ratios by institution and field (raw counts in parentheses)

	Economics	History	Journalism/ Comms.	Law	Psychology	Total	N of depts. w/ zero Rs
Case Western	1.3:1 (4:3)	9:1		4:1 (36:9)	1.7:1 (10:6)	3.1:1 (59:19)	0 of 4
UCSD	3.2:1 (16:5)	31:1	12:0		11:1 (22:2)	10.1:1 (81:8)	1 of 4
UC Irvine	3:1 (9:3)	32:0	3:0	29:1	7:1 (14:2)	14.5:1 (87:6)	2 of 5
UC Davis	10:1	31:0	3:0	12:1 (36:3)	23:0	25.8:1 (103:4)	3 of 5
Rensselaer	1:1	2:0	8:1		7:1	6:1 (18:3)	1 of 4
Boston U.	14:1	31:0	8:0	35:1	31:1	39.7:1 (119:3)	2 of 5
Penn State	7:1 (14:2)	9.8:1 (39:4)	5:1	2.3:1 (27:12)	20:1 (40:2)	6:1 (125:21)	0 of 5
Northeastern	5:1	10:1	4:0	33:0	13:0	32.5:1 (65:2)	3 of 5
Lehigh	4:1 (8:2)	8:0	7:0		13:1	12:1 (36:3)	2 of 4
Yeshiva	1:1	4:0		8.8:1 (35:4)	3:0	8.6:1 (43:5)	2 of 4
Pepperdine	0:4	0.5:1 (1:2)	1:1	0.7:1 (10:14)	14:0	1.2:1 (26:21)	1 of 5
Ohio State	0.8:1 (6:8)	5:1 (30:6)	6:1	4.8:1 (29:6)	2.6:1 (21:8)	3.2:1 (92:29)	0 of 5
Worcester Poly.	0:0 <sup>b</sup>	7:0			2:0	9:0	3 of 3
U. of Maryland	14:1	20.5:1 (41:2)	15:1	52:1	35:1	26:1 (157:6)	0 of 5
U. of Connecticut	5:1 (10:2)	26:1	2:1	9:1 (36:4)	43:1	13:1 (117:9)	0 of 5
Total (by individual)	4.5:1 (449:99)	33.5:1 (1037:31)	20:1 (220:11)	8.6:1 (1064:124)	17.4:1 (853:49)	11.5:1 (3,623:314)	
Number of departments with zero Rs	8 of 40 (20%)	24 of 40 (60%)	15 of 25 (60%)	1 of 25 (4%)	18 of 40 (45%)		66 of 170 (39%)

Notes: (a) The department had just two professors. (b) The department had just five professors.

The last column of the Table 3 counts the number of departments with zero Republicans. Boston College leads in shutouts, having four departments with zero registered Republicans. Figure 3 shows percentage of departments in the field with zero Republicans—60 percent in History, 60 percent in Journalism/Communications, and 45 percent in Psychology. In other words, in those three fields taken together, it is as likely as not that a department contains zero registered Republicans.

**Figure 3.** Percentage of departments with zero registered Republicans

Of the 170 departments, in only four did the number of Republicans exceed the number of Democrats: Pepperdine Economics, Pepperdine History, Pepperdine Law, and Ohio State Economics. Pepperdine is a standout in the set of 40 institutions (although its Psychology department is Democratic 14:0). Also notable for relatively low D:R ratios are Ohio State and Case Western; particularly noteworthy are their Psychology departments, which, with their combined 14 Republicans, alone account for 28 percent (14 divided by 49) of all Republicans found at all 40 Psychology departments.

## **Assistant professors are least likely to be Republican, emeritus are most likely**

Figure 4 shows D:R ratio by professor title or rank. As expected and consistent with previous research, younger professors are especially unlikely to be Republican. In the decades ahead, D:R ratios seem bound to increase, unless a sufficient number of young Democratic professors mature into Republicans.

The D:R ratio is lowest for emeritus faculty. If emeritus faculty are excluded, we get the following overall D:R ratios by field: Economics 5.0:1, History 36.4:1, Journalism/Communications 21.2:1, Law 9.2:1, and Psychology 18.9:1, and total 12.4:1. One argument for excluding them is highly sensible: They are retired and generally do not teach courses at all. One argument for including them is that often they still play a role in department life, sometimes with influence. We opted to in-

clude them because, given the nature of the research, we would rather err on the side that leads us to report lower rather than higher D:R ratios.

**Figure 4.** D:R ratios by professorial rank

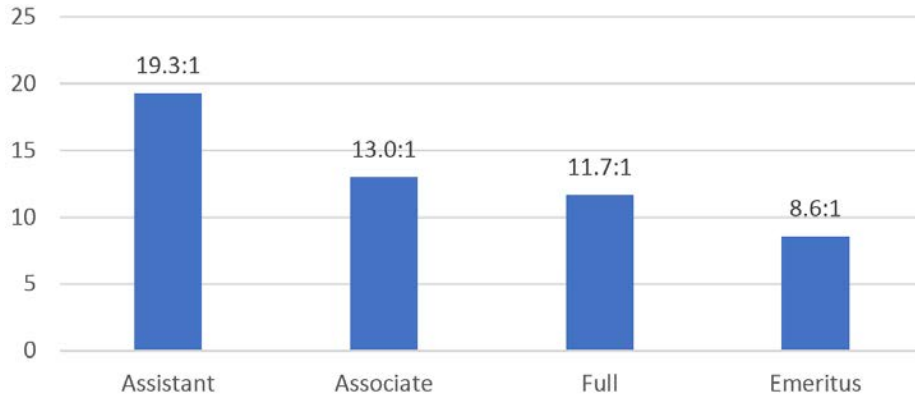
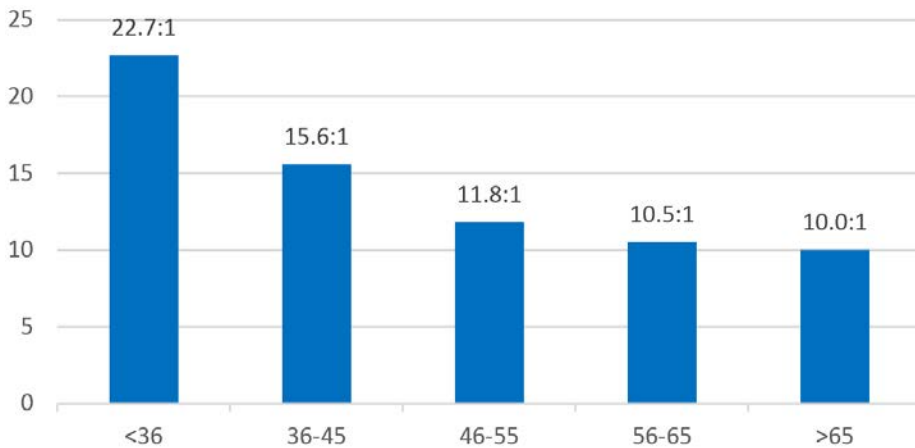


Figure 5 shows D:R ratios by professor age.<sup>26</sup> The youngest cohort, age 35 or younger, has 159 Democrats and 7 Republicans, for a D:R ratio of 22.7:1.

**Figure 5.** D:R ratios by professor age



26. All of the professors represented in Figure 5 were identified in Aristotle, of course. For those professors, Aristotle had birth-year information for 97 percent. For the other three percent we used birth-year information garnered from resumes and other Web sources, when we could, which was for most of them.

## Remarks on History

To our knowledge, previous data indicating D:R ratios in recent decades in Journalism/Communication, Law,<sup>27</sup> and Psychology<sup>28</sup> have been only sketchy, so we do not remark on recent trends there.

Circa 1963, academic historians had a D:R ratio of about 2.7:1 (Spaulding and Turner 1968, 251, 253). The 33.5:1 D:R ratio found here signals quite a change. It even signals a change since circa 2004, when the ratio was in the range of perhaps 9:1 to 15:1. In a 2003 survey of members of the American Historical Association, it was found that among those reporting voting Democratic 73.5 percent were employed in academia, whereas only 52.6 percent of Republican-voting AHA members were employed in academia (Klein and Stern 2005, 275). That is, Republican intellectuals—members of the AHA, most with Ph.D.s—were much less likely to be making careers in academia. Also, younger History professors were significantly less likely to be Republican than older ones (*ibid.*, 265–266). That was based on data from 2003. Since then, the older generation has been passing on, while perhaps young people interested in history, and who do not lean left, have seen the writing on the wall and increasingly stayed away. Writing for an AHA publication, Robert Townsend (2015) provides useful information on trends in areas of specialization within History. Way up since 1975 are Women/Gender, Cultural, Environmental, Race/Ethnicity, and Sexuality. Meanwhile, steadily down are Social, Intellectual, Diplomatic/International, Economic, and Legal/Constitutional. Townsend also gives pertinent information about age trends, showing that the growing subfields are disproportionately younger and the declining ones older.

## Remarks on Economics

The 4.5 D:R ratio we find in Economics probably overstates to some extent the four-year institutions' nationwide ratio. Still, it does suggest that the ratio has increased since circa 2004, when the ratio was, say, 2.8:1. Moreover, although the numbers are small, the age trend appears to be present in Economics as in the other fields. Table 4 shows cohorts: The 35-or-under group has 37 Democrats and four Republicans, or 9.3:1.

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27. For an insightful discussion of trends in Law schools and the legal profession, see Olson (2011).

28. For older data on Psychology, see McClintock et al. (1965); Spaulding and Turner (1968, 253, table 1, column 2).

TABLE 4. D:R ratios by age cohorts, Economics and the other four disciplines

Age	Economics			The other four disciplines		
	D	R	D:R ratio	D	R	D:R ratio
<36	37	4	9.3:1	117	3	39.0:1
36–45	67	9	7.4:1	519	29	17.9:1
46–55	68	12	5.7:1	611	45	13.6:1
56–65	113	29	3.9:1	719	51	14.1:1
>65	148	42	3.5:1	1,122	84	13.4:1
Total	433	96	4.5:1	3,088	212	14.6:1

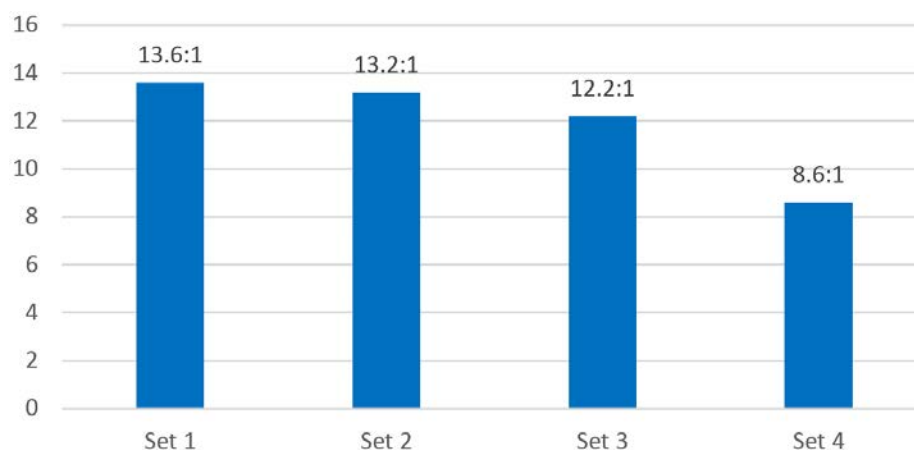
People wonder why economists have so much more clout and prestige than other social scientists. One reason is that traditions and standards inside the discipline have been such that checks and accountability on statist judgments have been much greater than in other disciplines. When a government intervention or program receives approval from sociologists or psychologists, it doesn't mean much, since it is common knowledge that within those fields there is little critical pressure against such judgments. But when it receives approval from economists, the approval faces a tougher test, and it means more. We recognize, of course, that Democrats in Economics are not the same as Democrats in other academic fields (Klein and Stern 2005, 279–285), and that in Economics there is a meaningful portion of professors with classical liberal tendency but who are not registered or registered but not affiliated, plus a few registered Libertarians. But we nonetheless feel that, at least since the days when Milton Friedman was vibrant, Economics has been trending toward becoming like the rest of the university. Vibrant classical liberals at the apex of the Economics pyramid are few and dwindling. William McEachern (2006) used political donations data and found evidence that the American Economics Association is more intensely Democratic within its leadership, and Economics departments at the top rank of universities have higher D:R ratios than do those at lower-ranked universities, as we explain in the next section.

## Rank of the university

At least since the work of Seymour Martin Lipset (1982; Ladd and Lipset 1975, 42–45, 226), it has been known that highly ranked universities tend to be somewhat more left-leaning or Democratic. We checked on such an effect by dividing the 40 universities into four “Sets,” where Set 1 is the highest-ranked universities. It should be borne in mind that even Set 4 consists of very prestigious, exclusive universities, given that our 40 universities come from the first 60 universities listed in *U.S. News and World Report's* “National Research Universities” list.

Sometimes multiple universities are given the same ranking—for example, four universities have the 57th rank. In creating our four sets, we kept universities of a given rank in the same set. Set 1 is ten institutions with *U.S. News* ranks 1 through 10 (of which, because of ties, there were eleven<sup>29</sup>); Set 2 is nine institutions ranked 12 to 27; Set 3 is nine institutions ranked 30 to 39; Set 4 is 12 institutions ranked 41 to 57. The D:R ratios for the four sets are shown in Figure 6. In keeping with previous research, the ratio declines with descending prestige.<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 6.** D:R ratios by *U.S. News and World Report* university rank



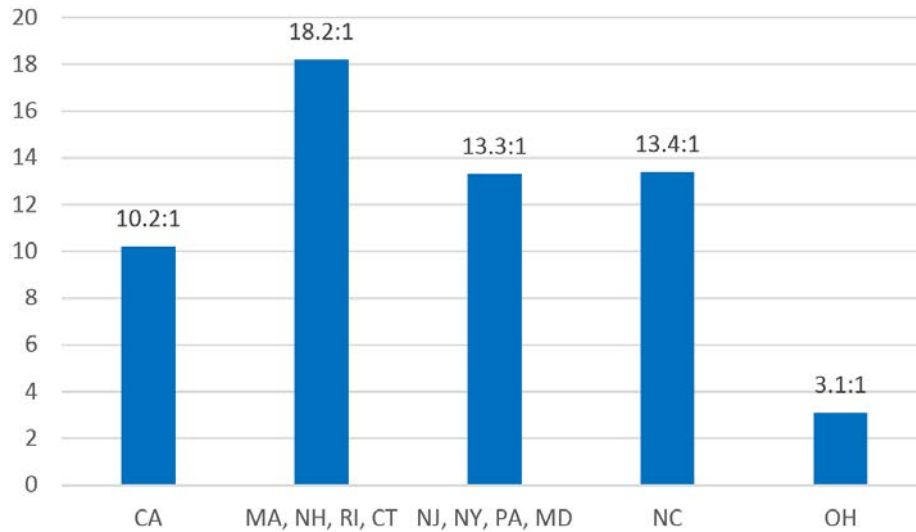
## Five groups of states

Again, the 40 universities sit in just 11 states. We found it natural to consider five groups of states, shown in Figure 7. The two Ohio universities are Ohio State and Case Western, and together they make our “Ohio” group quite exceptional from the other groups. In California, all the universities have very high D:R ratios except the astounding Pepperdine with 1.2:1. As for North Carolina—including Duke, UNC–Chapel Hill, and Wake Forest—its D:R ratio is perhaps higher than one might have expected. The group with the highest D:R ratio is the New England group, consistent with recent research by Sam Abrams (2016b).

29. The University of Chicago is the one of the eleven top-10 universities that is not included here, because, again, Aristotle does not have voter-registration information for the state of Illinois.

30. In the appendix tables ([link](#)), Table A5 shows each discipline broken down by “Set,” and that Set 4 in each has a lower D:R ratio than Set 1; the differences are statistically significant for History, Journalism/Communications, and Psychology.

**Figure 7.** D:R ratios for the five groups of states



## Gender

As shown in Table 5 the D:R ratio for women professors is 24.8:1 while that for men is 9.0:1. Using expressed-preference data, the Pew Research Center (2015) finds that in the general population women lean Democratic, 52 percent to 36 percent Republican. We find that only 2.2 percent of female professors are registered Republican. As for men, Pew finds that in the general population they are evenly split, 44 percent Democratic and 43 percent Republican. We find that only 5.4 percent of male professors are registered Republican.

**TABLE 5. D:R ratios by gender**

	Democratic	Republican	D:R ratio	Not Affiliated	Not Registered	Total
Female	1,267 (55.2%)	51 (2.2%)	24.8:1	320 (14.0%)	651 (28.4%)	2,289
Male	2,355 (47.6%)	263 (5.4%)	9.0:1	825 (16.8%)	1,467 (29.9%)	4,910
Total	3,622	314	11.5:1	1,145	2,118	7,199

*Note.* Excludes 41 minor-party registrants and three professors for whom we lacked information on gender.

Table 6 shows gender by field. Overall, 31.7 percent of the grand look-up list (less three missing observations) was female. The field with highest percent female is Journalism/Communications, while the field with by far the lowest percent female is Economics.



TABLE 6. Gender in the five disciplines

	Female	Male	Total
Economics	233 (15.6%)	1,260 (84.4%)	1493
History	634 (34.5%)	1,206 (65.5%)	1840
Journalism/Communications	194 (40.1%)	290 (59.9%)	494
Law	617 (34.1%)	1,191 (65.9%)	1808
Psychology	618 (39.3%)	997 (61.7%)	1615
Total	2,296 (31.7%)	4,944 (68.3%)	7240

## Did Trump's candidacy cause a sudden change in the data?

We are concerned that the nomination of Donald Trump might make our data somewhat aberrational, and we discuss the matter in an appendix. Our sense is that any such problem is probably minor, at most, but we confess the possibility and that we cannot be sure.

## The demand for and supply of wisdom

The creeping disappearance from the upper echelons of academia of Republicans and most any tenured faculty person who vibrantly dissents from leftist thinking is a noteworthy development. It is said that victors enjoy the spoils—and write the histories.

But the war analogy is imperfect. Even if the academic establishment continues to enjoy vast resources and coercively backed privileges (not only tax dollars but also, for example, what Adam Smith called “privileges of graduation”<sup>31</sup>), discourse remains substantially free, and persons—both outside of academia and within but only rarely high in the pyramid—will challenge the outlooks that are dominant in academia. Works like Jonathan Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind* (2012) and Christian Smith’s *The Sacred Project of American Sociology* (2014) represent a trend toward recognizing that scholarly interpretations and judgments are inseparable from a scholar’s sense of duty to higher purpose, as well as a trend toward recognizing that a human being is by nature a political and, in a broad sense, religious

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31. For Smith on “privileges of graduation,” see Smith (1976, 762, 778, 780) and his letter to William Cullen (Smith 1987, 173–179).

animal. We need to discern new emergent networks that have their own systems of interpretation, judgment, and standards. Networks that are not dominated by Democrats are diverse, both intellectually and institutionally. Sometimes they will succeed in establishing a base high in their disciplinary pyramid, as with certain units at Brown, Duke, Princeton, the University of Arizona, and elsewhere. Anyone who cares about the matter must decide for his or her self how a not-Democrat-dominated network is regarded justly.

## Appendix 1. Did Trump cause a change in the data?

Donald Trump's successful pursuit of the Republican nomination throws the question of which party is worse into a new light. Passing over that question, we consider a much narrower one. Our data reflects citizens' registration choice through a window of time in which the likelihood of Trump's being nominated passed from quite possible to certain.<sup>32</sup> Now, suppose that one morning in June 2015, Trump had woken up and decided to himself: "On second thought, I won't pursue the nomination." In that universe, would the data be much different? Republicans are scarce enough in the fields we examine that such an event plausibly could cause a marked difference in D:R ratios. We raise this question because one might think that our data is like a snapshot taken at a moment that does not represent what was normal before that moment, and, furthermore, may not represent what is normal after that moment. We do not presume to guess the extent to which future Republican normalcy will be 'Trumpish,' and moreover, perhaps Trump's success is *not* aberrational with respect to how Republican 'normalcy' has been evolving in recent years. At any rate, many leading Republican figures were deeply dismayed by Trump's success, and the other contenders for the Republican nomination were more conventional Republican types, so Trump is something of an elephant in the room that needs to be addressed: Does our data represent what, even from the perspective of some future point in time, is regarded to be a somewhat aberrational moment in the statistic studied here, namely, D:R ratios among professors?

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32. Using Aristotle, we began collecting our data in April 2016 and continued at a fairly steady rate, concluding in August 2016. Trump's candidacy looked to be quite certain by mid-May. However, when a voter alters his or her registration, the new information must, first, get rolled up by the state, and then it must pass into the commercial databases, so it is impossible for them to be perfectly up to date. We are not sure exactly how not-up-to-date they are, but we are told that Aristotle updates its information as soon as a state makes updated information available.

The short answer is we don't know. There are reasons to think that Trump might have caused a sudden change in the data. Many Republicans have been put off by Trump and what they take him to represent, and that would be especially true for Republicans in the professoriate. On the other hand, consider a Professor Doe, a registered Republican, who strongly dislikes Donald Trump. It is reasonable to imagine that he takes the trouble to alter his voter registration—to Democratic, Libertarian, or (most likely of these three, we think) non-affiliated. But altering one's registration is an irregular activity, and we find it also reasonable to think that Professor Doe would not give a thought to altering his party registration because of the candidate in one Presidential contest. His dislike of Trump may well lead him not to vote for Trump, but it is much less likely, we think, that he would quit the Republican Party because of the Trump development, and still less likely that he would re-register with the Democratic Party. In the way of scenarios and thought experiments, we might also ponder the desire to vote in the primaries, and its possible effect on voter registration.

**TABLE 7. Rates of Republican and Democratic registration in the 11 states at two points in time**

	1 October 2015	1 August 2016
Republican registrants	16,553,678	16,992,921
% of total	26.9%	26.7%
Democratic registrants	25,191,465	26,010,027
% of total	40.9%	40.8%
<i>Source:</i> Data provided by Voter Lists Online, at our specific request.		

Such speculations are almost all we have to offer. However, Voter Lists Online (the owner of the Aristotle database) kindly provided us with the data shown in Table 7, on voter registration in the 11 states seating the 40 universities (CA, CT, MA, MD, NC, NH, NJ, NY, PA, OH, RI).<sup>33</sup> We see that from October 1, 2015, to August 1, 2016, the number of registrants increased, but the rate for each party stays nearly constant, thus not showing any evidence of a Trump-inspired mass shift into or out of Republican registration.<sup>34</sup> But this data is for all citizens, of course, not just professors, and professors very plausibly could have behaved

33. Voter Lists Online provided this data at our special request. We did not ask for or receive any other such data (except that they provided the data for all 30 states for which they have it, not just the 11 reported on in Table 6; for the results for all 30 states see the next footnote). We asked for a first date of October 1, 2015, because at that early point it was much less certain that Trump would win the nomination.

34. Incidentally, Voter Lists Online provided such data on all 30 states for which they have it, and the results are the same in the sense that the party rates remain about the same over time: For October 1, 2015, Republican registrants constituted 30.1 percent, and Democratic 39.8 percent of all registered voters, and for August 1, 2016 the rates are 29.9 percent and 39.7 percent.

systematically differently than the entire state population. In particular it is hard to imagine many among the professoriate being inspired by Trump to join the Republican Party.

## Appendix 2. Supplementary tables and information about the release of our data

We have compiled tables (labeled A1 to A6) in an appendix ([link](#)). These tables provide the numbers for the figures appearing in this paper, as well as some supplementary statistics.

Regarding the release of our data, we are prepared to share the data under conditions of strict confidentiality to researchers whose purpose are scholarly. The data contains personal information about voter registration; even with names redacted the gender, age, title, discipline, and university information could be used to infer the individual's voter information. Inquiries about obtaining the data under conditions of strict confidentiality and for scholarly purposes should be directed to Professor Mitchell Langbert at [mlangbert@hvc.rr.com](mailto:mlangbert@hvc.rr.com).

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# Undoing Insularity: A Small Study of Gender Sociology's Big Problem

Charlotta Stern<sup>1</sup>

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

In the marketplace of ideas, competing ideas are put forth. Open debate, dialogue, and testing follow, and the best ideas win over time. Or so it is hoped.

With this short piece, I try to illustrate that gender sociology insulates its sacred beliefs from ideas that challenge those beliefs, even when the challenging ideas are very well-grounded. The sacred beliefs are to the effect that the biological differences between the sexes are minor and that the cultural differences between (or among) the genders are the result of social processes and have little basis in biological differences.

Beliefs interrelate with purposes or causes; sacred beliefs are packaged with sacred causes. Most gender sociologists have a sacred cause to reduce gender differences, as though the only gender differences that should emerge are those where physiological differences are both relevant and highly apparent, such as in sports. Gender sociologists often invoke sacred beliefs to justify social engineering. Gender sociologists tend to hold that society has fallen into a self-reinforcing trap of people 'doing gender,' and that we should support social movements and policy agendas that will free society from the trap and move us toward a state that is truer to the minimal differences between the sexes.

The challenges come from anthropology, developmental psychology, evolutionary psychology, the neurosciences, genetics, biology, and many other fields. For many decades now researchers have amassed findings that suggest that the differences between the sexes go far beyond the obvious physical and biological differences. Differences in competitiveness, aggression, sexual interest, risk beha-

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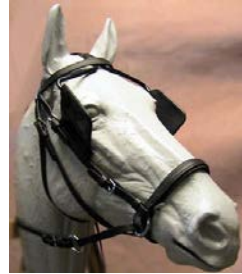
1. Stockholm University, 106 91 Stockholm, Sweden.

avior, and many other traits are found again and again, as are differences in brain physiology and neuroimaging, and are supported by many different methods and approaches.<sup>2</sup> It is blinkered to presuppose, without question, that we are blank slates inhering within bodies that just happen to have anatomical differences.

The infamous Larry Summers incident—in which Summers suggested that, even if means are equal, a difference in variance in ability could explain why males dominate the top of a field (Summers 2005)—points up how minor differences between distributions can explain striking differences in outcomes (see Johnson et al. 2008; Wai et al. 2012; Madison 2016). It also illustrates how the pertinent and perfectly innocent remarks of a Harvard University president can trigger the wrath of people enmeshed in sacred beliefs and taboos.<sup>3</sup>

Taboo is an inevitable aspect of social systems, but taboos may interfere with intellectual endeavors because they limit inquiry and challenge. It is time to work out improved attitudes about gender, attitudes that accept that differences between the genders may continue to exist even in settings where individuals are freer to express themselves and lead their own lives.

The present investigation is informed by my long and ongoing experience as a sociologist at Stockholm University. My teaching and research often touch on gender issues. I have served on about five thesis committees that addressed gender sociology or related matters, and I have participated in dozens of seminars that touch on gender sociology. My relationships with my colleagues and students are not heated. When I raise ideas that would challenge the sacred beliefs, I do so only at the edges. I have seen how people react when I or another suggests that maybe there is a difference in math skills between men and women, or that men and women have different preferences and motivations. In my experience, gender sociologists frown upon such remarks about innate differences in aptitude or motivations. I perceive deep and widespread taboo and insularity among gender sociologists. It saddens me. I feel impelled to make available some expression of my



**Figure 1.** A horse with blinkers, to limit the range of its vision (photo courtesy bitlessbridle.com)

2. The literatures on differences between male and female are vast. Pinker (2002, 337–371) provides an introduction, but the literatures have grown since then. For more recent discussions, I recommend, for example, Campbell (2013) and the work of David C. Geary ([link](#)). In a forthcoming book chapter (Stern 2017, available now as a working paper) I deal with some of the literatures that relate to gender and labor-market outcomes.

3. The Harvard faculty drove Summers out of his position as president of the university. On sacred beliefs and taboo in the social sciences, see Duarte et al. 2015; Haidt 2012; Tetlock 2003.

concern, hoping that students and others will hear it before sinking into the sacred beliefs and sacred causes addressed here.<sup>4</sup>

## Reading Pinker

Shortly after it appeared in 2002, I read Steven Pinker's *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. I found it somewhat polemical. For example, Pinker writes of gender feminism:

[G]ender feminism is an empirical doctrine committed to three claims about human nature. The first is that the differences between men and women have nothing to do with biology but are socially constructed in their entirety. The second is that humans possess a single social motive—power—and that social life can be understood only in terms of how it is exercised. The third is that human interactions arise not from the motives of people dealing with each other as individuals but from the motives of *groups* dealing with other groups—in this case, the male gender dominating the female gender. (Pinker 2002, 341, emphasis in original)

Still, I was impressed by the enormous amount of modern research summarized by Pinker (2002, 337–371). Gender is one of the chief topics of the book. I found its criticism of the notion that differences between the sexes are minor to be overwhelmingly persuasive.

Controversies over gender pit 'nature' mechanisms—sometimes expressed in terms of 'innate,' 'instinct,' 'essence,' 'genetic,' 'biological,' and 'evolutionary'—against 'nurture' mechanisms—sometimes expressed in terms of 'environment,' 'social construction,' 'culture,' 'custom,' 'stereotypes,' 'discrimination,' 'social forces,' 'power,' 'domination,' and 'oppression.' Most people give weight to both nature and nurture. But the distinctions are subtle and often problematic. Is pregnancy nature or nurture? As for 'social construction,' all social practice, even all cognition, can be seen as socially constructed. What matters, practically, are the conditions and bounds bearing on what gets constructed, and what improvements might result from new insights, new attitudes, new institutions, and so on. Yes, observed work-life balances arise in part from social constructs, but wouldn't any balance? The real issue is whether improvements are available to us, where 'improvement' accounts for the negative as well as the positive consequences of the change.

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4. For related investigations, see Horowitz et al. 2014; Winegard et al. 2014.

Gender sociology often seems to presuppose not only that sex differences are minor, but that social existence is highly malleable (particularly by social engineering) and that better social constructs are readily available. I think that those presuppositions are dubious, and I am unsympathetic to social engineering by government. Even if Pinker sometimes paints his opponents with a broad brush, his arguments against those three sacred presuppositions—little difference between the sexes, the malleability of social existence, and the availability of better social constructs—are powerful and backed up by a great deal of scholarly research. Since 2002 the literatures have continued to explode with further findings.

Pinker's 2002 review of the scientific literatures received tremendous attention in scholarly and popular sources, and Pinker made a number of highly viewed videos presenting his ideas (e.g., 1, 2, 3). If gender sociologists remained unexposed to the challenge that Pinker represented, it could only be from their own determination to remain unexposed. The exploration undertaken here examines the extent to which gender sociology has, in the years since the publication of *The Blank Slate*, acknowledged, discussed, or evaluated findings that challenge its presuppositions regarding differences between the sexes, the malleability of social existence, and availability of better social constructs.

A word about terminology: I am going to use the expression *biological-difference ideas* to refer to the large cluster of ideas, evidence, contentions, evolutionary theories, and so on that suggest that males and females are more than incidentally different in their distributions of aptitudes, potentialities, inclinations, and motivations, as well as a sensitivity to the fact that sometimes, as Thomas Schelling (1978) taught about segregation, small differences in hard-to-observe characteristics can give rise to significant differences in the easily observed outcome patterns. So 'biological-difference ideas' is here an abbreviation for all such challenges to the sacred beliefs of gender sociology. I will grade a sample of papers with respect to whether they are blinkered from biological-difference ideas.<sup>5</sup>

## “Doing Gender”

I was invited to contribute to a volume on how political ideology blinkers scholarship, and I wrote a critique of sociological research on gender and labor markets (Stern 2017). That critique also addresses the sacred beliefs and taboos addressed here. But I wanted to test my own impression, so I devised a small inves-

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5. Wordplay tempts us to write 'blinkered from Pinker,' which is especially apt because Steven Pinker's sister Susan Pinker insightfully expounds how biological-difference ideas play out in personal careers and the workplace, notably in *The Sexual Paradox: Men, Women, and the Real Gender Gap* (2009).

tigation, resulting in the present study. It is intended as a simple empirical test of the claim that gender sociology really is blinkered and insular in the matter of biological differences between the sexes.

I investigate a set of articles that cite “Doing Gender” by Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987), a classic in gender studies. After having been rejected at journals for almost ten years prior to its publication, the success of “Doing Gender” is striking (Wickes and Emmison 2007). It is the most-cited article ever published in *Gender & Society*, the top journal in the subfield as well as a leading journal in sociology generally (Jurik and Siemsen 2009). It has been described as “groundbreaking” (Ridgeway 2009, 146; Deutsch 2007, 106). In 2009, a symposium in *Gender & Society* was dedicated to celebrating it and discussing its contribution (see Jurik and Siemsen 2009 and articles in that issue).<sup>6</sup> As of late September 2016, it had 2,374 Web of Science citations and 8,960 Google Scholar citations.

West and Zimmerman develop the idea of “doing gender” to “advance a new understanding of gender as a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction” (1987, 125). They distinguish between a person’s sex and his or her gender. The sex designation is made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for female or male classification, such as genitalia or chromosomal typing before birth. One’s sex places the person in a sex category. Gender is the enactment of one’s sex category in all social situations (*ibid.*, 127). The person, in West and Zimmerman’s view, is “doing” a gender construct. “Doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological” (137). One’s sex category is “omnirelevant,” and we can “never really not ‘do gender’ as long as society is partitioned by ‘essential’ differences between women and men and placement in a sex category is both relevant and enforced” (137). “[I]he ‘doing’ of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production” (126). “[G]ender is an emergent feature of social situations; both as an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating one of the most fundamental divisions of society” (126).

In “Doing Gender” biological differences are, if only by implication, narrowed to genitalia and chromosomes (West and Zimmerman 1987, 127). Those differences are treated as rather incidental, like one’s height. But in social life, “sex category is used as a fundamental criterion for differentiation,” and so “doing gender is unavoidable” (*ibid.*, 145). One naturally reads West and Zimmerman as wishing to diminish ‘doing gender,’ even to eliminate it entirely, on grounds that it is not based on any really important differences between the sexes. ‘Doing gender’

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6. Smith (2009) is one symposium contributor who argues that to make sense of gender differences biology must be incorporated.

is presented as part of a lamentable system of social control. The paper's final paragraph reads:

Gender is a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category. An understanding of how gender is produced in social situations will afford clarification of the interactional scaffolding of social structure and the social control processes that sustain it. (West and Zimmerman 1987, 147)

## Twenty-three articles that cite “Doing Gender,” 2004–2014

“Doing Gender” was published in 1987. In a post-Pinker world, it seems reasonable to think that “Doing Gender” understated the importance of biological difference. Has gender sociology been learning from the vast scientific literatures that were summarized by Pinker in 2002 and that have since further expanded?

In December 2015, using the Social Science Citations Index (SSCI), I compiled articles that cite “Doing Gender.” I included in my search those articles with “sociology” marked as a topic and that were published between 2004 and 2014. I then sorted the articles from most highly cited to least. I picked the two most highly cited articles for each year. Of the 23 articles,<sup>7</sup> nine were published in *Gender & Society* and six were published in general sociology journals such as *American Journal of Sociology*, *American Sociological Review*, or *Annual Review of Sociology*. There is a good mix, then, of articles in mainstream sociology and articles in the subfield of gender sociology. There is also a good mix of literature overviews and empirical investigations.<sup>8</sup>

The citing of “Doing Gender” is merely my means of drawing a pertinent sample of papers dealing with gender differences and gender outcomes. Some of the 23 articles cite “Doing Gender” in a passing way, and some cite it ceremonially,<sup>9</sup> but even most of those are dealing with gender differences or outcomes and, in

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7. My sample contains 23 articles, rather than 22, because three articles were included for 2014: Two articles were tied for second place in citations.

8. I categorized nine articles as theoretical contributions, literature reviews, or evaluative discussions of the state of the literature. The other fourteen articles were empirical investigations; four used a quantitative approach, nine used qualitative approaches (analysis of interviews, newspaper reporting), and one article used both.

9. Of the 23 articles, I would say that the ‘doing gender’ concept is core to the formulations or investigations of eight articles, those being: Deutsch 2007; Bolton and Muzio 2008; Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Rhoton 2011; Miller 2011; McLaughlin et al. 2012; Jenness and Fenstermaker 2014; and Westbrook and

my opinion, should address biological-difference ideas. In my review, I coded just three articles as not relevant to the matter investigated (LaRossa 2005; Messerschmidt 2012; Moen et al. 2013), meaning that they do not deal with matters for which biological-difference ideas would clearly be relevant.<sup>10</sup>

**TABLE 1. Classification of 23 articles citing “Doing Gender”**

Article	Biological-difference ideas mentioned?	Overall grade
Ridgeway and Correll (2004, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Blinkered
Risman (2004, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	Yes, but dismissive	Blinkered
Breen and Cooke (2005, <i>European Sociological Review</i> )	No	Neutral
LaRossa (2005, <i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i> )	Not relevant	N.A.
Hook (2006, <i>American Sociological Review</i> )	No	Neutral
Raley and Bianchi (2006, <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> )	Yes	Unblinkered
Deutsch (2007, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Blinkered
Schippers (2007, <i>Theory and Society</i> )	No	Blinkered
Noone and Stephens (2008, <i>Sociology of Health and Illness</i> )	Yes, but dismissive	Blinkered
Bolton and Muzio (2008, <i>Work, Employment &amp; Society</i> )	Yes, but dismissive	Blinkered
Ridgeway (2009, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Blinkered
Schilt and Westbrook (2009, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	Yes, but dismissive	Blinkered
England (2010, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Blinkered
Hook (2010, <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> )	No	Neutral
Rhoton (2011, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Blinkered
Miller (2011, <i>Sociology</i> )	Yes, but dismissive	Blinkered
Messerschmidt (2012, <i>Men and Masculinities</i> )	Not relevant	N.A.
McLaughlin et al. (2012, <i>American Sociological Review</i> )	No	Blinkered
Dworkin et al. (2013, <i>Men and Masculinities</i> )	No	Blinkered
Moen et al. (2013, <i>Work and Occupations</i> )	Not relevant	N.A.
Jenness and Fenstermaker (2014, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Neutral
Young et al. (2014, <i>Society and Mental Health</i> )	No	Blinkered
Westbrook and Schilt (2014, <i>Gender &amp; Society</i> )	No	Blinkered

Table 1 lists the articles. I read all of the articles and developed a spreadsheet with quotations and my own observations. After completing the spreadsheet I did a thorough word search on *essen\**, *evolut\**, and *biolog\** to make sure that I did not miss

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Schilt 2014. For discussion of core usage versus peripheral or ceremonial citations, see Wickes and Emmison 2007; Messerschmidt 2012.

10. LaRossa (2005) mentions “Doing Gender” as one example of researchers translating nouns (gender) into verbs (engender, doing gender) when developing concepts and variables. Messerschmidt (2012) refers to “Doing Gender” as one concept appropriated by academia. Moen, Lam, Ammons, and Kelly (2013) discuss “Doing Gender” as part of an analogy within their discussion of how professional workers manage time.

any mention of biological-difference ideas; the results of this word search form an online appendix ([link](#)).

In the second column of Table 1, a coding of “No” indicates that biological-difference ideas are missing. The coding “Yes, but dismissive” indicates that the article brings up biological-difference ideas to dismiss them as unimportant. The coding “Yes” indicates that biological-difference ideas are treated in the article.

In the third column I assign overall grades to the papers: “unblinkered,” “neutral,” or “blinkered.” These scores are based not only on whether biological-difference ideas are mentioned (as indicated in column 2) but also on how pertinent biological-difference ideas are to the discussion and how responsibly they are treated. Of the 20 papers, 15 were scored “blinkered,” four “neutral,” and only one, “unblinkered,” illustrating that gender sociology does insulate itself from the challenge of biological-difference ideas.

In an online appendix ([link](#)) I provide a spreadsheet giving quotations from each article and my reasons for grading as I did the article’s treatment of biological-difference ideas. In what follows here I offer sundry remarks about some of the articles.

## **One article graded unblinkered**

One article, by Sara Raley and Suzanne Bianchi (2006), includes biological-difference ideas and the interaction between biology and culture in their literature review on whether the gender of children in Western societies has bearing on family processes such as divorce, educational savings, time spent with children, etc. They cite “Doing Gender” in a sentence where they talk about notions of gender differences being constructed. Hence, ‘doing gender’ is not a core concept in their review. Overall, the article is exemplary in bringing in both ‘nature’ and ‘nurture’ explanations to bear on their topic. The result is a nuanced discussion of causality. The article is also exemplary in discussing the publication bias of statistical significance, arguing that studies finding no differences in treatment of children are less likely to be published. They conclude:

Often insufficient attention is paid, both in study designs and in the interpretation of findings, to the ways that sons’ and daughters’ behaviors may differ, on average, and may thus motivate differential treatment by parents. Yet, children are active coconstructors of their universe. Greater attention to the ways in which sons and daughters elicit or reinforce differential parental investments is a topic worthy of more serious sociological attention than it has been given to date. (Raley and Bianchi 2006, 417)



### Four articles graded neutral

Four articles were graded as neutral. Three of those do not include discussion of biological-difference ideas per se, but they include discussions about gender differences that allow for more active gender differences (Breen and Cooke 2005; Hook 2006; 2010). Richard Breen and Lynne Prince Cooke (2005) investigate gender differences in preferences (citing Hakim 2000) using a game theory model. In two articles, Jennifer Hook (2006; 2010) discusses household choices, and in treating gender inequality she briefly discusses explanations other than male oppression. Hook cites literature on maternal gatekeeping and women wanting to maintain control over the household (2006, 655). The fourth article (Jeness and Fenstermaker 2014) deals with transgender prison inmates; I do not see how including biological-difference ideas would have added value to its arguments.

### Fifteen articles graded blinkered

In remarking on the articles I coded as blinkered, let me begin with five articles, “Unpacking the Gender System” (Ridgeway and Correll 2004), “Gender as a Social Structure” (Risman 2004), “Undoing Gender” (Deutsch 2007), “The Gender Revolution: Uneven and Stalled” (England 2010), and “Framed Before We Know It” (Ridgeway 2009), each written by high-profile gender scholars and published in *Gender & Society*. In theoretical expositions on gender, it is clear that biological-difference ideas are pertinent, and given that these scholars are experts on the topic I find the articles blinkered. Only Barbara Risman (2004) mentions the existence of biological-difference ideas. She does so in her overview of how the gender tradition evolved: “The first tradition [to explain gender] focuses on how individual sex differences originate, whether biological (Udry 2000) or social in origin (Bem 1993)” (Risman 2004, 430). Risman also mentions personality differences as mattering in equal sharing households (*ibid.*, 440). But in her conclusion, she takes a firm stance against invoking biology:

There is no reason, except the transitional vertigo that will accompany the processes to dismantle it, that a utopian vision of a just world involves any gender structure at all. Why should we need to elaborate on the biological distinction between the sexes? We must accommodate reproductive differences for the process of biological replacement, but there is no a priori reason we should accept any other role differentiation simply based on biological sex category. Before accepting any gender elaboration around biological sex category, we ought to search suspiciously for the possibly subtle ways such differentiation supports men’s privilege. (Risman 2004, 446)

Risman seems to be addressing evolutionary critics, indirectly, and dismissing them.

Eight other articles graded as blinkered treat gender differences of various kinds, where biological-difference ideas are pertinent but missing. The eight articles are empirical and most use interviews that are interpreted in a 'doing gender' framework. In my short review of the articles, I use the wording of the authors in order to maintain as true a representation of the content as possible.

The article by Laura Rhoton (2011) is titled "Distancing as a Gendered Barrier: Understanding Women Scientists' Gender Practices." Interviews with female STEM academics are analyzed in order to understand why engaging in "feminine practices" in an environment that values "masculine practices" may undermine legitimacy, as femininity is subordinate to masculinity (Rhoton 2011, 707). Her interviewees perceive average gender differences; women as a group tend to take criticism or disagreement personally, and are more prone to jealousy, passive aggressiveness, and giggling (*ibid.*, 702–703). Professional socialization, developing thick skin, objectivity, and assertiveness are interpreted as masculine behaviors that reproduce a masculine culture, hence keeping the gender system intact. The biological-difference ideas put forth in the interviews are interpreted as reflecting "an essentialist framing of gender" and are dismissed since feminine characteristics can be suppressed and overcome through professional socialization (*ibid.*, 703).

Four of the articles focus on males. Male behaviors are interpreted as enactments of masculinity and expressions of seeking power and dominance over women. For instance, Heather McLaughlin, Christopher Uggen, and Amy Blackstone (2012) address sexual harassment by men, suggesting that women in power are more likely to be harassed because men will use harassment as a tool to police appropriately gendered behavior. Other articles are more focused on masculinity itself, a bit less in relation to women (Dworkin, Hatcher, Colvin, and Peacock 2013; Noone and Stephens 2008; Miller 2011) but share a conceptualization of males and masculinity lacking any recognition of biological-difference ideas.

Two articles study experiences of transgender individuals (Schilt and Westbrook 2009; Westbrook and Schilt 2014). Laurel Westbrook and Kristen Schilt (2014) use "Doing Gender" as a conceptual framework to understand social processes of gender determination. They discuss biology-based determination of gender vs. identity-based determination of gender in the context of sex segregated public space (bathrooms, competitive sports) and transgender individuals. Obviously, biological sex is not relevant as gender identity is at the core of investigation. But biological-difference ideas would be pertinent in interpreting reactions to transgender individuals by cisgender men and women. For instance, in discussing transgender athletes, Westbrook and Schilt write:

In June 2012, the IOC [International Olympic Committee] ... [stated] that athletes competing as women cannot have a testosterone level “within the male range” unless it “does not confer a competitive advantage...,” thus minimizing what is viewed as an unfair hormonal advantage. These explicit criteria allow the IOC to incorporate trans and intersex athletes, and thus to validate the liberal moment of gender, without challenging the premise that modern competitive athletics rests on: the presumption that there are two genders and all athletes must be put into one of those two categories for competition. (Westbrook and Schilt 2014, 41; one citation omitted)

The authors seem to treat hormonal differences and their impact on sports as unreal and the IOC’s insistence that testosterone can yield an advantage as following from a simplistic binary notion of gender. They go on to state that:

While transwomen might self-identify as women, people who subscribed to biology-based ideologies of gender view these athletes as males who carry a size and strength advantage over females. (Westbrook and Schilt 2014, 41)

I think that biological-difference ideas could have added value to this discussion.

At root, these fifteen articles are graded as blinkered because I find that insulation from, or avoidance of, biological-difference ideas damages the quality of reasoning on display. Any one of these studies would be improved by discussing well-established average gender differences in agreeableness, competitiveness, aggression, sexual interest, and risk behavior.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

I generated a sample of 23 well-cited articles that themselves cite the landmark article “Doing Gender” (West and Zimmerman 1987), and then effectively reduced that sample to 20 by removing three that were not substantially relevant to the matters addressed in “Doing Gender.” Of these 20, only one article aptly engages with the literature on biological-difference ideas, to which Pinker (2002) drew such great attention. Four articles were relevant but deemed neutral, meaning that I concluded biological-difference ideas would not clearly add value to their authors’ arguments. Fifteen of the 20 articles, however, discuss gender issues in a manner that is blinkered from biological-difference ideas. Had these 15 articles been informed by biological-difference ideas, they would have provided added value to sociological discourse. One cannot draw quantitative estimates on the ba-

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11. For further detail on my review of the articles, see Appendix 2.

sis of my investigation, but its findings are consistent with an image of gender sociology as a subfield that has insulated its sacred beliefs from important scientific challenges.

I have extensive first-hand experience with gender sociology's insularity. But I also know of pervasive preference falsification (Kuran 1995), and I have seen students awaken with an 'a-ha!' moment when exposed to unorthodox thinkers such as Catherine Hakim (1995; 2000; 2008). I believe reform is possible. Whether people should 'do gender' less, and how they should 'do gender,' are questions worthy of personal reflection, scholarly exploration, and public discourse. More definite, to my mind, is that people should do less insularity.

## Appendices

**Appendix 1:** A file showing the work, based on SSCI citations, done to arrive at the articles that formed my sample of 23 articles that cite "Doing Gender." [[download](#)]

**Appendix 2:** A spreadsheet I used to record relevant quotations and notes when grading the 23 articles' treatments of biological-difference ideas. [[download](#)]

**Appendix 3:** The results of my searches of the article texts for *essen\**, *evolut\**, and *biolog\**, which were done to check that I hadn't missed any treatment of biological-difference ideas. [[download](#)]

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# Introduction to “The Social Theories of Classical Political Economy and Modern Economic Policy”

Erwin Dekker<sup>1</sup> and Stefan Kolev<sup>2</sup>

In 1890, the centenary of Adam Smith’s death was used by Carl Menger as a touchstone for a reflection on the economic thought of Menger’s time and the liberal tradition of Smith and classical political economy. This reflection was published in two parts, on the 6th and the 8th of January, 1891, in the most respected newspaper of the Habsburg Empire, the *Neue Freie Presse*. Never before translated into English, it is presented here under the title “The Social Theories of Classical Political Economy and Modern Economic Policy.”<sup>3</sup>

To give some context to Menger’s essay, let us draw on Friedrich Hayek’s contextualization of Menger’s career. Hayek writes that in the decades after 1848, classical political economy experienced mixed fortunes across Europe: “critical attacks and attempts at reconstruction multiplied in most countries.” He continues:

Nowhere, however, had the decline of the classical school of economists been more rapid and complete than in Germany. Under the onslaught of the Historical School not only were the classical doctrines completely abandoned—they had never taken very firm root in that part of the world—but any attempt at theoretical analysis came to be regarded with deep distrust. This was partly due to methodological considerations. But even more it was due to the intense

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3. The German title differs between the first and second parts of the newspaper article. The first title speaks of the social theories of the classical political economist (!) (*des klassischen National-Ökonomen*), a reference to Smith, and the second title of classical political economy (*klassischen National-Ökonomie*). The original articles are available online from the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek ([link](#)) and are reprinted in the *Collected Works of Carl Menger*, vol. 3 ([link](#)).



dislike of the practical conclusions of the classical English School—which stood in the way of the reforming zeal of the new group, which prided itself on the name of the ‘ethical school.’ (Hayek 1992/1934, 63–64)

“The ‘ethical school’” is a reference to the school of *Social-Politik*, the movement of economists across German-speaking Europe for social reform, later called the ‘Younger’ Historical School.

Menger, who had started out as an economic correspondent, was not only an economic theorist of great significance, he was also a prominent Viennese liberal. In 1883 he published his second book, on methodology, which was critical of the ‘Younger’ Historical School. Its leader Gustav Schmoller caustically replied, Menger caustically rejoined, and Schmoller published a dismissive letter about Menger’s rejoinder. The exchange constitutes the textual core of what is known as the *Methodenstreit*. Hayek tells of “the passion which this controversy aroused” and “what the break with the ruling school in Germany meant to Menger and his followers”:

Schmoller, indeed, went so far as to declare publicly that members of the ‘abstract’ school were unfit to fill a teaching position in a German university, and his influence was quite sufficient to make this equivalent to a complete exclusion of all adherents to Menger’s doctrines from academic positions in Germany. (Hayek 1992/1934, 81)

Menger did not perceive himself as a revolutionary in economic theory. The article presented here shows that Menger was spiritually close to Adam Smith and classical political economy. Likewise, Menger’s tutorial instruction from 1876 to the Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria closely followed *The Wealth of Nations* (particularly Book I). As Erich Streissler writes, “Carl Menger was much more of a classical economist than is commonly recognized” (1994, 24).

The article presented here is one of the best sources we have for understanding Menger’s position on questions of economic policy (Böhm 1985; Streissler 1990). It is part of a larger effort, from Menger and his students, to defend classical political economy and to draw a connection between their theoretical contributions and that of the classical school. Two other important contributions to that effort are, first, Eugen Böhm-Bawerk’s lengthy review of Lujo Brentano’s Viennese inaugural lecture on the classical school (Böhm-Bawerk 1924/1889), and, second, a dissertation written under Menger’s supervision by Richard Schüller (1895) with the clearly programmatic title *Die klassische Nationalökonomie und ihre Gegner* (*Classical Political Economy and Its Enemies*).

Menger’s article, as well as Böhm-Bawerk’s review and Schüller’s dissertation, were written on the defensive. Reacting to the low standing accorded to the

classical school, Menger, Böhm-Bawerk, and Schüller were primarily occupied with correcting and refuting the arguments of their opponents. The debate over the standing of classical political economy is closely connected to the *Methodenstreit*, with a similar separation between camps. But the debate about the standing of political economy is more directly tied to economic policy and the advent of the *Verein für Socialpolitik* (VfS) and what Menger throughout the piece calls the school of *Social-Politik*. In Menger's article we have to wait until the final pages to get a good sense of what he himself favors.

The VfS, the German equivalent of the American Economic Association, was founded in 1872 by a group of economists, and was soon dominated by Gustav Schmoller, who was two years Menger's senior. Schmoller's agenda for the decades to come aimed at generating policy solutions to the 'social question.' His reformist goals were reflected in the name of the association, with its emphasis on social and economic policy. The substance of the agenda might be described as an attempt to establish a 'third way' between the *Manchestertum* and state or Marxist socialisms (Grimmer-Solem 2003, 171–186). *Manchestertum*, a pejorative term coined by the German socialist activist Ferdinand Lassalle in the 1860s to attack the allegedly anti-social attitudes of British liberals like Richard Cobden, was soon widely used by socialists and conservatives alike to attack liberalism as an extremist ideology that was imported from Britain and was bereft of any sympathy for the poor and the working class (Doering 2004, 18–21). The VfS was explicitly founded as a counterweight to the *Volkswirtschaftlicher Kongreß* (Economic Congress), a convention of Manchesterist liberal public figures like Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch and John Prince-Smith (Henderson 1950, 297–301; Hentschel 1975; Oschina 2010, 14–16). In the article Menger repeatedly distances himself from these individuals and the ideas associated with *Manchestertum*.

The VfS, eventually successful in crowding out the Economic Congress, was one of Schmoller's weapons—Schmoller being a gifted academic entrepreneur—to consolidate large parts of German economists around his agenda and, after forming alliances with powerful bureaucrats in the university administration of the new Reich, to dominate the nomination of appointees to chairs of political economy in Germany as well as in Austria-Hungary (Blumenthal 2007, 66–75). That included the appointment of Brentano, his fellow *Social-Politiker*, to Vienna in 1888 (Backhaus 1993, 12–13), which ignited heavy opposition from the burgeoning Austrian School.<sup>4</sup> The VfS and its intellectual climate had effects reaching well beyond Central Europe: The many American students at German-speaking uni-

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4. Brentano occupied his chair in Vienna for less than a year between 1888 and 1889, when he moved to Leipzig. Menger was strongly opposed to Brentano's appointment, telling Brentano: "You cannot imagine what bitterness your appointment has filled me with" (quoted in Grimmer-Solem 2003, 265).

versities, described by Richard T. Ely as “the group of young rebels who returned from Germany about 1880,” had a direct and significant impact on the formative decades of the American Economic Association, founded in 1885 (Ely 1936, 143; see also Seager 1893). Both the VfS and the AEA were, during these decades, part of what in America has come to be called progressivism (Bernstein 2001; Leonard 2016).

This context of the rise of progressive politics is of crucial importance in interpreting Menger’s article. He writes: “It is not true that the newer school of *Social-Politik* in Germany stands in substantive contrast to classical political economy.” Quoted out of context this sentence can be seriously misleading, and a proper understanding of the article depends on what Menger is trying to convey here. He is trying to convey a similarity in spirit, or inclination—“*Tendenz*,” he calls it—of the classical school and that of the modern *Social-Politiker*. It is Menger’s central message that one can be for the poor, for the workers, and be a teacher and writer in the tradition of classical political economy. Indeed, toward the end of the article the guise falls away to some extent: The well-being of society requires that tradition.

All classical political economists, he argues, were convinced that many of the injustices of their time harmed the poor and the workers. The final pages of the article make it clear that this would entail a policy program quite different than that proposed by the *Social-Politiker*. But Menger has an even more important issue on his mind. He wants to make clear that the classical political economists were every bit as much concerned with advancing justice through economic reform. In practical terms this meant that economists working in the classical tradition could just as much belong to the VfS. Menger argues that there is a fundamental similarity between the classical economists, himself, and the *Social-Politiker* of his time. That is why he argues that Smith and his disciples could well be described as the *Social-Politiker* of their age, and why he extols their accomplishments in the policy arena, especially their success in breaking down privileges. But from these shared goals, this shared purpose, quite different social policies could result, based on differing economic theories. It is this shared purpose that is also the subject of Böhm-Bawerk’s opening article “*Unsere Aufgaben*” (“Our Mission”) (1924/1892) in the newly founded journal *Zeitschrift für Volkswirtschaft, Socialpolitik und Verwaltung* (*Journal of Economics, Social Policy and Public Administration*). This journal, in combination with the reactivation around 1890 of the *Gesellschaft Österreichischer Volkswirte* (“Society of Austrian Economists,” which was initially organized in 1875; see Egger 2001, 4–7), constituted the Austrian answer to the efforts by the VfS.

The fact that Menger is on the defensive results in descriptions of Smith and the other classical economists that seem one-sided, even distorted. In his efforts to argue that their sympathy is with the poor and workers and their intention is to

further justice, he eagerly seizes upon passages in which the classical economists accept state interventions. It is up to us, as readers, to interpret what Menger means precisely. But the end of the article should make perfectly clear that Menger was squarely at odds with the economic program of the *Social-Politiker* of his age. He makes clear that the “negative program” of the classical economists, aimed at breaking down existing privileges and moving toward a system of natural liberty, was of an importance in improving the position of the worker far greater than modern interventionist measures. Moreover, he also criticizes a number of interventions promoted by the *Social-Politiker* that create new privileges and effectively harm the lower classes.

Another remarkable aspect of Menger’s work around this period is his concern with establishing a lineage for the work being done by him and his students and associates. Around the same time he writes several commemorative articles, for a variety of occasions, in which he relates the contributions of Austrian economists to those of others. Menger clearly develops a preference for Adam Smith, whom he here calls the “consummate master” (“*Vollender*”) of classical political economy, and in the other commemorative articles Menger praises Smith as the most important classical political economist, who eschewed dogmatism and whose inclinations were always sound. Later accounts of Austrian economics have sometimes accorded a pioneering and revolutionary role to Menger himself, but Menger is clear that he saw himself as continuing the tradition in which Smith was paramount, and which included the important economic theorists of the nineteenth century, including David Ricardo, Jean-Baptiste Say, John Stuart Mill, William Stanley Jevons, and Léon Walras. Menger’s frequent reference to Smith’s disciples in this article should certainly be read as an indication that Menger considered himself to be one of them.

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# The Social Theories of Classical Political Economy and Modern Economic Policy<sup>1</sup>

Carl Menger  
*translated by Erwin Dekker and Stefan Kolev*

[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

## I.

The centenary of Adam Smith's death has passed virtually unnoticed on German soil. The progressive German press has bestowed only few wreaths of grateful memory upon the grave of this man, who for a century provided that very press with the weapons it has used in the battle against the oppressive economic privileges of the once-favored societal groups. German science, too, which until the middle of our century<sup>2</sup> followed the great master more with piousness than with critical independence, has only honored him timidly. Alas, on this occasion Smith has been struck by the cruel fate of being "historically interpreted," and being "defended" from too much diminution, by the representatives of a hostile group, which has meanwhile gained dominance at German universities. What we witnessed on the 17th of July of last year was an unenthusiastic, almost hesitant commemoration of the man who was once praised as the father, yes, even the consummate master of scientific political economy.

But even so, the miserable centenary we witnessed is only a minor stroke in the decline in the German public reputation of the "old" or classical political economy and its founder. When Babeuf, no longer fearful of death, stood in front of the guillotine, he worried only that his opponents would write the history of his endeavors. Classical political economy really has been struck by this fate. The role that the school plays in current public opinion in Germany has been "created"

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1. This essay is a translation from German of a two-part article published in the *Neue Freie Presse*, Vienna, January 6 (pages 8–9) and January 8 (page 8), 1891. The parts are indicated here by the roman numeral headers.

2. The nineteenth century.

by its hateful opponents, by agitators pursuing practical goals, by Friedrich List, and in other respects by Ferdinand Lassalle. This reputation of classical political economy has been eagerly reinforced by the scientific opponents of the progressive bourgeoisie, working in the spirit of Prince Bismarck. Thereafter in German science classical political economy is regarded as capitalistic, atomistic, abstract, and against the people,<sup>3</sup> it is considered to be refuted and dismissed.

The reversal in the public opinion of Smith and classical political economy that has occurred in Germany has not remained restricted to academia. German economic policy has also renounced the teachings of Smith and his disciples, “the economic party doctrines of individualism and liberalism.” Prince Bismarck defended himself, and allowed himself to be defended by others, against the charge of being a politician in the spirit of *The Wealth of Nations*, as if he defended himself from an intellectual and moral failing, and ever since there is hardly a statesman in Germany who does not place special emphasis on his emancipation from Smith’s theories. Smith is not only a dethroned prince of science in Germany, he is—like another Delbrück<sup>4</sup>—pushed aside because of outdated views and has consequently fallen from grace as advisor to leading German statesmen. If Smith—a man once praised as the sixth great power<sup>5</sup>—could have witnessed the fate of his scholarly fame in Germany, he would cry out, with Hecuba:

*Quondam maxima rerum  
Nunc trahor exul, inops*<sup>6</sup>

Such a reversal does not fail to leave a deep impact on the political parties of Germany and Austria. The liberal party had, from the moment when it secured basic political rights for the population, drawn its main force from its economic program. Questions of fiscal and socioeconomic policy were its primary concern. A close attention to particular economic interests had won it the hearts of the nations.<sup>7</sup> But from the time that Smithian thought was believed to be refuted and dismissed, the liberal party has—like an Antaeus—lost that ground from which it

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3. “*Volksfeindlich*,” literally ‘hostile to the people,’ has no equivalent in English; we opted for ‘against the people.’ In 1891 this word did not yet have the nationalistic connotations it would later have, when it would be closer to ‘unpatriotic.’

4. A reference to Hans Delbrück (1848–1929), a scholar who was repudiated by Bismarck-admiring historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834–1896).

5. That is alongside the five great powers: United Kingdom, Prussia, France, Russia, and Austria.

6. Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 13:508–510: “modo maxima rerum, tot generis natisque potens nuribusque viroque nunc trahor exul, inops.” In F. J. Miller’s translation (Harvard University Press, 1916): “But late on the pinnacle of fame, strong in my many sons, my daughters, and my husband, now, exiled, penniless [...] I am dragged away.”

7. Nations (“*Völker*”) here probably refers to the different nationalities in Germany and Austria-Hungary.

mainly drew its force. The decline of the old, and the victory of the new political economy has caused, more than any other shift in public opinion, a shift in the power relations between the political parties, a roll-back of liberalism, even in the noblest sense of that word. The dominant opinion among scientists and practitioners that the Smithian system had been refuted by the new developments in German science, that classical political economy had been dismissed, is a fact of wide-ranging political significance. The liberal party lost its erstwhile connection with economic science and consequently its footing and leadership in economic matters as well as its belief in its own economic program.

I am well aware of the fact that overcoming scientific fallacies entrenched in academic minds, even when they clearly contradict facts, is one of the most cumbersome tasks of scientific criticism, especially when the dominant fallacies are supported by the interests of powerful groups in society. But time not only dampens passions, it also has a corrective impact on men's fallacies. Thus the dominant legend in Germany of the relationship between the "new" political economy and the Smithian doctrine will eventually be replaced by a better understanding. I believe we would do well not to condemn classical political economy based on the authority of its opponents, but instead to not spare efforts to evaluate it without bias, perhaps ideally to let it speak for itself once more. That is what should take place here, even at the risk of concluding that the supposed victory of the school of *Social-Politik*<sup>8</sup> over Smith and the classical authors of political economy is based on a confusion between classical political economy and Manchesterism, and is thus a victory not over classical political economy, but over the one-sidedness of the doctrines of Manchesterism.

It is not true that the newer school of *Social-Politik* in Germany stands in substantive contrast to classical political economy.

In every conflict of interest between the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, Smith sides *without exception* with the latter. I use the term "without exception" with proper consideration, as one cannot find one single instance in the works of Smith in which he represents the interests of the rich and the powerful against the poor and the weak. As highly as Smith praises the free initiative of the individual in economic matters, does he energetically promote state interventions<sup>9</sup> to abolish laws, or the execution of the laws, which oppress the poor and the weak in favor of the rich and the powerful.

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8. When referring to this school, its ideas, etc., Menger uses the adjective form "*social-politische*" and noun "*Social-Politik*." We opt to use "*Social-Politik*" throughout, for both parts of speech.

9. "*Eingriffe*" might have a slightly different connotation from our modern use of the word *interventions*. Nonetheless we opted for 'interventions' here, not only because it is the literal translation of *Eingriffe*, but from the other occurrences of the term it also becomes clear that Menger refers to positive state action, not to a more general idea of economic reform.



Smith fights against the industrial policy of the mercantile system because it favors the industries of the rich while neglecting and oppressing those branches of industry which guarantee the sustenance of the poor and the weak. He demands free mobility because its limitation hurts labor much more than capital, as the rich merchant can obtain the right to settle down anywhere much easier than the poor craftsman. He is against the regulation of the so-called legal settlement laws, because they primarily hurt the poor and violate natural liberty and justice when expelling someone from a parish who has chosen the very place as his residence; he favors high wages, in which he sees both an imperative of humanity and of prudence. Smith is against state meddling with the wage contract, especially when the intervention proves to be to the *disadvantage* of the worker and to harm “the holiest and most inalienable right of the worker, the right to his labor.”<sup>10</sup> He speaks so infrequently against state intervention *advantageous* to the poor and weak that he rather endorses it in all cases when he expects it to be *favorable* (and not oppressive) for the propertyless classes. Smith even favors legal provisions on the wage level when they are set at such a level that they *favor* the workers, and he *always* declares such fixed wages as just and fair.<sup>11</sup> Smith also favors the law which forces in some trades the masters to pay the workers in money and not in kind.<sup>12</sup> Yes, Smith goes so far as to argue that, while *capital profits are a deduction from the full product of labor, rents are the incomes of those* who wish to reap without having sown. When matters concern the protection of the poor and the weak, the basic principled standpoint of Smith sometimes is more progressive than that of any of the modern “*Social-Politiker*.”<sup>13</sup> At various points in his work, his views touch upon those of the modern socialists. As is well known, Louis Blanc, Ferdinand Lassalle, and Karl Marx constantly refer to the theories of Smith and those of his disciples, not to those of their opponents.

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10. Not all quotations by Menger are literal. This one is most likely a reference to: “The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property” (Smith 1976/1776, 138).

11. Menger uses the word “*Lohn taxen*,” which has since fallen out of use. This mercantilist institution was used by many medieval cities to regulate the wage levels for the different branches of employment in the sense of ‘fair wages’ for these different branches, mostly in the form a fixed wage or of a maximum wage. The aim of a maximum wage was to prevent inflation due to excessive wage dynamics in the sense of wage-price spirals, and of a fixed wage to prevent downward spirals of wages if employers in a guild colluded against the employees.

12. In Smith’s original: “Thus the law which obliges the masters in several different trades to pay their workmen in money and not in goods, is quite just and equitable. It imposes no real hardship upon the masters. It only obliges them to pay that value in money, which they pretended to pay, but did not always really pay, in goods” (1976/1776, 158).

13. Adherents or practitioners of *Social-Politik*.

From the above, every unbiased reader can discern the true inclination of Smith's *Social-Politik*. He identifies laws and execution of laws which oppress the workers and the propertyless to the favor of the propertied classes, and which harm "the holiest and most inalienable right, the right of the worker to his labor." Therefore he stands, in line with *his* historical task, for the liberation of the propertyless classes from the harmful influence of the state on the labor contract and, if I may say so, of odious privileges. However, Smith does not stop there. He demands in numerous cases positive regulations in favor of the workers. To consider Smith an enemy of labor, or even to be a doctrinaire indifferent to the working class, is a falsification of history. The complete opposite is correct.

It should not be thought that it was just Smith whose view, in the spirit of the liberality of the eighteenth century, was shaped by the duty of the individual and of society to the workers. Rather, it is also the disciples of the great friend of humanity [Smith] who energetically speak up for the propertyless classes.

According to Ricardo, "the general happiness" depends primarily on the fate of the working classes. The wage level, he argues, determines the welfare of the largest part of society. Every shift in the distribution of income which gives the workers a greater part of the national income is a very desirable improvement in the condition of society, because through such a shift easily the most important class of society, the working class, gains. "However," says Ricardo, "one could state that with this the income of the capitalist will not increase, or that the million which falls to the workers in the form of the increased wages, is deducted from the rents of the landlords. Even so!" says Ricardo, "This cannot shake my argumentation. The condition of society is still improved. My argument proves that it is even more desirable that the single most important class of society gains through this new distribution of national income."<sup>14</sup>

The labor-friendly attitude appears least in Robert Malthus, the representative among the classical economists of agrarian interests. He too demands help in cases of need, even when this can be offered by a sacrifice from the propertied classes: "At least then the evil will be generalized, tempered, and made bearable for all."<sup>15</sup> I know, Malthus says, of nothing more miserable than the idea to condemn

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14. In Ricardo's original: "But it may be said, that the capitalist's income will not be increased; that the million deducted from the landlord's rent, will be paid in additional wages to labourers! Be it so; this will make no difference in the argument: the situation of the society will be improved, and they will be able to bear the same money burthens with greater facility than before; it will only prove what is still more desirable, that the situation of another class, and by far the most important class in society, is the one which is chiefly benefited by the new distribution" (1821, 32.51).

15. In Malthus's original: "Yet even in this way of employing labour, the benefit to some must bring with it disadvantages to others. That portion of each person's revenue which might go in subscriptions of this kind, must of course be lost to the various sorts of labour which its expenditure in the usual channels would have supported; and the want of demand thus occasioned in these channels must cause the pressure of

workers to dress themselves in rags and to live in miserable huts, in order to be able to sell a few more of our cloths and calicos abroad. He demands the employment of the unemployed through public works. Every friend of humanity, he argues in another passage, must wholeheartedly wish Robert Owen success in his efforts to pass a parliamentary act limiting the number of working hours for children and prohibiting their employment at too young an age. He even declares that he would immediately favor eliminating the corn tariffs if this permanently improved the condition of workers. However, he is not convinced of the utility of this measure (just like our current agrarians don't believe that the abolition of corn tariffs improves the position of the workers). However, it should not be overlooked that Malthus is fundamentally influenced in these doctrines by his patriotic concern over the independence of his home country, which he considers threatened by England's dependence on imported corn during war times.

The head of French classical political economy, Jean-Baptiste Say, argues much in the same spirit as the current *Social-Politiker*. "The entrepreneurs," he argues, "claim to have the right to assemble to resist the undue pretensions of the workers. But when one believes that the coalitions of workers who fight for the assertion of their rights are blameworthy, how come that one does not hold the same opinion of the coalitions of entrepreneurs opposing the workers who demand sufficient wages? The employers already have enough instruments of influence through their wealth and social position and are not entitled to even more influence. When the authorities side with one camp in such struggles of interest, the other side will invariably be oppressed."<sup>16</sup> "A humanitarian perspective," he argues in another passage, "makes it desirable that workers and their families can dress themselves as is fitting given the climate and the season; that they have spacious, airy and heated rooms; and that they have healthy, abundant, and somewhat varied food."<sup>17</sup> "When it is the custom of a nation that it is unconditionally necessary that every worker has the duty to save for old age, then this will undoubtedly increase

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distress to be felt in quarters which might otherwise have escaped it. But this is an effect which, in such cases, it is impossible to avoid; and, as a temporary measure, it is not only charitable but just, to spread the evil over a larger surface, in order that its violence on particular parts may be so mitigated as to be made bearable by all" (1826, III.VII.13).

16. Say's *Cours complet d'économie politique pratique* has not been translated, and we can thus only refer to the French original: "Les maîtres ont prétendu qu'ils étaient obligés de se rassembler pour résister aux injustes prétentions de leurs ouvriers; mais si l'on trouve répréhensibles les coalitions d'ouvriers qui se concertent pour faire valoir leurs droits en commun, pourquoi ne trouve-t-on pas telle la réunion des maîtres qui s'entendent pour refuser un salaire suffisant? Les maîtres, par leur fortune, par leur position sociale, ont déjà des moyens d'influence qu'il ne convient pas de fortifier" (Say 1840, 556).

17. "Humanity, indeed, would rejoice to see them and their families dressed in clothing suitable to the climate and season; houses in roomy, warm, airy, and healthy habitations, and fed with wholesome and plentiful diet, with perhaps occasional delicacy and variety." Say continues with a serious caveat: "But there are very few countries, where wants, apparently so moderate, are not considered far beyond the limits of

the wages. *However, in the eyes of every friend of mankind it must look outright appalling that this has not already been the case for a long time.* One must lament that the worker not only does not save for old age, but not even *for accidents, for illness and incapacity for work.*<sup>18</sup> In some of his writings, Say goes further. He writes that one must combat the problems of the working classes according to their causes. He suggests, regarding important matters, that the state should make positive interventions in favor of the workers. “M. de Sismondi”, he writes, “who in general recognizes the harmfulness of state interventions in private affairs, nonetheless believes that the law should offer protection for that contracting party (the worker) which, in the nature of things, finds itself in such a precarious and subordinated position that it is frequently forced to accept irksome conditions. It is impossible not to share the opinion of Sismondi as well as not to agree with the currently emerging trend in English legislation to fix the age under which children are not allowed to be drawn to work in factories.”<sup>19</sup>

Such are the “anti-labor doctrinaires,” the men whose teachings are notoriously denounced as capitalist, against the people, and refuted, against which our modern “*Social-Politiker*” rail, and against whose affinity Poschinger seeks to defend Prince Bismarck, as if against a disgrace inflicted on the latter.<sup>20</sup> It is no less an outrage against the historical truth when the doctrines of those who develop Smith’s doctrines in *his* spirit are made to appear as representatives of a cruel and exploitative capitalism, than when it is done with Smith himself.

The same lack of unbiasedness and truthfulness that is present in the critique of classical political economy by the newer schools of *Social-Politik* is also present in relation to numerous other matters of economic policy.

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strict necessity, and therefore not to be gratified by the customary wages of the mere laboring class” (Say 1855, II.VII.51).

18. “Did the habitual practice of society imperatively subject every family to the obligation of laying by some provision for age, as it commonly does for infancy, our ideas of necessity would be somewhat enlarged, and the minimum of wages somewhat raised. It must appear shocking to the eye of philanthropy, that such is not always the case. It is lamentable to think of the little providence of the laboring classes against the season of casual misfortune, infirmity, and sickness, as well as against the certain helplessness of old age” (Say 1855, II.VII.52–53).

19. “M. de Sismondi, convenant en principe des inconvénients qui résultent de l’intervention de l’autorité dans les conventions particulières, pense néanmoins que la loi doit prêter quelque force à celui des deux contractants qui est nécessairement dans une position tellement précaire et dominée, qu’il est quelquefois force d’accepter des conditions onéreuses. Il est impossible de ne pas partager en ce point l’opinion de M. de Sismondi, et de ne pas approuver une disposition récente de la législation anglaise, qui fixe l’âge au-dessous duquel il n’est pas permis à un manufacturier de faire travailler les enfants dans ses ateliers.” (Say 1852, 50).

20. In his foreword to *Aktenstücke zur Wirtschaftspolitik des Fürsten Bismarck* (*Documents on the Economic Policy of Prince Bismarck*), Heinrich von Poschinger wrote that Bismarck derived his power, in part, “from the gradually spreading belief in the German Reich that his economic policy was based not on *The Wealth of Nations*, but on the well-being of every single man” (1890, ix, our translation).

It is not true, it is a falsification of history, that Smith is a doctrinaire of “*laissez faire, laissez aller*,” or that he thought that the only way to advance the economic well-being of society was the completely free play of individual interests. He recognizes on numerous occasions in his works that the endeavors and interests of single individuals and entire societal classes can contradict the general interest, and in such cases he not only does not reject state interventions but rather lets them appear as an imperative of humanity and consideration for the common good. He expects so little of implementing the principle of “*laissez faire*” that he, on the contrary, points to a number of organizations and institutions *which are to a great extent advantageous to the common good, and which would never be possibly established by the free play of competition*. He explicitly declares that in these cases the state has *the important duty to establish and maintain the offices and organizations which foster the common good*. Smith is not only for interventions by the state in the economy in favor of the poor and weak, especially the workers. He also endorses, proportional to the circumstances,<sup>21</sup> corn tariffs in favor of agriculture, export subsidies for wool to raise the national production, and, yes, moderate tariffs on all manufacturing products, to secure an advantage for national labor on the domestic market. But unlike our modern *Social-Politiker* he never neglects the advantages of the international division of labor, and he recognizes the destructiveness of protective tariffs that steer national production in an inappropriate direction. He is so far from advocating a complete freedom of trade that he declares it equally absurd as the realization of some Utopia.<sup>22</sup> Smith declares that the state has the task to provide roads, canals, harbors, public warehouses, etc., and yes, under certain circumstances he even favors the state fixing the prices of basic foodstuffs, etc.

This point of view is essentially shared by the other authors of the classical school. They too are anything but supporters of the principle of *laissez faire*. In fact they sometimes go even further in their support of positive interventions by the state in the interest of the common good. J. B. Say demands forestry legislation, which protects the land from wood shortage and the water courses from depletion; he endorses measures of the government favoring agriculture and preventive measures against unsound practices of industrialists. In trade policy he not only argues for some consideration for existing industries and a gradual shift toward

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21. The German “*nach Maßgabe der Verhältnisse*,” might alternatively be translated as “if reasonable given the circumstances.”

22. Menger presumably has in mind the following passage of *The Wealth of Nations*: “To expect, indeed, that the freedom of trade should ever be entirely restored in Great Britain, is as absurd as to expect that an Oceana or Utopia should ever be established in it. Not only the prejudices of the publick, but what is much more unconquerable, the private interests of many individuals, irresistibly oppose it” (Smith 1976/1776, 471). But assuming that is indeed the referent passage, the meaning which Menger ascribes to it seems to us not to have been Smith’s intended meaning.

freedom of trade, he also demands state support for such industries which initially operate at a loss but offer the prospect of becoming profitable in the course of time—the support of industrial education of the people by the state—fundamentally anticipating the ideas of Friedrich List. In the same manner, Malthus supports protective tariffs, insofar as they have the goal to let specific lines of production in a country develop, to prevent great fluctuations in the economic life of a people, or to restore the equilibrium between different classes of society. He argues that protective tariffs are an important means in an economic policy aimed at the common good. Ricardo believes that tax-balancing tariffs and subsidies are necessary, and he supports the famous Corn Laws. It is an antihistorical legend that classical political economy supports the unrestrained rule of individual self-interest and the passivity of the government in economic matters.

The newer school of *Social-Politik* in Germany has not refuted and dismissed classical political economy—it has, rather, continued its development in certain respects, and in other respects, as I will show, it has lagged behind. In the fight of the school of *Social-Politik* with the proponents of capitalistic Manchesterism—its caricature of Classicism—it was partly right, *but not against Smith and classical political economy*. The final configuration of classical political economy cannot be found in Cobden, Bright, Bastiat, Prince-Smith, and Schulze-Delitzsch, but rather in John Stuart Mill, the social philosopher, who, next to Sismondi, must be considered the most important founder behind the modern direction of *Social-Politik*, as far as it has an objective scientific character. Whoever reads the writings of the classical school as an interrelated whole will find the above judgment to be confirmed in every respect.

Classical political economy has erred in many respects, and in some decisive respects for the further development of economic theory. The current fashion in the newer German political economy which underestimates Smith and his school is based upon misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the classical authors, the correcting of which is the duty of objective science. This underestimation has even led Roscher to the noteworthy remark that the future “will restore the honor of men like Ricardo and Malthus as scientists.”<sup>23</sup>

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23. “Recent science has endeavored, and successfully, to examine the facts which contradict the Ricardian and Malthusian formulations of the laws in question, and to extend the formulas accordingly. ... [I]t is not hard to comprehend that, while this process of elucidation is going on, most scholars, those especially possessed more of a dogmatic than of a historical turn of mind, should estimate these two leaders more in accordance with their few defects than with the great merits of their discoveries. ... For my own part, I have no doubt that, when the process of elucidation above referred to shall have been thoroughly finished, the future will accord both to Ricardo and Malthus their full meed of honor as political economists and discoverers of the first rank” (Roscher 1878, p. x).

## II.

The real difference between classical political economy and the modern school of *Social-Politik* in the workers question is not their inclination. Both recognize the unfavorable economic position of a large part of the workers within the population, both demand changes in favor of the workers, and neither fundamentally denies state help. The contrast is that the Smithian school believes that the improvement of the economic position of the workers lies primarily in the elimination of all state and social institutions which are disadvantageous for the workers' employment and their income, and only deems positive interventions by the state in the economy advisable where the self-help of the workers and their free associations do not suffice for attaining the above purpose. Our modern *Social-Politiker* on the other hand—I mean those who are serious about improving the workers' lot—place the main emphasis on positive measures of the state, now that a large part of the laws of past ages which oppressed the poor and the weak in favor of the propertied classes have already been abolished. In this difference we cannot recognize a fundamental opposition, no different inclination, but only a difference in the evolution of circumstances regarding the continued development of the efforts to improve the position of the working class. The economic policy of classical political economy was precisely dedicated to the most immediate and urgent needs of the time in which it came into being, a time full of unjust class privileges and detrimental restrictions on the poor and weak, full of irrational and self-interested over-regulation. Smith and his disciples recognized the needs of *Social-Politik* in their time very precisely when they first pressed for the abolition of the harmful restrictions on workers and when they opposed the state interventions in the economy detrimental to the poor.

Smith and his disciples were "*Social-Politiker*" for their time at least to the same degree as those economists who currently claim for themselves the honor of this title as against the Smithian school. The men who stood up for the elimination of serfdom, feudal labor,<sup>24</sup> arbitrary justice, exclusive and exploitative guilds, monopolies, tax privileges, etc., have, when we look back at the conditions that had been there before their activities started, even with regard to their "negative program," at least an equal claim to the honorary title of *Social-Politiker* as do any economists of the present.

But that negative part does not exhaust the program of Smith and his disciples. We have seen that those same men spoke out for the necessity of positive measures by the state in all fields of economic life as soon as the free conduct

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24. Menger refers to the institution of "*Frohnden*."

of the individual proves insufficient for or harmful to the common good. No unbiased observer would believe that either Smith or his disciples would, from the spirit of their teachings, if they were asked today, oppose the more recent positive regulations which are truly aimed at the well-being of the workers class,<sup>25</sup> but probably they would oppose the corn tariffs, the progressive increase in indirect consumption taxes, the cartel laws, and various other laws and institutions of “*Social-Politik*.” It would be unfair to question the “inclination” of these men.

One could at most pose the question which group of social philosophers has actually *achieved more* for the protection of the needy classes, if this way of posing the question should not be dismissed as unhistorical. The goal of both schools is, considering the circumstances of their time, improving the economic position of the weak and the oppressed. But if the acceptance of theories of *Social-Politik* by the least privileged classes is taken as the correct measure of their relative merit, then the issue can hardly be decided in favor of our modern *Social-Politiker*. Wherever I look, the working class even today does not rely on the newer economic theories, according to which we should not be certain that high corn tariffs (imposed by grain-importing countries!) raise the price of bread, that petrol tariffs raise the price of the most important source of light for the worker, or that indirect taxes raise the cost of living of the worker and lower his standard of life. Rather, I find to this day that the workers, almost without exception, base their efforts on the theories of classical political economy, on the price theory of the classical school, on the land rent theory and the wage law of Ricardo, on the maxims of the classics that favor direct taxes, etc.

The same can be said for the newer positive measures for the improvement of the working classes. I do not want to doubt the inclination from which they owe their origin, nor their expected successes. But I must state the following two things: that the laws which protect the worker originate from England, the land of “classical political economy,” and secondly—what I believe is more important—that nowhere is there a considerable group of workers who would be willing to exchange the right of self-determination and in particular the right of free association for the sum of all of the positive measures of modern *Social-Politik*. And that is, I believe, for good reasons. However highly one wants to value the worker-insurance as has already partly been introduced in Germany and in Austria, plus the entire sum of the *Social-Politik* measures aimed at the improvement of the working classes, an unbiased observer would have to recognize that the liberation of the workers from the former oppressive laws that favored the propertied classes, and the freedom of association for which the classical school argued, are, in their

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25. Menger uses in the context of workers the word “*Arbeiterstand*”, literally “workers’ estate,” even though other contexts he also uses “*Classe*.”



practical effects, to the present day, of immeasurably greater value. The intellectual leaders of the workers movement have also recognized that at all times. They accepted the improvements of modern *Social-Politik*, but they expect a more substantial improvement of the position of the workers from the freedom of association. Only recently, the English leader of the workers, Burns,<sup>26</sup> declared at the Liverpool congress that the freedom of association gives the workers a means of power which should enable the workers to achieve all their goals and which initially should be used with some caution for the very sake of the workers' own interests. The measures of *positive* state assistance favoring the working classes have not been met with the same enthusiasm by the representatives of the working classes, and have not given rise to the same great hopes. The merits that classical political economy has earned for the situation of the needy classes certainly do not lag behind those of newer schools of *Social-Politik*. The supposedly purely "negative program" of Smith and his disciples is still met with a higher esteem by the representatives of the needy classes than is the "positive program" of the newer *Social-Politiker*. This is even more the case since the latter is bound up with a system of other measures of *Social-Politik* that are decidedly detrimental for the working classes, and against which Smith and his disciples would vehemently object in the name of those same propertyless classes.

Where the classical economists are certainly equal to the modern *Social-Politiker* with respect to their worker-friendly inclination, I believe that in another respect the perspective of classical political economy is without a doubt significantly superior to that of the new *Social-Politiker*. By that, I mean the correct insight into the causes of the well-being of the working classes. That the position of the workers does not only depend on the positive legal interventions, but at least as much on the progressive accumulation of capital and on the entrepreneurial spirit of those who possess it, is too often completely overlooked nowadays. The one-sided tendency against everything which is named capital and enterprise has seemingly blinded the newer schools of *Social-Politik* to the recognition of this truth and its practical consequences. It is true that the distribution of income between capital and labor is in itself a problem of the utmost importance and every measure through which labor gains a greater proportion of the fruits of production, as long as it does not threaten the continued existence of industries, should be applauded as welcome social progress. But with equal certainty would I argue that a significant increase in wages can only be the consequence of the progressive accumulation and productive use of capital. Indeed, the employment of a growing labor force with increasing wages or even at the current wage level can only go hand in hand with capital accumulation and an increase of productive activities. They who, too

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26. John Elliot Burns (1858–1943) was a British unionist, MP, and minister of the Liberal Party.

one-sidedly, only have an eye for a maximally beneficial distribution between the entrepreneur and the worker of the value of production, fail to see that the expected benefits from this for the working class, however important they may be, are severely limited. The expected benefits which arise automatically from the accumulation of capital and its productive use are of far greater importance.

Our age has often been accused of the fact that, unlike the propertied classes of antiquity, we do not enjoy life leisurely, but instead continuously strive for the acquisition of more wealth—that the propertied classes have been inflicted by an irrational pleonexia, which is not so much guided by a striving for leisurely enjoyment but rather from striving to possess more than others. It is this accusation which, especially with respect to the bourgeois classes of contemporary society, is not completely unjustified, and which matters even more when we take into account that the abstract drive for the accumulation of capital is partly cancelled out, in its effects for the capital owners, by the reduction of the interest rate. However, it seems to me that it is overlooked by those who make this accusation that this pleonexia is a kind of economic remedy for the progressive growth of the labor population, for it is among the most important means to provide this very population with employment and wages. However one might think about the “abstract capitalist drive” of the bourgeois classes of society, from the perspective of *Social-Politik* it is beneficial. At the very least it does not deserve the loud reproach of those who do not voice one word of reproach toward the waste of capital that takes place among other social classes, sometimes in ruinous ways, for example through the mortgaging of increased rents from land and the use of this money for consumption purposes.

So classical political economy certainly does not lag behind the newer school of *Social-Politik* in its worker-friendly inclination, and with respect to the correct insight into the causes of the more or less satisfactory fate of the propertyless classes, classical political economy is far superior. Classical political economy does not overlook the importance of capital, the entrepreneurial spirit, and commercial intelligence for the well-being of the working class. It is free from doctrinaire spitefulness towards capital and enterprise, which the newer doctrines of the *Social-Politiker* have adopted from socialist agitators. It does not lose sight of the fact that even an unequally distributed wealth of capital is less harmful for the working classes than is a lack of capital, and that the worker is never more helpless than when the “cursed money” dries up for the entrepreneurs, or when an intimidated entrepreneurial spirit shies away from capital investments.

I have argued that the newer measures of *Social-Politik* to lift up the needy classes are already contained in the program of classical political economy. But I should have added a caveat to this argument, which I believe, also, lends a great superiority to the Smithian perspective over those of the new *Social-Politiker*. Adam

Smith and his disciples always stood up for the *common good*, not for class interests, and they were even less prone to advocate favorable measures for particular factions within social classes, an accusation from which the newer *Social-Politik* cannot be completely spared.

Our rural population has been badly hit by the decline in prices of agricultural products. They are supposed to be assisted by disinheriting a part of them, with this adding a new artificial rural proletariat to the already existing proletariat. The class of farmers is supposed to be assisted by pushing the overwhelming majority of the farmers into the proletariat. Artisans and craftsmen wage a heavy fight with big industry. The cure against their decline is supposed to lie in setting up excessively high protective measures for the existing businesses while making it more difficult for self-employed new entrants to start a business, so that the class of dependent wage laborers would be artificially increased. The position of the workers, clearly, leads to highly sophisticated thoughts from the *Social-Politiker*. The solution should, according to some, come from associations of workers, which, through exclusion of the poorest and the neediest, would lead to a certain worker aristocracy, which would be granted the advantages of petty bourgeois existence, but which would at the same time make the struggle for existence hopeless for the remaining workers. The creation of privileged factions within the individual classes of society—a preferred *numerus clausus*—where the rest of society is completely neglected, would supposedly cure the social afflictions of our times! And all of this is propagated not from the perspective of one-sided factional interests, but from that of a popular *Social-Politik*! The task of helping the weak and disinherited shall be met by artificially increasing them in number, and especially by increasing the wealth and employment advantages of particular factions within social classes through “positive legal measures,” while those outside these factions would not only be denied access to property but also to employment. Even the cartels of the industrialists—the configurations of the roughest, most collectivist Manchesterism—have finally found their apologists, and finally are they recognized as beneficial institutions of *Social-Politik*, yes, even as universal means for the solution to our social problem. In this way the social ills of the world are supposed to be eliminated, and the encroachment of socialist elements in the armies, which are cited as a threat to our current legal and social order, stopped!

*Social-Politik* measures of this “positivism” are as alien to Smith, to his teachings, and to those disciples who have continued to work in his spirit, as the importance for society of capital and entrepreneurial spirit is alien to the modern *Social-Politiker*.

Thus, again, classical political economy does not lag behind the newer schools of *Social-Politik* in its sympathy toward the poor and the weak, and with respect to the correct understanding of the nature and the causes of economic

phenomena—the correct theoretical insight—classical political economy is far superior.

The effects of the new doctrines on the classes of the population who are to be supported have been felt. The striving for a better position in society through thrift and personal industriousness, a striving that no unbiased observer can deny is responsible for the most important economic improvements of all classes of the population, is visibly disappearing in large parts of the people, while all their thoughts and intentions are directed towards the struggle of individual classes to secure a maximum share of the total production of the economy. The striving for personal industriousness has given way to a class struggle that, as seen from the perspective of society as a whole, is unproductive. Self-interest, so much despised by the *Social-Politiker*, has not disappeared from the world, but rather has degenerated into a collectivist, a national and a class egoism, which does not strive for an increase in the total production (that which is to be shared!) but rather for the maximal part of the total production for every individual social class.

The school of *Social-Politik* in Germany suffers from a doctrinarism, which in its one-sidedness vividly brings to mind the doctrinarism of Manchesterism, only that the latter uncritically expects everything from the free play of individual interests, while the former expects everything from artificial “organizations” and the interventions of state authority. There was a time when the reputation of a competent economist was granted to anybody who declared an intention to destroy anything that smacked of state influence or organization. To receive the highest praise of the current representatives of one strand of *Social-Politik*, no more is needed than to display blind animosity against capital, entrepreneurial spirit, and any form of individual initiative and responsibility in economic matters.

The doctrinarism of the one and of the other have equally distanced themselves from an objective science which recognizes the role of state authority as consisting in the equally important tasks of improving the position of the working class and a just income distribution, but at least to the same degree also in promoting individual industry, thrift, and the entrepreneurial spirit.

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## About the Author

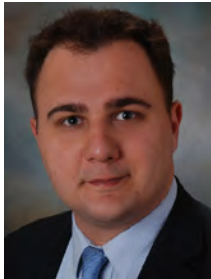


**Carl Menger** (1840–1921) was an influential thinker and professor at the University of Vienna. His *Principles of Economics* of 1871 was a breakthrough in economic theory, notably for its marginalist approach and its subjectivism. His individual-centered conception of the economy was soon perceived as revolutionary and has ever since attracted generations of scholars to expand on this conception, with his immediate and closest associates being Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk (1851–1914) and Friedrich von Wieser (1851–1926). Following the publication of his *Investigations into the Method of the Social Sciences with Special Reference to Economics* in 1883, Menger engaged in what later would become known as the *Methodenstreit*, a controversy on the role of theory and history in economics, his principal opponent being the head of the Younger Historical School, Gustav Schmoller (1838–1917). In the decades after the *Methodenstreit*, Menger remained influential, both as teacher and as a public figure, but did not publish new treatises, either on theory or methodology. After the birth of his son Karl in 1902, Menger increasingly withdrew also from public life, and Wieser succeeded him at University of Vienna as the professor of economic theory. Menger's library was later sold to Hitotsubashi University in Japan, while his archives are preserved at Duke University. Between 1933 and 1936, F. A. Hayek edited the four-volume *Collected Works of Carl Menger*. Menger is widely credited as having originated the Austrian school of economics.

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# How To Do Well While Doing Good!\*

Gordon Tullock

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Economic research always has the potential of contributing to public welfare since improved knowledge can have an effect on the world that is desirable and is unlikely to have an effect that is undesirable. Nevertheless, I would estimate that the average article in economic journals these days has very little prospect of contributing to the well-being of the world. Most economists know this and worry more about publication and tenure than about the contribution their research will make to public welfare. The argument of this chapter is that virtue does not have to be its own reward. The average economist can benefit his career while simultaneously making a contribution to the public welfare.

Consider, for example, the case of the dissolution of the Civil Aeronautics Board (C.A.B.). In 1937, Congress cartelized the U.S. air transport industry, establishing a government agency, the C.A.B., to supervise and control the cartel. As a result, in the United States air transportation prices were held well above their equilibrium, even though they were lower than the prices charged internationally and in Europe.<sup>1</sup>

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1. The apparent reason that American airlines' prices were lower than those in Europe was not that our airlines were any less monopolistic but that they were more efficient, with the result that the optimum monopoly price for them was lower than the optimum monopoly price for such monsters of inefficiency as Air France or Japan Airlines.

In 1984, the C.A.B. was abolished, and it is clear that economists played a major part in its destruction. A group of economists (Jim Miller is the one that I know best) devoted a great deal of time and effort to economic research in connection with the airline industry and to what we may call public relations activities in connection with it. They formed an improbable political alliance between the American Enterprise Institute and Senator Kennedy for the purpose of bringing the control device to an early grave. Further, they were able to convince some of the airlines that they would gain from the elimination of the C.A.B.

As far as I can see, when these economists began their campaign there was substantially no public interest in the matter at all; most people and politicians would have argued that the C.A.B. was necessary in order to prevent the airlines from exploiting the passengers. It is also true that most of the economists who looked at the problem had approved the regulation. It should be said that a good many of the economists that looked at it were members of that small subset of the profession who were professional public utility economists and whose own personal income depends very heavily on the continued existence of these boards for which they can give expert testimony. Miller could have joined this small group but chose the other side, and in view of his subsequent career, it is hard to argue that he was not right, both from the standpoint of the public interest and his own career.

I do not want to, indeed am not competent to, go into the detailed history of this successful campaign, but I should like to point out two important factors: The first is that the average citizen, if he or she had known the truth about the C.A.B., would always have been opposed to it. This is one of the reasons why you can argue that it was in the public interest. The second is that it was not too hard to get the actual story out. The problem was mainly that of explaining the matter to the politicians and the media. This is not necessarily easy since neither of these groups have any particular motive to think hard about the true public interest. They are both much more interested in the image of public interest currently in the minds of the citizenry. But to say that it is not easy, is not to say that it is impossible, and here we have a clear-cut case where it was accomplished. The theme of this sermon is "Go Thou and Do Likewise."

The C.A.B. is not by any means the only example. Banking regulation has to a large extent collapsed in recent years. This was to a considerable extent the result of technological developments, but the existence of a vigorous group of economic critics of the regulations was no doubt important. After all, the regulators could have just changed their regulations to take in the new technology. The fact that they did not was certainly, to some extent, the result of the work of the antiregulation economists in this area. The partial deregulation of the trucking industry is almost



entirely the result of economic activity and, indeed, during the latter part of the Carter administration an economist was acting chairman of the ICC.<sup>2</sup>

In all of the cases originally the majority of the economic profession was on the wrong side, *favoring* regulation. This is one of the problems we face when we talk about economists having a good effect on policy. We must admit that in the past economists have frequently had a bad effect. Good economists have always had a good effect, however, and those who had a bad effect were bad economists. This is not just an ad hoc argument; I believe that one can look into the matter and discover that the people who favored such agencies as the ICC at the time they were set up were markedly poorer economists than the ones who objected to it.

There are other striking examples. In 1929 the United States was probably the world's highest tariff nation. It is true that during the intervening years we have developed a habit of setting up quotas and voluntary agreements, but even if you add those on, we still are a very low trade barrier nation. This change seems to be almost entirely an outcome of steady economic criticism. Certainly, it is very hard to put your finger on any other reason for the change.

Once again however, the history is not clear. The protective tariff, of course, has long been a *bête noire* of the economists, but a review of the advanced theoretical literature over the last years shows far more discussion of optimal tariffs than of the desirability of getting rid of tariffs. This is particularly surprising because the articles dealing with optimal tariffs rarely, if ever, point out that their optimality is a rather special one and that, in any event, it would be impossible to calculate an optimal tariff in the real world.<sup>3</sup> Still, the majority of economic opinion was always against protective tariffs even if this point of view did not get much attention in the technical journals. In a way the success of the tariff-lowering movement depended a great deal on the fact that the secretary of state for some twelve years was a former southern congressman who had learned free trade in his youth and stuck with it. Cordell Hull, of course, has been dead for many years, but the trend that he started continued. Certainly, the general favorable economic climate for such cuts was important there.

What can we do now and, more specifically, what can readers do that is good but will also help them in their careers? My argument is that there are numerous instances that almost all economists can agree are rent-seeking and detract from general welfare. In such cases virtue need not be its own reward.

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2. Unfortunately, this partial deregulation seems to have stopped. (I hope temporarily.) Once again, it is encouraging that most economists were opposed to this regulation.

3. It is not that the optimal tariff literature is wrong. It is that it can be misused and that economists are more likely to have a positive effect on public policy because rent-seeking forces will be pushing for a tariff that is far beyond any optimal tariff.

Let me begin with an example on which almost all economists would agree. There are about 300 British Columbian egg producers, and some time ago it occurred to them that they were not as wealthy as they would like to be. They pressed the British Columbia government into setting up the British Columbia Egg Control Board, a cartel in which the government not only fixed prices but actually engaged in civil service employing operations. Specifically, the Egg Control Board purchased the eggs from the owners of egg factories and then sold them to the public.

The original arguments for this program (other than that it would make the egg producers wealthy), were that they would stabilize prices and protect the “family farm.” They have stabilized prices. If you compare prices in British Columbia to those in Washington State, which has roughly the same conditions, it is clear they fluctuate more in Washington State. However, they have stabilized prices primarily by preventing the falls in price that periodically cause so much distress for producers of eggs in Washington. Whether this particular kind of stability is admired by the housewife, as opposed to the egg producer, is not pellucidly clear. As for protecting the “family farmer,” I doubt that these enterprises really should be referred to as family farms, but it is true that there is some evidence that the average size is possibly slightly suboptimal in British Columbia.

In order to charge a monopoly price it is, of course, necessary to prevent entry into the business. This is done by the traditional grandfather clause, so that those who are producing eggs in British Columbia when the scheme started are the only ones who are permitted to do so. As a result, the wealth of the farmers has increased very greatly because the permits to produce eggs are now valuable. Indeed, for the average egg producer, the permit is more than half his total capitalization.

It should be pointed out, however, that in addition to the egg producers there is one other beneficiary of this scheme. The egg producers produce more eggs than can be sold in British Columbia at what the British Columbia Egg Marketing Board thinks is a stable price. The additional eggs are sold on the international market for conversion to things like dried eggs at whatever the market will bring.

How do I know all of this about the British Columbia Egg Marketing Board? The answer is simple. Two economists decided that it would be a worthwhile study and the Fraser Institute published it in the form of a small booklet.<sup>4</sup> Borcharding and Dorosh thus acquired a reasonably good publication, probably quite easily. It is no criticism of the pamphlet to say that it involves no particular economic sophistication or advanced techniques. It may have been a little difficult, because I presume the Egg Board was not exactly enthusiastic about cooperating with them.

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4. The booklet is *The Egg Marketing Board, A Case Study of Monopoly and Its Social Costs*, by Thomas Borcharding and Gary W. Dorosh (Vancouver: The Fraser Institute, 1981).

Nevertheless, I would imagine that the cost/benefit analysis of this pamphlet, in terms of getting a publication and the effort put into it, was very exceptionally favorable. Further, the pamphlet itself certainly will make the survival of the Egg Board, at least, a little less certain, a result most economists believe would be beneficial.

Of course I hope that more is done here. The pamphlet was published by the Fraser Institute, which exists essentially for the purpose of doing this kind of thing and attempting to influence public policy by its research. The head of the Fraser Institute frequently appears on television. I would think that the prospects for the Egg Board are clearly worse than they were before all of this started. I hope that Borcharding and Dorosh follow up on this, not so much by further research although that of course probably can be done, as by trying to get other publications in the local media.

Here, I am going to suggest that they do something unprofessional; I believe economists should make an active effort to interest the local newspaper and other media in such issues. Stories of a small entrenched interest robbing the general public are the kind of story that does go well once you sell a reporter. Further, they are not particularly complicated.

Such activities are not the ones economists normally engage in; moreover, it will be a little difficult to interest newspaper reporters. Newspaper reporters tend simply to say what other newspaper reporters have said.<sup>5</sup> Granted that reporters behave this way, they are nonetheless normally looking for a scandal which they can make headlines about, and there are innumerable examples. The licensing of private yacht salesmen in California is my favorite case of the public being protected against low commission rates, but I am sure most economists can think of a half dozen more. But let us defer further discussion of general publicity for now.

We can roughly divide various rent-seeking activities for which there is likely a consensus among economists that they are indeed rent-seeking into three categories: those that involve spending money in a way that in the standpoint of the average taxpayer is foolish but that benefits a particular group, those that involve fixing prices above equilibrium, and those that involve obtaining cartel profits by restricting entry into a business.<sup>6</sup>

Economists have not been very successful in their efforts to stop federal government expenditures resulting from rent-seeking. Jack Hirshleifer, for example, devoted a good deal of time and energy, together with a number of experts

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5. The “deregulation” that has been so successful in recent years in the United States is an example. It has become more or less a fad with most of the correspondents for *The Washington Post* who were in favor of it without having any clear idea why.

6. I leave aside here those cases in which if we look only at the short run, as unfortunately the voter does, the beneficiaries outnumber the people who pay. Price controls on gas are a current example.

in the field, in attempting to prevent the Feather River Project from being built in California. It has not been completed yet, but, on the whole, their efforts cannot be said to have made a major impact. I do not know why it is harder to stop government expenditures of this sort than the other kinds of government activity, but I suspect the problem is simply that from the standpoint of the citizens of California, the project is in fact a good one.<sup>7</sup> Their efforts were very largely concentrated in California. The cost, on the other hand, was very largely borne outside of California. There has been relatively little in the way of efforts on the part of economists to stop locally financed expenditures where I think they could have more impact. In making attacks on local expenditures, I think it is wise to keep in mind that in many cases the money actually is federal. It is not unwise of the local government to accept a gift from the national government even if the gift is not in optimal form. The conclusion that can be drawn is that rent-seeking can most often be stopped if the groups that are bearing the cost can be informed.

Turning to the other two categories, entry restriction and price control, most of these are state and local regulations, although there are, of course, federal examples. At these lower levels of government the beneficiaries and the injured groups are somewhat closer together and informing the injured group is somewhat easier. Further, an individual's activities are more likely to have effect in such a restricted area, and last but not least, most of these projects are fairly simple. Thus, it seems better to concentrate anti-rent-seeking activities in these areas.

Let us begin with the cases in which the prices are fixed by some government board, with a maximum and minimum price. This is essentially the British Columbia Egg Board, and there is a simple argument to be used against it, which is that there should be no minimum price. Consumers can hardly be protected by a minimum price. If you can get the minimum price out, the pressure group that set the thing up in the first place will probably see to it that the maximum price is eliminated.

At this point, I should perhaps mention the standard rationalization,<sup>8</sup> that advocates of the minimum price will almost certainly use. They will allege that if the minimum price is not imposed then some company with a lot of money will cut prices, drive the competition out of business, and then exploit its monopoly. This argument is eliminated by not arguing against the maximum price, and instead leaving that to the regular political process. The lesson here is a simple one: The best economic reasoning is not always (indeed, it is generally not) the best politics. Policy economists must formulate arguments that are most liable to lead to the desired outcome, not that are most elegant.

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7. Ignoring, of course, those particular farmers who will be damaged by the canal across the delta.

8. I encountered it in high school.

Restrictions on entry are subject to a variety of forms of arguments. The formal rationalization—that is, that they make certain that the service provided is on a certain level of quality—can be countered by Milton Friedman’s “certification,” which is that the state or local government could provide certificates of competence to anyone who passed their regulations, but not prohibit people who do not have such certificates from practicing provided that there was no fraud. In other words, the person without a certificate would not tell people who solicited his services that he had one. This procedure would probably eliminate most of the monopoly gains and convert the present arrangements into something that might even be socially desirable.

The usual argument against this, of course, is that people are not bright enough even to look at the certificate. (Why people who argue this way think that people are bright enough to vote, I don’t know, but they do.) To counter this argument one can move to a second line of defense, by pointing out that these regulations are not and, in fact, make very little effort to pretend to be, efforts to raise the quality of services.

Uniformly, when such restrictions are put on, everyone now in the trade is grandfathered in. Indeed, that is the reason they are put on—the current people in the trade want to have their lifetime income raised by reducing competition. Clearly, if everybody now in the trade is competent without investigation of any sort, it is unlikely that an investigation is of any use. Thus, all new proposals of this sort can be opposed quite readily.

If we turn to the older ones, there may well be an examination, usually an irrelevant examination, but the examination is given only to new entrants. The appropriate argument here is simply that it is possible for a person practicing, whether as a doctor or as a plumber, to fail to keep up with new developments, forget old developments, or, for that matter, become a dipsomaniac. It would be desirable, therefore, that everyone in the trade not only be examined when he enters but be reexamined from time to time. It is hard to think of any argument against this, but it clearly would eliminate the political pressure for the restriction if the restriction had to take the form of continuing examinations.

Finally, there is a constitutional argument. The Supreme Court has held that requiring a waiting period for a new entrant into a state before he can go on relief violates his constitutional rights to travel freely. Prohibiting him from practicing his trade as a carpenter would also do so. Of course, if the restriction were literally evenhanded—that is, if the New York restriction on carpentry is the same for New Yorkers as for Californians who want to migrate to New York, then this constitutional argument would not exist. Such a restriction, however, would imply that if all people who are practicing carpentry in New York at the time the law was passed are admitted without examination, people who are practicing carpentry in other

states at that time should also be admitted without examination. If we could get the Supreme Court to hold that this is what the Constitution said, we could feel confident that there would be absolutely no political effort to establish new restrictions on entry in the states and local governments throughout the United States.

If an examination for carpenters has been in existence for a long time so that there are not very many carpenters from other states who were carpenters at the time that the original carpenters were grandfathered in, there is a somewhat more difficult constitutional problem. Here, however, an argument would be needed that the examination is not really intended to certify people's ability as carpenters but to prevent migration from other states. It seems to me that the simple fact that the examination is not given regularly to people who are already practicing in order to make certain that they are retaining their skills, and not becoming dipso-maniacs, would be adequate here. Such constitutional arguments may or may not be successful in the courts. I recommend its use in economic arguments, even though it is not strictly relevant, simply because I think it will have a persuasive effect on the average voter.

In making any anti-rent-seeking argument, one should always point out that the data are inadequate (one can also imply in a tactful manner, that the reason that the data are inadequate is that the guilty are concealing or keeping secret evidence of their guilt). More data are always needed and generally the pressure group is to some extent unwilling to provide data because it fears strengthening your argument. Mainly, however, this argument places you in a very good position for rebuttal. Almost certainly, the pressure group representatives will argue that you are simply ignorant in their field. A response in which you say that your ignorance is partly because they are keeping secrets and ask them to provide further information generally would be helpful. In the unlikely event that they do provide additional information, of course, you have opportunity for further and better research.

A second argument that inevitably can be made is that the pressure group has something material to gain from its activities. Although we, as economists, do not regard this as in any way discreditable, the average person does. In fact, the pressure group will normally be arguing that its existence benefits people it in fact injures, but they will normally not deny that its own members are gaining, too. You will thus merely be giving strong emphasis to something the pressure group tends to pass over lightly.

If individual economists would select some blatantly undesirable activity, preferably of a state or local government, and become a modest expert on it, it is my contention that the economy would improve. Doing so does not involve a major investment. In general, these programs are not complicated, but nevertheless becoming an expert will involve some work. After becoming an expert, the economist should attempt to get media publicity for the position with the result first,

of certainly attracting the attention of the pressure group, which may or may not be useful, and, second, if the economist pushes hard enough and is persistent, he probably will have at least some effect on the activity of the pressure group.

Here, I should emphasize that though I am suggesting this as an individual effort, there is no reason why small collectives of economists should not be involved, and there is certainly no reason why you should not seek out the support of other groups. The League of Women Voters, for example, tends to go about looking for good causes and you may be able to improve their taste. There are also various business groups, Rotary Clubs, and so on that are always on the lookout for a lecturer and that would give you an opportunity to provide some influence.

Persistence will, however, be necessary. The pressure group will continue and a mere couple of months' noise about it is helpful but unlikely to accomplish a great deal. Persistence is not difficult, however. Once you have passed the threshold of knowing enough about the organization so that you can regard yourself as a modest expert, it is very easy to keep up with further developments and incorporate additional data into your analyses. Further, your contacts with the media are apt to be self-reinforcing. After you have convinced people that you know a great deal about, let us say, controls on egg production, you are likely to find television program directors asking you questions about all economic matters. You should answer them, of course, to the best of your ability, and this will not only, we hope, contribute to the economic information of the public but also give media representatives an idea of your expertise so that when you bring up the subject of eggs or whatever it is, they are likely to pay attention.

Most economists only occasionally give lectures to something like the Rotary Club. I am suggesting that this aspect of professional life be sharply increased. Furthermore, I am suggesting that you become an expert on some rather obscure topic instead of giving your lecture to the Rotary Club on what is right or what is wrong with Reaganomics. This is indeed a change from the normal academic life but not a gigantic one. I am not suggesting that you devote immense amounts of time to these joint projects, merely that you do indeed devote some time to them. In a way it may be a pleasant change from the more profound and difficult work that I am sure mainly occupies your time.

So far I have been telling you how you can do good and have not explained why I think you can also do well. The first thing to be said is that of course the kind of research I am proposing does have some potential for publication in the regular economic literature. *The Journal of Law and Economics*, *The Journal of Political Economy*, *Public Policy*, and others all are interested in such articles. I would also suggest that the political science journals would be interested, although it would be necessary to make a few changes in your approach if you submitted articles to them.

But while all of these people would be interested and, I think, the prospects for publication are quite good, it has to be said that if a great many economists begin working in this area it would rapidly exhaust the desire for such articles in these journals. After awhile, only the very best of such articles could be published there. Further, in this case “best” would not refer entirely to the quality of the work but also to the importance of the subject matter. A new twist in cartel economics would, for example, probably be publishable when hundreds of studies of specific cartels would not.

So far, of course, the tolerance of these journals for this kind of article has by no means been exhausted and those of you who get in first could no doubt take advantage of that tolerance. Once we turn from this kind of journal publication, however, there are a number of other places with gradually decreasing prestige where you can get published. There is now a chain of economic institutes who are in general interested in studies of this kind of cartel.<sup>9</sup> The Borchering and Dorosh pamphlet is a good example. Clearly this is a perfectly suitable publication to put on your vitae even if it does not carry quite so much weight as publication in *The Journal of Political Economy*. I, as a matter of fact, have three such things on my own vitae. Indeed, I would imagine that in cost/benefit terms these things are considerably more highly paying than JPE articles because although the payoff is not as high, the cost of producing them is also low.

Below that level there is the possibility of fairly widespread publication in such things as articles in local newspapers, letters to the editor, and so on. These are not great publications and you might want to indicate on your bibliography that you think they are not. For example, you could have a separate section for newspaper articles and letters to the editor. You might even mention your appearances on TV in this separate section.

With respect to these less important articles, speeches, and the like, the payoff in academic life is, of course, quite low per unit. Most universities, however, regard activity in the public arena as meritorious and pay it off in higher wages. It also carries with it the advertising value that an article in *The Journal of Political Economy* carries, although, once again, at a lower level.

But although these are less important publications, their cost is also quite low. Once you have become an expert in this area you could grind them out practically at will, producing a letter to the editor, for example, in a half hour. Thus, once again, the cost-benefit analysis from a pure career standpoint seems to be positive.

But this may immediately raise a question in your mind. How do I know that better information is likely to cause the end of these special-interest arrangements? After all, they have been in existence a long time and most economists know about

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9. The bulk of them owe their origin to the energies of Antony Fisher.



them in general even if the public does not. They do not seem to be very secretive. I believe that they depend on either ignorance or misinformation on the part of the public. My reasons for believing so are two: First, if you discuss any of them with average voters it will turn out that they have never heard of them, or if they have heard of them, they are badly misinformed about them. In the case of the British Columbia Egg Board, the average voter probably does not know that there is such an organization. The voter who does probably has bought the argument that the organization stabilizes prices and protects the family farm.

But in addition to this informal public opinion poll, there is another and, in my opinion, more important reason. If we think of the British Columbia Egg Board, any economist could quickly arrange a set of taxes on eggs together with direct subsidies to the people who were in the business of producing eggs<sup>10</sup> that would make both the customers and the producers of the eggs better off. We do not see this direct subsidy being used. Why do pressure groups not simply aim at a low tax on the entire population that is used to pay a direct sum of money to them rather than these clearly non-Pareto-optimal arrangements that we in fact observe? I think the only available explanation for this is that they know that a certain amount of confusion and misdirection is necessary. A direct cash transfer, a tax of \$10 per family in British Columbia for the purpose of paying a pension to the 300 people who happen to own egg factories at the time the program was put into effect, would never go through because it is too blatant and obvious. It is necessary that these things be covered by some kind of deception. Granted that I am right about this—that these programs require that the people be misinformed—informing them is likely to terminate the program. No politician is going to tax all of his constituents a small sum of money in order to give a large sum of money to a small group no matter how well organized that small group is if everyone knows that is what he is doing. Economists can see to it that they do know.

Note here, also, that the nature of the mass media is on your side. The mass media all aim at large audiences. The small pressure group does not have much chance of getting the attention of the mass media except, possibly, unfavorable attention. The small pressure group very likely has its own journal, which it uses for internal communication, but the owner of a TV station or a newspaper will tend to come down for his customers en masse, not a tiny minority of his customers. Thus, not only is secrecy and deception necessary here but the nature of the mass media means that unmasking of these villains is likely to be popular with those who want to make money in the media business.

I am sure all of this sounds rather wild to most of you. I gave an earlier version of this paper at my own university and a young ABD, who had been listen-

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10. Some of these might, of course, decide to stop producing eggs and move to Hawaii on the subsidy.

ing and apparently could not believe his ears came up afterward and asked me whether it was really true that I was suggesting that he not only study up on some local government-managed cartel but seek publication in places other than the JPE. I assured him that was my objective. He went away looking astounded, not, I think, at the brilliance of my ideas, but at the eccentricity.

This particular young man will, I think, have great difficulty getting any publications ever in the JPE. Competition is stiff (even to this day I have about half of my submissions turned down<sup>11</sup>), and most economists will never get a single article published in a leading journal. Still, I assume all of you are members of that small minority who do occasionally break into print in such places as JPE, the AER, and the QJE.

Turning to the problem of the man who does have great difficulty getting anything published, something on his vita is better than nothing, and the proposal that I am making is a way in which he can pretty much guarantee he will have at least something on his vita. For the more productive economist, who does currently produce articles for the leading journals, it is still helpful to add additional items even if these additional items are not of Nobel Prize quality. Once again, the cost of producing these things is comparatively low, so you make a good deal per unit of effort.

Even if there were no beneficial impact on your career, nevertheless, I would urge it on you. All of us are, to some minor extent, charitable and this is a particularly convenient way for economists to work out their charitable feelings. Getting rid of the British Columbia Egg Board might not impress you as a major accomplishment, but individuals can expect to have only small impacts on the massive structure that we call modern society. It is likely that you will do more good for the world by concentrating on abolishing some such organization in your locality than the average person does—indeed, very much more. It is an unusual form of charity, but a form in which the payoff would be high. But although such work falls squarely in the path of virtue, it also has positive payoffs. You can, to repeat my title, do well while you are doing good.

## References

**Borcherding, Thomas, and Gary W. Dorosh.** 1981. *The Egg Marketing Board: A Case Study of Monopoly and Its Social Costs*. Vancouver: Fraser Institute. [Link](#)

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11. I have a large collection of unpublished articles.

## About the Author



**Gordon Tullock** (1922–2014) was Professor Emeritus of Law at George Mason University. Tullock was born and raised in Rockford, Illinois, and earned his J.D. from the University of Chicago. A prolific political economist, Tullock authored several books, among them *The Calculus of Consent* (with James M. Buchanan), *The Politics of Bureaucracy*, *The Organization of Inquiry*, and *The Economics of Non-Human Societies*; a ten-volume collection of his *Selected Works* was published by Liberty Fund in

2004–2006. Tullock's many notable activities included his founding and longtime editorship of the journal *Public Choice*. As of September 2016, his Google Scholar page ([link](#)) showed over 39,000 citations.

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