

REVIEW ESSAYS

No Revolution? Don't Blame Evolution!

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The dismal science has its optimists. Among them are Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. Yet sociologists considering their collaborative *oeuvre* might be perplexed. They remain best known in sociology for their *Schooling in Capitalist America*, a devastating critique of our educational system that concludes with a sincere, detailed contemplation of how the “necessary and feasible” socialist revolution can be accomplished ([1976] 2011: 282). On the other hand, their most recent book, *A Cooperative Species*, is about human evolutionary history and how it has shaped our psychology.

Sociologists are accustomed to arranging their intellectual deck chairs with “socialist revolution” on the left and “evolutionary psychology” on the right. Is this the same Bowles and Gintis? Have they forsaken their political ideals for the seductions of game theory and fieldwork accounts of hunter-gatherers?

Regarding the revolution, Bowles and Gintis have recently said elsewhere that they remain “convinced of the attractiveness of [socialism] as a system, but are less sanguine about its feasibility” (2011: xi). If a socialist America is infeasible, why? While *A Cooperative Species* is not directed toward this question—to be clear, it is not specifically about socialism at all—it can nevertheless be read as ruling out one possibility. Human nature is not to blame.

This position is contrary to the common argument that, however appealing radically egalitarian social change may seem in principle, people are too intrinsically selfish for it to work in practice. This is often presented as an unfortunate logical inevitability, as though socialism was the societal analogue of a perpetual motion machine. Nice guys finish last, and more importantly so do their

A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and its Evolution, by **Samuel Bowles** and **Herbert Gintis**. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011. 262pp. \$39.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780691151250.

genes, whenever they are in long-run competitive self-interested behavior.

In this view, most of what is perceived as altruism is one or another form of *mutualism*—where helping others is also helping oneself. Altruism toward close relatedness, in which individual-level sacrifice is recast as gene-level selfishness, is the most prominent example. “Scratch an altruist, watch a hypocrite bleed,” famously wrote one early sociobiologist (Ghiselin 1974: 247). The implication is that any social arrangement predicated on substantial human prosociality is many millenia too late to be workable for our species.

Bowles and Gintis dismissed this argument back in *Schooling in Capitalist America*, stating that “the antagonisms, insecurities, provincialisms, egotisms, competitiveness, greed, and chauvinism which we observe in U.S. society do not derive from innate biological needs or instincts or infirmities” (1976: 16). *A Cooperative Species* may be considered the capstone of considerable work which Bowles, Gintis, and others have done in the intervening years to substantiate this view. The book is an extremely detailed, exacting, and persuasive argument for the possibility that people can be genuinely nice. Or, at least, that “we are not purely selfish” (p. 3).

You do not actually need evolutionary theory to show that people are not purely selfish. Indeed, one might say that evidence

that nonselfishness exists is ubiquitously available to observant social actors, and that it takes the determined ministrations of a science writer or economics professor to cause us to doubt our own motives and those of others. Bowles and Gintis' preferred scientific evidence on the issue comes from behavioral experiments, especially those that can be compared to straightforward predictions from game theory. They review the large literature of studies in which people paired with strangers show enthusiasm for cooperation that both contradict predictions based on strict self-interest and also defy explanations based on mutualism alone.

Consequently, the puzzle is not whether we are cooperative but how to reconstruct the evolutionary history that made us this way. If you have no interest in that history, then you can skip this book. The "take away" is that a thorough demonstration exists for how human nonselfishness is fully consistent with evolution by natural selection. You can have a noncynical view of human nature and not worry that you are an unwitting crypto-creationist.

Worth emphasizing is that it is simply not the place of evolutionary theory to tell us how we "really are." Rather, the closest we will ever get to our "nature" is through the painstaking study of actual brain, mind, and behavior. The more we know about our present psychology, the better we can adjudicate among competing accounts of our species history. Far less so the other way around.

Bowles and Gintis present the better side of human nature as a set of "social preferences." We enjoy working together. We are inclined to help others. We are angered by people who exploit our generosity. We feel guilt about our selfishness, and shame when selfish actions are brought to the attention of others.

People vary in the frequency and strength of these preferences. So do societies. But, argue Bowles and Gintis, they are widespread enough to understand personal contribution to common projects, including enforcing social norms against group-detrimental behaviors and encouraging cultivation of similar preferences in the next generation.

Very important here is that although Bowles and Gintis are offering an evolutionary account of social preferences, these are not strictly "genetic" in the way that sociologists often misunderstand the term. Social characteristics do not develop in a predetermined way impervious to experiences. Rather, what has co-evolved is a mutually sustaining genetic propensity toward these traits and a cultural propensity toward producing environments in which the individual development of these traits is cultivated and reinforced.

Put another way, people may be said to be "naturally" cooperative, but the arrangements of societies—as part of the same, historically sustaining process—make us more so. Bowles and Gintis place great importance on human socialization. After all, "a considerable fraction of the total available time of members of most societies is spent teaching the young the proper way to behave" (p. 184). The capacity to internalize norms is presented as a vital part of human developmental plasticity. Why children should be susceptible to moral instruction is sometimes regarded as problematic by evolutionary psychologists—it is another thing one can tangle oneself into imagining as evolutionarily impossible—but cultural transmission and norm internalization have obviously worked well for our species.

Co-evolution is consistent with arguments back in *Schooling in Capitalist America*. There, the educational system co-developed with capitalism to place a heavy emphasis on the cultivation of traits congenial to the workplace (e.g., acceptance of authority, tolerance of long periods of boredom). That was not an argument about *gene-culture* co-evolution, but then again capitalism has been a short-lived phenomenon compared to life on the savanna.

Even though it is fairly easy to imagine hypothetically how groups would benefit from shared social preferences among members, such preferences outside kin are rare in nature. So why human beings and not meerkats must be explained. Much of the book is directed toward offering arguments for how early humans stood to reap particularly large benefits from cooperation and how they were particularly well-suited to make it work.

Here one gets to fundamental questions about the ultimate contributions of mathematical modeling to historical reconstruction. Again, the point of all this is not a toy proof-of-concept demonstration. As Bowles and Gintis emphasize, "The question we are asking is about something that actually happened in the human past" (p. 17). They take great care in their modeling to try to inform them with parameters that reflect plausible values of conditions of our ancestral past.

Yet all models, of course, are simplifications. These simplifications invariably result in actors that have some very rudimentary cognitive or social capacities (sometimes along with vast informational or calculating powers in other respects). Maybe actors can only learn from their own experiences, for example, or perhaps they are unable to coordinate actions with others.

Various of Bowles and Gintis' arguments for why human beings are particularly suited to evolving cooperative dispositions turn on the observation that humans are smart. Especially important are the capacities that enable reputations, norms, other forms of culture, and institutions. Bowles and Gintis demonstrate repeatedly that the evolution of cooperative behavior is made more workable when some capacity of humans is added to a model.

What is less clear is how many other routes may yield a similar end, and so it is hard to evaluate how much closer the exercise brings us to "what actually happened." As they write with respect to one of their key concepts, "We do not know that a human predisposition to strong reciprocity evolved as we have described. But our model and simulations suggest that it could have" (p. 164). Perhaps this is the most we can hope for.

That said, *A Cooperative Species* poses a convincing argument for why human capacities make us a particularly propitious species for large-scale non-kin cooperation. The standard argument for the difficulty of evolving cooperative behavior is that selfish people outcompete altruists within groups, and the advantages that more altruistic groups have over more selfish groups is too diluted by scale and time to offset this. Bowles and Gintis provide a variety of mechanisms to solve this problem for humans.

Within groups, the standard argument is that selfish defectors alongside cooperators are the strategic equivalent of wolves in sheep's clothing. But the sheep are not so disadvantaged if you grant them the ability to identify wolves, avoid interacting with them, and coordinate punishing actions against them. Again, the ability for humans to communicate and to develop norms and other institutions makes the evolution of cooperative dispositions more likely. Bowles and Gintis also emphasize the importance of leveling practices that reduce inequality within groups, so that whatever competitive advantages selfishness might yield within a group are less important, making between-group differences more consequential.

Standard arguments about why differences between groups are not important to evolution usually only consider the extent to which groups of cooperators might outproduce more selfish groups. Real human groups do not stick to their own equations, but instead they compete for resources and territory, often violently. As it happens, allowing groups that work well together to kill off less effectively cooperating groups, or forcibly assimilate them to more prosocial norms and institutions, works wonders for the mathematical feasibility of group selection.

Granted, all this adds up to a view of human nature with many ironies. Over the long run, the zeal we have to punish people who take advantage of our generosity allows us to have a stronger predisposition to cooperate in the first place. Aversion to those demarcated as outsiders allows us to more effectively trust insiders. War rewards those who work well together. In the end though, these ironies add up to a complicated human nature replete with internal tensions that accords well with introspection (at least for this reader). What we perceive as the brighter and darker aspects of human motivation and emotion are brought together in the service of balancing individual benefits with the potential large returns of being able to cooperate in grander pursuits.

More broadly, Bowles and Gintis' arguments make plain that people who want a different world need to leverage our evolved psychological architecture, but they are not doomed by it. We simply cannot know what can be achieved under

alternative cultural and institutional arrangements. People sometimes imagine that the way genes and culture operate together is that genes set the constraints on human possibility and then culture determines what happens within those constraints. People also used to think that our physiology obviously precluded us from ever traveling via flight or communicating instantly over long distances. If real constraints exist, it is unclear whether they can ever be distinguished *a priori* from failures of imagination.

Of course, novel social changes may not be in the direction of the greater good. Another implication of *A Cooperative Species* is that if we like a world with social preferences, we need to work to sustain a culture and institutions that encourage and enforce them.

Believing in a positive view of human nature does not get us off the hook from pursuing our own moral development, working to cultivate humanity in the next generation, and demanding good behavior from others.

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Bowling Together

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The family is collapsing. So is community and, for that matter, civil society. Or so journalists and sociologists warn. ABC News and *USA Today* are quick to print stories based on such claims, beginning with those familiar anecdotes from Joe or Jane who capture our attention and validate the studies by telling us how alone and lonely they feel. A *New York Times* headline, picked up by many other newspapers and blog sites, trumpets "The Lonely American Just Got a Bit Lonelier."

Two new books, one by Claude Fischer and one by Eric Klinenberg, both start with a set of observations that would seem, at first, to support this view of increasing isolation—in Klinenberg's case the stunning increase in the number of people who live alone, and in Fischer's case the reported reduction in the number of confidantes Americans turn to. Yet, for neither is the evidence quite what it seems and both wind up arguing that connections—both to family or friends—are very much with us. Both show that the apparent increase of social isolation masks a remarkable persistence of social ties.

Still Connected: Family and Friends in America since 1970, by **Claude S. Fischer**. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation, 2011. 159pp. \$24.95 paper. ISBN: 9780871543325.

Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone, by **Eric Klinenberg**. New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2012. 273pp. \$27.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781594203220.

Fischer argues that Americans are still deeply intertwined with spouses and children as well as other relatives, neighbors, and friends. And, as Klinenberg makes abundantly clear, living alone is not the same as being alone or lonely.

Although Fischer and Klinenberg end up in similar places, they get there by different routes. Fischer emphasizes the continuing sway of family; Klinenberg emphasizes the draw of living separately. Klinenberg argues that the broad social trends—the rise in

women's employment and longevity, the decline in marriage, divorce, and fertility, as well as the spread of new technology, especially the internet—are the engines of change for social connections. In contrast, Fischer suggests that although we might expect these trends to have changed social connections, they have not.

The two books also use very different kinds of data and methods: Fischer's brief book is loaded with graphs and tables. Klinenberg relies on quotes and life stories. Examining a number of national data sets collected over the last four decades, Fischer looks at the social connections with family and friends. Klinenberg, relying on the statistical reports of others, his own fieldwork, and over 300 intensive interviews—all with people in big cities—focuses on how more and more people of all ages are living alone as "singletons" (his label for those who live alone, used to distinguish them from "singles" who sometimes live with partners, roommates, or children).

In *Still Connected: Family and Friends in America since 1970*, Claude Fischer provides an account of the manifold ways in which we have remained engaged with family and friends from 1970 to 2010. In some sense he is continuing the agenda of his important 1982 work, *To Dwell among Friends*. But that book is comparative, highlighting the differences between the personal relationships of those in small towns to those in big cities. There, Fischer emphasized the way urban life transforms community but does so by showing the ways urbanites are more involved with loosely connected friends while small towners are more engaged with dense networks of kin. In this new book, he generalizes: social ties of all sorts persist despite many developments that might lead us to expect otherwise.

Still Connected is insistently and admirably cautious. Fischer uses a number of national data sets to check and recheck his argument. Rather than trying to legitimate or even cover up some limit of the data, he often discusses what he calls its "thinness," addressing the ways that better data might alter one argument or another. He writes repeatedly of problems with the survey questions he used and points out the enormous difficulty entailed in studying changes

in social ties over time, given a reliance on questions whose wording and placement often changes with each new survey, on cross sectional studies separated by a number of years without reference to what happened in those years, and on survey questions that all too often combine different groups, like relatives and non-relatives, even though he wants to look at each separately.

Still Connected is insistently descriptive. As Fischer himself writes: "The question driving this book is descriptive: how did Americans' relationships change over forty years? Explaining why changes occurred—or did not occur—is another, more complex task. . . the focus of this book is on the 'what' not the 'why'" (p. 23). For the most part, he leaves a discussion of explanations to his concluding chapter and there only devotes a few pages to them. (It is, to be sure, difficult to explain the absence of change.) Though claiming to be only descriptive, Fischer is nonetheless in some sense addressing a key theoretical issue, about the association of modern life and social integration that was also the focus of his earlier book.

Perhaps because of his caution, Fischer quite convincingly shows that notwithstanding demographic changes and technological developments, Americans still manage to visit, talk, and help others about as much as they did before such changes occurred. Here, Fischer is continuing a debate he had in the pages of the *American Sociological Review* where he criticized Miller McPherson and his colleagues for suggesting that many Americans are now so isolated that they have no one with whom to share important matters. Fischer shows that the percent of social isolates is "virtually nil" and the number has remained about the same over the past four decades. Moreover, Americans now see relatives as often, maybe their mothers even a little more; they talk more to friends, both in person and virtually, than they did in the 1970s. And their feelings about these connections have changed little as well. Americans experience no more loneliness and maybe even less. They still value family life, even three-generation households which have continued to rise since Fischer wrote this book. They feel close to the same number of people. He not only

looks at social supports, he also looks at connections that are burdensome. And here, too, he finds little change. To be sure there is occasional movement: for example, families do not eat together at home as much as they did decades ago, probably because mothers do not cook as much. But families eat together at similar rates—they just do it in restaurants rather than at home. And they spend less time with their spouses—albeit probably more with their children.

In this short book, Fischer does not address variation by class, gender, race, or even geographic location. Instead, he paints a monolithic picture of social connections. Over and over, the news he reports is that ties have stayed the same. A reader might find this astonishing given that more and more women have jobs, people live longer, delay and leave marriages, have babies outside of those marriages, use the internet—recipes, one might think, for the decline of community. Yet, Fisher tells us there has been no decline of community, no decline of connections. It is a stunning finding, convincing and broad in its implications. In this short book, Fischer has a more modest agenda than he had in *To Dwell among Friends*. But it is an agenda he executes effectively.

Eric Klinenberg's *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*, is also in some sense a sequel—to his book, *Heat Wave*, where he discussed the hundreds of people who died alone in the 1995 Chicago disaster when temperatures soared over 100 degrees. Most of those who died were men, disproportionately African American, who lived alone in abandoned, decaying neighborhoods, out of contact with family and neighbors. Klinenberg was then concerned with social disaster and isolation. But this piqued his interest in broader patterns of living alone in big cities. In *Going Solo*, he comes to understand that most of those who live alone are neither isolated nor lonely. He emphasizes instead the ways in which these singletons have contributed to a lively public life, by volunteering, eating out, visiting and emailing friends, and refurbishing those abandoned apartments, streets, and parks.

Going Solo is at its core comparative. Although he does not examine those who reside with others, Klinenberg portrays

variation among those living alone—between women and men, blacks and whites, middle class and poor, those of different ages. The experience of living alone varies dramatically—with those younger and more affluent (who mostly populate the first substantive chapters) enjoying a “second adolescence” and reporting they chose and like living by themselves contrasted to the poor, many African Americans, and the very old (who are the subjects of the penultimate chapters) who more often suffer the costs of solo living.

Occasionally, as I read the early chapters, I thought Klinenberg romanticized or at least overstated the wondrous lives of young and affluent women and men who go solo, and I would have liked to see some comparison to those who share homes. But just at the point when my skepticism peaked, he would turn to some ambivalence or cost, while maintaining the general tone of positive regard for those who chose to spend their youth or middle age without others in their homes. While many have emphasized the economic and emotional benefits of marriage, Klinenberg's middle chapter begins with the story of one divorced woman who says “marriage is fucking boring” (p. 91), even if she, like others divorced, feels an occasional pang of loneliness or worries about her future. The latter chapter on the elderly is far more measured, recounting the difficulties of getting old without someone nearby. But even here he shows us that getting old together is not for the weak. Especially for women who act as caregivers for their often older, disabled husbands, Klinenberg suggests sharing a home might even be a greater hardship than going it alone. Older solo women, until themselves seriously disabled, play bridge, meet for coffee, and go to the park with other older women and an occasional older man (who, a number told him, they have no interest in marrying); they see and visit their children—especially their daughters, although they would prefer not to have to live with them. The most isolated seem to be the older male singletons; the most dismal stories are of those who live in SROs, surrounded by other distressed male singletons who avoid interacting with each other. This is anything but the monolithic portrait we find in Fischer.

Still, Klinenberg only looks at residents of urban areas, and he is careful to point out this limit of his work. Given Fisher's earlier findings about the differences between urban and rural dwellers, combined with his current argument that little has changed, we might expect that a focus on singletons in small towns or rural areas might yield findings less optimistic about ties to friends. But Klinenberg does occasionally make comparisons between the United States and other countries, especially to Sweden where the number of people who live alone is astonishingly high. For example, in Stockholm about 60 percent of residents live solo and are offered much support for doing so—whether from housing planners (a couple of whom Klinenberg interviewed when in Sweden) or more broadly from the generous public welfare system. That number is higher than in the United States, but the U.S. rate is higher than you would probably think before reading this book. And it is much higher here than it was a half century ago—over 30 million people live alone today, compared to only 4 million in 1950. Put starkly, as Klinenberg does, the majority of all Americans are single, spend more of their lives unmarried than married, and spend much of that time living alone.

A number of other scholars have suggested that singles and singletons are not necessarily without social connections. Based on analyses of national data, research shows that married people help and see less of their parents, siblings, friends, and neighbors than those never or previously married. While conservative commentators are offended by such critiques and argue that marriage is the basic unit or building block

of society, research suggests otherwise. The decline in marriage might even explain why Americans are still connected. But Klinenberg does something innovative and clever, turning this argument in a more optimistic direction: he is not critiquing marriage so much as he is defending living alone. Using rich accounts drawn from his intensive interviews and observations, Klinenberg writes of people who live alone and who say they like both companionship and privacy. In doing so, he suggests, they obtain not only a more environmentally sustainable public life but also a kind of solitude that is restorative. And many of them eventually choose to marry. Living alone becomes a stage—or stages—in the life course, but not just a short one between leaving home and getting married as it was some decades ago.

This account should sound familiar: it is an exchange, really a disagreement that we have heard over and over again—one at the core of the sociological enterprise. It was news when farmers and small towners purportedly felt lonely and lost upon moving to urban areas in the first half of the twentieth century; it was news again when sociologists informed journalists about the march to the suburbs and growing isolation of the nuclear family post-World War II. But at those moments, while some sociologists recounted the imminent social disintegration we faced, others sociologists rebutted that account. Fischer and Klinenberg have convincingly done it again. In recent years, much has changed in American life. Much has gotten worse. But, according to these two highly readable books, Americans are still bowling together.

Media, Social Science, and the New Politics of Knowledge Production

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There is currently a crisis of institutions in the United Kingdom. This is associated with a number of recent events, including corruption and the failure of regulatory oversight in the banking industry, media malpractice in the wake of the phone-hacking by journalists at News International (currently subject to the Leveson Inquiry), and the scandal over inflated and illegal expenses claims by MPs.

Malcolm Dean's book on the reporting of policy issues just misses the opportunity to reflect on these events. On the one hand, it is timely; on the other, it is premature, published prior to the Leveson Inquiry hearings. But the book is disappointing on other grounds, too. It does not present a very analytical approach to the issues and is largely a descriptive account that is not much more than a chronological account of events and personalities. The book is arranged into ten chapters, with seven of them being specific areas of social policy (law and order, drugs, asylum, child poverty, vocational education, health and social care, and housing). The topics are important, but the themes are the same. Each is a tale of "spin," distortion, and venality. In consequence the book manages to be both highly detailed and repetitive.

Dean, until his recent retirement, had been a journalist with the *Guardian*, special correspondent on social policy matters and initiator of its weekly "society" supplement (which along with other supplements, such as "education" and "media" became necessary reading for people working in those areas and provided important revenue for the newspaper with its regular supplements attracting core readership and advertising revenue for job adverts). The supplements are also a vehicle for academics to publish news about their research without the loss of editorial control over a story typical of other reporting on such issues. However, it has given rise to a perception of the typical

Democracy Under Attack: How the Media Distort Policy and Politics, by **Malcolm Dean**. Bristol, UK: Policy Press, 2012. 420pp. \$34.95 cloth. ISBN: 9781847428486.

Guardian reader as social worker, university teacher, or other public sector professional, reinforcing the appearance of segmented publics.

The undermining of public trust is also happening at a time of severe budget cuts following the financial crisis, with major initiatives to transform welfare policy and significant impacts upon disadvantaged groups. Indeed, the government is also complicit in the manufacture of distrust, since its policies of the marketization of the public functions of government—from the health service, through prisons and higher education—also depend on "spinning" the idea of failures in public provision and governance to which the market is offered as a solution.

How these developments are reported and how the media are managed are issues of supreme importance for democracy in an age of austerity. They have also become important for academics in the United Kingdom, as the government increasingly argues that any research that is publicly funded—whether directly through the Research Councils, or indirectly through the Research Excellence Framework (previously known under the acronym RAE)—should have demonstrable "impact." This impact is measured in terms of direct influence upon a "user group" (in the social sciences, usually policy-makers, including NGOs, or practitioner groups) involving exhortation to the co-production of research and the involvement of users at an early stage in research design. In this way, research is pressed down the direction of "mode 2" applied

knowledge, with the internal disciplinary audience diminished in favor of external audiences (usually representing particular organized interests). The marketization of knowledge is then continuous with the marketization of everything else, and academics are to be complicit in it.

Equally, many academics and university press offices believe that press coverage is an indication of impact and academics are increasingly exhorted to the use of social media (twitter, facebook, blogs, and the ubiquitous project website) to promote research to wider publics. The consequence is a series of increasingly segmented audiences, often of like-minded publics, with increased "hyping" of findings in order to break out of narrow boundaries and achieve coverage in national media, both print and broadcast. Of course, the means necessary to achieve such coverage include the adoption of the framings of issues already presented within the media and by media-oriented "Think-Tanks" promoting radical policy solutions, usually of a market-oriented kind. The emerging neo-liberal knowledge regime meets a neo-liberal regime of knowledge dissemination.

Dean provides little address of these wider contexts and purveys a relatively simple model of media distortion brought about by concentration of ownership, especially via News International, politicians' fear of media influence, and market-driven journalists seeking revenues in a declining market for print media. Each of his different areas of social policy is subject to the same besetting "sins" of "reptilian" (his own characterization) reporting. These are the sins of distortion, of dumbing down, of a greater interest in politics than policy, of group think, of being too adversarial, of being too readily duped, and of concentrating on the negative.

Underlying the list (and I am not unsympathetic to his characterizations) is a view that reporting might serve rational debate, through the discussion of facts bearing upon public policy. His "solution" in an afterword is equally traditional—perhaps the Inquiry under Lord Leveson will recommend radical reform to the structure of media ownership, regulation, and transparency in the relations between media owners and government ministers.

In this way, Dean is aligned with a particular kind of mantra in U.K. social policy about the possibility and value of social scientific knowledge. This is the mantra of "evidence-based policy" and the idea that the social science community might serve politics at a distance from the fray of the "warring gods" of politics. The U.K. Academy of Social Sciences (representing professional associations, learned societies, and individual fellows) for example, is currently pursuing a Campaign for the Social Sciences, to make it "better understood within policy making circles and the public at large. In short ... [to make it] widely understood as a necessary core ingredient of a successful economy and society" (<http://www.campaignforsocialscience.org.uk/about-CfSS>).

What is missing from the campaign (and from Dean's book) is an understanding of the politics of knowledge production, including the politics of the social sciences themselves, and the changing nature of the university. We can no longer assume the university to be a neutral space (if we ever could) with a broadly ameliorative orientation to social issues and thus, to be a space in which social policies can be evaluated on behalf of an unspecified "public." The neo-liberal knowledge regime places the university as an integral part of a global knowledge economy. That economy has contributed to widening inequalities on an unprecedented scale and has been associated with the reorganization of employment and welfare to suit corporate interests. In short, the university has become an international education corporation contributing to the expansion and reproduction of inequalities.

At this point, I should declare an interest as co-founder of a different campaign, the Campaign for the Public University (www.publicuniversity.org). The corporate form of universities is not neutral in their relation to knowledge production and the types of public that are served by them. The marketization of higher education that is proceeding at an unprecedented pace in England will transform relations among the social sciences and their social functions. The instrumental conception of the university has no vision of education and knowledge as serving democracy and social justice, and

in this absence, no place for the critical sensibility that has underpinned much sociology.

Malcolm Dean is correct to regard democracy as under attack, but it is not the media that is the primary problem. The very rational knowledge that he seeks to promote and the conditions of its production are under attack. The threat to democracy comes from government itself, and its direct capture by corporate international elites. The

media may distort policy and politics, but what is necessary is a more robust account of structures of power and the politics of our present.

Let it be hoped that these are parochial concerns. Dean's book does not look up from the local problems of a small provincial country, but the wider issues of the politics of knowledge may be compelling elsewhere ... let it not be *de te fabula narratur!*

Rio and Its Slums: The Future at the Crossroads

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Rio de Janeiro is known as a post-card city throughout the world and recently was elected a world heritage site. Nestled between the Atlantic Ocean and the Brazilian mountains, Rio is renowned for its natural beauty and has served as the scene of numerous films and even more songs. At the same time, for years Rio filled the international headlines because of the city's high violence rate. One of its most negative aspects is great wealth and poverty living together, even though this is not a specific characteristic of this particular city, but the reality in any great contemporary metropolis. Even so, Rio is a singular city because it incorporates urban slums in centrally located and wealthy neighborhoods, and despite the fact that most slums are located on the outskirts of town, this proximity between rich and poor creates an unforgettable image for any outsider visiting Rio for the first time.

The 2010 census data shows that around a million and a half residents in Rio de Janeiro live in favelas, meaning areas that the *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* (IBGE) define as subnormal agglomerations. This population is distributed among 763 slums, located in different parts of the city.

In order to better understand what official statistics consider to be a favela, it is necessary to return to this classification of a subnormal agglomeration according to the *Manual de Delimitação dos Setores* (Manual for Demarcating Sectors) for the 2010 census. This document defines a subnormal

Living in the Crossfire: Favela Residents, Drug Dealers, and Police Violence in Rio de Janeiro, by **Maria Helena Moreira Alves** and **Philip Evanson**. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011. 240pp. \$32.95 paper. ISBN: 9781439900048.

Favela: Four Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro, by **Janice Perlman**. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010. 412pp. \$29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780195368369.

agglomeration as each group of at least 51 housing units, most of which lack essential public services, and that until recently have occupied (or have formerly occupied) land officially belonging to someone else (whether public or private) and generally spread out in a disorderly and dense manner.

However, for inhabitants of the city, slums represent more than just places with peculiar attributes. Slums possess specific cultural characteristics and forms of sociability and at the same time, may be distinguished by the violence inflicted on their inhabitants, which is distinct from and more frequent than violence experienced by other inhabitants of the city.

This is an exceptional situation that marks slums in Rio and the subject matter of the two books here under review: *Favela: Four*

Decades of Living on the Edge in Rio de Janeiro, by Janice Perlman, and *Living in the Crossfire: Favela Residents, Drug Dealers, and Police Violence in Rio de Janeiro*, by Maria Helena Moreira Alves and Philip Evanson. The intense empirical research of both leaves it clear that living conditions in these localities extend far beyond official statistics, as daily dramas and experiences are portrayed with both scientific accuracy and social engagement. This is why affectionate references made to interviewed slums dwellers are common in both studies.

Perlman takes us back in time, since her work recovers contact with families she interviewed in the late 1960s. From 1968 to 1969, she did fieldwork in three slums in Rio, using both surveys and life stories. The result was published in 1976, in the book *The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro*. This study became an important reference for urban field analysis in Brazil and marked debates on marginality, slums, and migration. Exactly 30 years later, in 1999 Perlman returned to Rio de Janeiro in order to meet up with the same families she had interviewed in the 1960s.

We all know that societies all over the world went through dramatic changes during the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Perlman came back to a totally different scenario in Rio. She called attention to the fact that urban infrastructure had improved in slums as well as general living conditions. Brazil was not under a military dictatorship anymore, but firmly on the way to consolidating a democratic regime. At the same time, slums dwellers were submitted to a different "order" and a different "State."

It should be remembered that from the mid-1980s up to 2010, the city of Rio de Janeiro and especially its more poverty-stricken communities lived under an incredibly violent and cruel regime that went into effect because of an alleged war against drug trafficking. If on the one hand, drug traffickers imposed terror on the regions they dominated, on the other hand, public forces brutally treated any citizen indiscriminately, including during shootouts that often left women and children as the fatal victims, treated as "collateral damage." As absurd as this may seem, political and police forces tried to, and succeeded in, convincing

the local population that the city was going through a civil war.

These are the conditions under which Perlman revisited slums in Rio and pointed out changes that took place over this period of time. She registered in her book: "When I lived in the favelas in 1968–69, I felt safe and protected, while everyone from elites to tax drivers to leftist students foolishly perceived these settlements as dangerous. The community was poor, but people mobilized to demand improved urban services, worked hard, had fun, and had hope... When I returned in 1999, the physical infrastructure and household amenities were greatly improved. But where there had been hope, now there were fear and uncertainty. People were afraid of getting killed in the cross fire..." (pp. xxi–xxii).

Coincidentally, crossfire is a word included in the title of the other book under review here: *Living in the Crossfire*, even though the two books are distanced by almost a decade in terms of fieldwork carried out (Perlman was in Rio in 1999, while Alves, Evanson and their research team carried out focal groups and interviews from 2007 to 2008). These were extremely brutal times in Rio de Janeiro, when the poor got caught up between drug dealers and the police. The government could not have cared less about civilian lives during those years, when the official discourse was to reestablish order by declaring war against drugs and international weapons traffic, and police were unmerciful and did not hesitate to use lethal force.

This explains why the two books use the same register and express almost identical impressions of slums. Yet, at the same time, the two studies use different methodologies, despite both basing their empirical data mostly on in-depth interviews and life stories. Perlman seeks to recover stories of people and families with whom she had contact in the late 1960s. As such, her work offers a great contribution, since she incorporates a longitudinal analysis over a long time span. She also makes use of quantitative data, such as surveys. Alves and Evanson did participant observation in three communities, besides focal groups and interviews with relevant political actors, among with ex-president Lula and the Rio de Janeiro governor, Sérgio Cabral.

Yet if both books clearly and vividly denounce permanent violations of human and civil rights, they also sketch an almost idyllic landscape in slums. The reader who opens either book will be left with a strong impression that violence is external to slums and that there is no tension or conflict among inhabitants themselves who, in the end, support each other and cooperate in perfect harmony. Perlman's narrative on slums is pure delicacy and poetry when she portrays slums as places where friendship, affection, and popular culture prevail. Despite the fear and insecurity that the author found to be permanent aspects in these communities in the late 1990s, she claims to salvage, when she goes into residents' homes, the same positive feelings that she felt upon making her first contact with slums in Rio in the late 1960s. According to the author herself: "Favela is life, favela is love; Favela is freedom, friendship and feijoada; It is laughter and tears, life and death—only a hair's-breadth apart" (p. xxiii).

Alves and Evanson represent slums in a very similar way. They call attention to the communitarian spirit, ties among inhabitants, and their dedication to activities that represent public services not provided by the state. The authors see soccer and samba schools as integrating elements in these localities, where people may develop a sense of community and collective identities. The authors state: "So although one can say that people in the favelas have been shaped by a history of exclusion, exploitation, and resistance, one should also take note of these astonishing efforts of collective and individual creativity and the tenacious maintenance of community traditions. At their best, the favelas offer the rest of Brazil lessons in community spirit and the strength that comes from joining together with neighbors. They show people working together in a way that overcomes racial and regional ties. They promote a feeling of joy and energy that is contagious and marks what many refer to as the 'spirit of the *cariocas*'" (p. 25).

Nobody would disagree that people living in poor communities often face difficulties that end up joining them together in order to help each other out. However, this does not mean that there are no conflicts among neighbors in slums and the social relations

are always distinguished by peace and solidarity. Quite the contrary, several studies point out that gossip, surveillance on neighbors, and disputes are the recurrent among slums dwellers. Fights over demarcating land and public utilities such as water and electric power, and even personal issues, are also common in slums.

It is important to remember that even with its own peculiar characteristics, slum sociability is not drastically different from any other region of the city, especially lower-income neighborhoods. The fact is that contrary to certain romantic images that appear in films and songs, violent sociability often prevails in slums, the result of all the abuse to which residents are submitted.¹

The literature on slums in Brazil is quite broad and remarkably solid, and the points covered above may be found in studies by Brazilian authors such as Licia Valadares and Luiz Antônio Machado. It is important to emphasize that nowadays living conditions and access to consumer goods in slums is similar to the rest of the population in Rio de Janeiro. As such, care should be taken with the representations and images of slums that have made their way into social-science investigations. One of the many myths created from these representations is the "favela/rest of the city" dichotomy. This parallel, dividing Rio into two different "worlds," obscures heterogeneity within slums, as well as similarities between slums and other kinds of urban spaces. In her book *A invenção da favela: do mito de origem a favela.com* (The Invention of the Favela: From the Myth of Origin to Favela.com), Licia Valladares² calls attention to the necessity of social researchers questioning this image, which should be repositioned as part of the wider urban transformations underway in contemporary societies.

It is even more important to consider economic growth in the last decade in

¹ Luiz Antonio Machado da Silva coined the concept of "violent sociability" in his book *Vida sob cerco: violência e rotinas nas favelas do Rio de Janeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Fronteira, 2008.

² Valladares, Licia do Prado - *A invenção da favela: do mito de origem à favela.com*. Rio de Janeiro, Fund: Getúlio Vargas, 2005.

developing societies, including Brazil, which gave working classes greater access to consumer goods. What kinds of meanings may actually be derived from a significant number of Brazilians entering the consumer market still is not clear, but doubtlessly, this represents a change in parameters that, until recently, divided social groups and lifestyles. Slums dwellers may be included among these consumers.

This is why it is worth emphasizing that slums have changed, and continue to change, together with reality in Brazil as a whole. Maybe it is time to rethink the idea that there is a gap separating slums from the rest of the city, or the "hill" from the "street," as people say colloquially in Rio.³

Finally, it must be mentioned that near the end of 2008, the Rio state government occupied numerous slums with Pacification Police Units (UPPs).⁴ The occupations were presented as the key public-safety policy for combating violence in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Since UPPs are relatively recent, it is not possible to present an accurate analysis of their effectiveness and consequences on slums populations. A common criticism of this policy is that the UPPs were established in only a few slums, mainly in the more affluent parts of the city, while most slums still lack governmental support. Another important questioning of this policy regards the duration of the occupation: If the social reality in slums does not change and the initiative does not advance any further than mere police occupation, what will happen when these police units leave the slums? The insecurity and vulnerability portrayed

in the two books is still valid for most slums dwellers, especially those on the outskirts of the city. Nonetheless, there remains a strong perception that violence has indeed decreased in communities where UPPs were established, as well as in the city as a whole.

Alves and Evanson mention the UPP experience, but their research came to an end in 2008 and the first UPP occupied the Dona Marta slum in November of that year, thus the authors could not offer much information on this policy. It is worth remembering that, even if doubts do still arise as to the UPP's capacity to respond to the public-security problem in Rio de Janeiro, this issue was even more dubious when the book was written. Perlman did her research in the late 1990s so she did not have any opportunity to ask slum-dwellers about this new part of their daily lives.

All of these motives make the two books in question somewhat dated, nevertheless they do offer an important contribution to literature on the subject and offer a means of creating better living conditions in Rio's slums. Greater worldwide transformations affecting life in Brazil, in Rio de Janeiro and, yes, in slums, make it legitimate to affirm that we have arrived at a turning point. The two books reviewed here allow us to learn more about part of the story, presenting relevant topics for better understanding what could be waiting for us on the next street corner. It is fundamental to remember that the future is the result of decisions and choices, in both political and social arenas, made in the present time.

³ Following the idea that all slums are on hill-tops without paved streets.

⁴ UPPs aim at replacing drug-trafficker command in slums by occupying them with specialized police units designated to offer community services, end armed conflicts, and make it possible for slum dwellers to enjoy normal daily routines.

The Currency of Democracy: Politics, the Media, and Corporate Control

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The *Mansfield [CT] Independent News* arrived in my mailbox the other day. Perhaps because I had been thinking about the two books under review here, I was struck by the line under its bold-faced title: "Information is the currency of democracy." Thomas Jefferson." Both *After Broadcast News* (by communications scholars Bruce Williams and Michael Delli Carpini) and *The Space of Opinion* (by sociologists Ronald Jacobs and Eleanor Townsley) emphasize how vital public information is to the maintenance of a democratic government; the communications team is more direct than sociologists in addressing the neoliberal market for information.

Instead of discarding the free four-page monthly, I read it, googled its three-person staff, and felt it captured the transformation of media that the two books discuss. Here is why: The "Independent" seemed independent in name only; like early nineteenth-century newspapers, it expressed its ideological commitment regarding the activities of the town council. Its publisher is the head of the Republican Town Committee. Its editor used to write an often vitriolic blog about town government on the local *Patch* (owned by AOL) that, unsolicited, had begun to appear in the inbox of my university account a year or so ago. While a vitriolic newspaper story may still be an oxymoron, these days a vitriolic blog is not. On *Patch*, the editor's column was accompanied by a bright color-photo in which she embraces a statue of Thomas Jefferson in the manner associated with family snapshots. She also is a regular at town meetings and she sometimes contributes nasty criticisms of the council and its Democratic majority during the broadcast of the town council meetings on a public-access channel of the local cable provider. Like the famous broadside attacks aimed at Thomas Jefferson, her tone does not seem politely rational to me. All told, that is a lot of local political commentary

After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment, by **Bruce A. Williams** and **Michael X. Delli Carpini**. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011. 361pp. \$32.99 paper. ISBN: 9780521279833.

The Space of Opinion: Media Intellectuals and the Public Sphere, by **Ronald N. Jacobs** and **Eleanor Townsley**. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011. 295pp. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780199797936.

available in a town of roughly 15,000 people, not counting the students who live on the University of Connecticut campus.

Although I can have face-to-face exposure to local political events, I experience them through the media. I have no choice but to encounter non-local events through the media. The authors of the two books under review would probably find me a responsible and informed citizen. I watch news and opinion shows, read several on-line newspapers, and when I am driving, I sometimes listen to the radio talk-shows of people whom I believe to be despicable reactionaries. (I want to know what they are thinking, but I do not think they care much about me.) Partly because of my choices, partly through the structure of communication in a complex society, the media do indeed actively filter the world for me. They have not merely annexed, but replaced Habermas' mythic eighteenth-century coffee shop where male citizens informally discussed the political matters of an emerging democratic society.

The scads of information which I routinely encounter seem to affirm the common understanding that more news and opinion is available in the digital age, and so we have all experienced an increase in digital

democracy. However, some social scientists find that digital democracy may be a myth, because the "Internet has shifted . . . the bar of exclusivity from the *production* to the *filtering* of political information" (Hindman, p. 13, emphasis in the original). For instance, with its combination of political news and gossip about stars, Yahoo receives 3.8 billion page views a day. Before, corporate gatekeepers filtered what could become news. Now anyone with access to a computer can post a political blog, but even larger conglomerated gatekeepers decide what information people will routinely encounter. To be sure, some people eschew the routine. Exemplifying processes described decades ago, they seek out sources of information which will affirm their own opinions. As users selectively expose themselves, relatively few online newspapers and blogs become more powerful and the others lose their economic base. Rather than becoming more enlightened about the viewpoints of those with whom they disagree, these users reinforce their belief in their own political rectitude; they become politically stubborn.

The authors of both *After Broadcast News* and *The Space of Opinion* worry about democracy in the digital age. To discuss what is happening to Jefferson's "currency of democracy," Jacobs and Townsley present results of content analyses about how expressions of political opinions have changed across media from the years 1993–1994 to 2001–2002. Jacobs and Townsley also discuss entertainment as opinion; they introduce their data with an historical and theoretical understanding of American media. In *After Broadcast News*, Williams and Delli Carpini offer a terrific historical treatment of the transformation of the mediated information called news in the United States. They emphasize that the conflation of news and entertainment is not a novel phenomenon; the Yahoo homepage reproduces the mix of information typical of the first page of a mid-nineteenth-century newspaper. Even though Williams and Delli Carpini present a very idealistic vision of a democratic debate about the next media regime and perhaps because Jacobs and Townsley pay limited attention to the economic interests of the media and to issues of raw power, the two sociologists seem more naïve.

After Broadcast News is a history of American media systems and a prayer for the future. The book departs from other histories by specifically addressing a key issue in our own time: how news and entertainment were once joined to one another and are inextricably linked again. Williams and Delli Carpini use the term "media regime" to refer to "a historically specific relatively stable set of institutions, norms, processes, and actors that shape the expectations and practices of media producers and consumers" and note that the word regime "signals the degree to which any stable media system depends on actions by the state. . . ." (p. 16). By treating media regimes as social formations, the product of social choices, rather than technological inevitability, they emphasize how media systems are shaped by interactions and struggles between the media and the state. These influence what information media present and how they present it. Deploying terms introduced by John Fiske (1996), they remind us that contemporary renderings of political occurrences are "multiaxial;" they revolve around representations of multiple media so that these media realities meld with everyday reality to produce a "hyperreality," defined as "'a postmodern sense of the real that accounts for our loss of certainty in being able to distinguish clearly and hierarchically between . . . the modes of its representation'" (p. 118). Again quoting Fiske they note that multiaxiality "transforms any stability of categories into the fluidities of power" (p. 120). The authors hope that recognition of this transformation and that their analysis of earlier media ages will free us from blithely accepting the practices of the Age of Broadcast News (the 1930s through the 1980s) as the appropriate, even proper way of talking politics. (The 1930s saw the inauguration of state regulation of radio and television supposedly to serve the public good, a policy transformed in the 1980s when the Soviet bloc collapsed and neoliberalism emerged as a new political and regulatory principle.) Before the explosion of media, Williams and Delli Carpini point out that Americans had accepted the objectivity of professional journalists as the norm and insistently distinguished between news and entertainment. These norms and distinctions no longer

work. Not only do many twenty-somethings get their news from *The Daily Show*, from Facebook or from Tweets, but today producers are no longer distinct from users. (Bruns [2008] has termed these producers/users “producers;” c.f. Oscar Westlund 2011.) Whether employed by a media organization or blogging at home in pajamas, many producers do not abide by the professional code of objectivity that dominated the news media for much of the twentieth century. Some contemporary political exchanges, especially those on talk radio, cable news, and blogs (see Sobieraj and Berry 2011), have more in common with the vitriolic attacks directed at Thomas Jefferson than the rational exchanges among informal groups. The authors hope that their explanation of how the Age of Broadcast News both expressed and shaped its times will open us to the possibilities inherent in our emerging media age.

Wisely, Williams and Delli Carpini do not attempt to predict the shape of the emerging media regime, but hope that there will be active public debate about its characteristics. Without informed debate, they argue, “the democratic potential of this new environment will likely be lost to a series of incremental decisions largely driven by market forces and entrenched political interests” (p. 289), as happened when earlier media regimes emerged. Their hopes for such a debate are quite idealistic: it should involve transparency, pluralism, verisimilitude, and practice to create a democratic media environment and they provide extended discussions of what they mean by these terms. “Transparency” refers to “the ability of participants in politically relevant, mediated communication to know who is speaking to them,” including knowledge of the “economic interests of a movie studio” (p. 289), as well as those of a newspaper chain, to be able to assess sincerity and authenticity of the people, organizations, and institutions being mediated, and finally an audience familiar with the rules used to construct public information. “Pluralism” indicates “openness of the media environment to diverse points of view and the equal accessibility of these different views” (p. 295). Because “[b]oth transparency and pluralism take as a given that truth and

objectivity are problematic concepts that have lost their authority,” Williams and Delli Carpini praise verisimilitude, defined as “the likelihood or probability of truth” that requires “authors of any media text be aware of and take responsibility for its deeper truth claims, even if these claims are not strictly verifiable in any formal sense” (p. 305). Williams and Delli Carpini cannot explain how the debate will avoid the partisanship and entertaining nastiness of Rush Limbaugh, Bill O’Reilly, or Keith Olbermann. By practice, they refer to the use of the media to model appropriate interactions and to participate in political engagement. While the authors thus recognize that news/entertainment is not rational, they nonetheless fervently hope that debate about the emerging media system will not succumb to a pugilistic metaphor (accusation/counter-accusation; punch/counterpunch). In 1937, Leo Rosten tried to explain why so many news accounts sounded like a reprise of a boxing match rather than a sophisticated analysis of, say, economic policies. He wrote “journalists place a premium on conflict, particularly conflicts between well-known persons. An attack is news” (Rosten: 258). Those conflict-ridden accounts helped to sell newspapers, as did the comics page and movie reviews. Williams and Delli Carpini recognize that the media are businesses. They nonetheless hope that open debate will enable the state to design a media regime that serves citizens, not merely corporations.

In *The Space of Opinion*, Jacobs and Townsley engage in a radically different enterprise. Rather than looking at how the form of news changes as media regimes succeed one another, they address patterns of opinion and commentary found in the seemingly expanded media environment (“seemingly,” because if the point of elite control has indeed shifted from news production to dissemination, the range of opinion available in the media may not have expanded all that much). For them, the space of opinion, such as newspaper columns and political talk shows, represents “mediated deliberation” which can be “successful” without being “fair” and extends beyond the supposedly objective page of news reports. They set out to learn how different media formats tend to encourage different kinds

of speakers and performative styles (p. 71). They ask this question, because they want “to link the normative commitments of the three ideal-typical models [of mediated communication] with their different degrees of tolerance and preference for specific parts of the media space” (loc. cit.). These are the “rational model,” “Habermasian theories of informal publics and complex democracy,” and “cultural models. . . recognizing. . . drama, disagreement, and strategic communication.” To oversimplify, they are asking who is correct, the followers of Robert Park, Jürgen Habermas, or Jeffrey Alexander? Also, do some theories apply to some media spaces but not others? If so, what are the consequences?

Jacobs and Townsley seek their answer in content analyses of the opinion columns of two very different national newspapers, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*, and patterns of appearances on four distinctive Sunday morning talk shows, *Face the Nation* (CBS), *Crossfire* (CNN), *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer* (PBS), and *Hannity & Colmes* (Fox News). Identifying both the media and the commentators with cultural fields, they ask who writes for which newspaper and appears on which TV show. Are members of one branch of government more likely to appear on one kind of show than another? Are “think-tank intellectuals” (as Jacobs and Townsley call them) more likely to appear on talk shows than to write newspaper columns? (They are.)

The patterns might be interesting, but how do they matter? And are data about a ten-year period sufficient to get an inkling of the future? Do the patterns foretell a less centrist political environment than had been typical during the Age of Broadcast News? Jacobs and Townsley answer yes and no: the proliferation of opinion formats has created a dense environment replete with “intertextual references. . . this circulation of opinion still works from the center, where authoritative opinions are produced, and then moves outward” (p. 239). Newspaper op-ed pages and Sunday talk shows reference one another. The cable shows, such as *The O’Reilly Factor*, reference the mainstream media in “a critical way with the suggestion that those formats are biased, elitist or limited.” And even newer formats, such as *The*

Daily Show with Jon Stewart and the now defunct *Countdown with Keith Olbermann*, in turn criticize them. Jacobs and Townsley hope that this “nested cross-commentary”—this “ensemble of spaces and. . . the nature of critical dialogue that takes place between them”—is “a fundamental part of the quest for a more just and rational civil society” (p. 246). I do not share Jacobs and Townsley’s confidence that more media contribute to more democracy. In the short run, I experience political stubbornness and hear railing diatribe.

Ultimately Jacobs and Townsley, and to a lesser extent Williams and Delli Carpini, are optimists because they minimize the raw power of the media. I am not referring to theories about how the media influence public opinion or even ideas about how the media are a filter. Nor am I disparaging Williams and Delli Carpini’s sophisticated discussion of the construction of hyperreality. Rather, for me, the difference between optimistic American and more realistic European theories is captured by the distinction between two verbs—mediate and mediatize. Both sets of authors use the American terms “mediate” and “mediation.” The process of “mediatization” is more redolent of power. As the Danish scholar Stig Hjarvard has explained, the term “mediatization” refers to “a double-sided process of high modernity in which the media emerge as an independent institution with a logic of [their] own” to which other institutions must accommodate and “also become an integrated part of other institutions,” such as “politics, work, family and religion, as more and more of these institutional activities are performed through both interactive and mass media” (Hjarvard: 105). Those media have such power that Hjarvard’s definition has replaced the older meaning of mediatization: to annex one state to another state, allowing the former ruler to maintain his title and some authority.

The problem of mediatization is quite complex. It is not just that newspapers (online and hard copy), television, radio, blogs, magazines, movies, a smart phone, and even popular songs filter the information (news/entertainment) that I know about my town and about national and international affairs. The filtering or mediation

matters, as both Jacobs and Townsley and Williams and Delli Carpini point out in very different analyses of representations of 9/11 and the American war on terror. (Williams and Delli Carpini's discussion includes such entertainment as network talk shows.) It is even more important that a myriad of institutions design themselves to be presented in the media and in doing so, they may take the rules that govern the media as their own rules. Put somewhat differently, as institutions and individuals produce themselves, they embody the media.

These two very useful books forced me to clarify my ideas. I recommend them as a way to start thinking about political institutions in today's media environment.

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From Primates to Parliaments

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We have come to expect bold, sweeping arguments from Francis Fukuyama but his latest book definitely surpasses any of his previous ones in the bold sweep department. It is the first of a planned two-volume project covering the emergence, and frequent decay, of political institutions from the beginning (and even before that) to today. This first volume, *The Origins of Political Order*, covers the period from primate politics to the eve of the French and Industrial revolutions. In it Fukuyama aims to lay bare the historical sources of the three main components of political order—effective state formation, the rule of law, and political accountability—as a basis for a better understanding of their fate in the modern world in the second volume. Fukuyama sees himself as extending and elaborating upon the foundations laid by his "mentor" Samuel Huntington in the magisterial *Political Order in Changing*

The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution, by **Francis Fukuyama**. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012. 585pp. \$18.00 paper. ISBN: 9780374533229.

Societies, particularly in establishing processes of political and institutional development as irreducible to "more fundamental" economic or social factors.

In Part I of the book, Fukuyama presents the basic assumptions that will inform his analyses. Citing widely from the literatures on evolutionary psychology, biology, anthropology, and primatology, he argues that we humans are inclined to nepotism, to violence but also social cooperation, to becoming emotionally attached to rules and norms, and to seek status and legitimacy. These traits in turn imply that: (1) the primordial

state is one of "patrimonialism," favoring one's kin and close associates; (2) that effective social cohesion cannot be based on self-interest alone but requires legitimacy and authority; (3) that institutions tend to resist change until they are met with catastrophic (often violent) crises; and (4) that the painstaking process of building effective political institutions is punctuated by frequent relapses to a more primitive patrimonialism.

The core of the book consists of three sections dealing with each of the three major aspects of political development. In Part II, on state building, Fukuyama recounts how the first non-patrimonial state (i.e., a centralized bureaucracy based on merit rather than kinship) was created in China during the Qin and Han periods in the two centuries BC under the pressure of incessant warfare and benefitting from a relatively weak kinship-based aristocracy. This set the stage for a ruthless, unconstrained centralized government which has survived to the present day, many rebellions and feudal-patrimonial relapses notwithstanding. Similar results were obtained, for a while, in the Muslim world where the requirements of warfare and conquest and the need to overcome tribal rivalries led to the invention of professional armies and administrations staffed by slaves from the conquered territories who could not pass on their privileged positions to their offspring or kinsmen. This system was perfected by the Ottomans. While it was effective in staving off nepotism, venality and corruption for some time, "eventually [it] succumbed to the natural human desire of their elites to pass on status and resources to their children" (p. 215) as the slaves became a new aristocracy eventually repatrimonializing the state. India provides an interesting contrast in that there the dominance of the Brahmins and the caste system prevented rulers from ever forming any state as brutally effective as China's or the Ottoman's. Finally in Europe, Fukuyama claims, the Catholic Church effectively undermined the strength of kinship relations and promoted a much more individualistic orientation as a result of its early assault on extended patrilineal kinship ties and rights.

Part II deals with the rise of the rule of law, the idea that "there is a preexisting body of law representing the will of the whole

community that is higher than the will of the current government and that limits the scope of that government's legislative acts" (p. 253). This idea became prevalent in Europe primarily as a result of the effective separation of Church and State that resulted from the Concordat of Worms, and the successful depatrimonialization of the Church by the imposition of celibacy on the priesthood by the energetic Pope Gregory VII. This produced a powerful bureaucratic hierarchy independent of secular authority which was able to rationalize and uphold canonic law as primary and superior to secular law and to produce an independent class of jurists capable of interpreting the law. It also provided Europe's secular rulers with a model of a modern, bureaucratic, and rule-governed administration for their later state-building efforts. This evolution contrasted sharply with that of the Muslim world, as well as that of Orthodox Christianity, where religious leaders gradually came under the sway of secular ones creating a form of caesaropapism.

To trace the rise of accountable government, which "means that the rulers believe that they are responsible to the people they govern and put the people's interests above their own" (p. 321), Part IV focuses, sensibly enough, on Europe. From the late Middle Ages onward, European rulers were forced to modernize their states as a result of almost continuous warfare, but they did so under circumstances quite different from those faced by the Qin and Han emperors almost two millennia earlier. These included respect for the rule of law, an entrenched aristocracy of varying strength, and a range of forms of consultation and local self-government bequeathed by feudalism and early Common Law traditions. The different regimes that emerged were largely the outcomes of a four-way struggle between kings, upper nobility, gentry, and the third estate, with the peasantry in a mostly subsidiary role. Depending on the degree of mobilization and alliances among those resisting the king's efforts to increase his powers, the outcomes ranged from the victory of the principle of "no taxation without presentation" (Britain, Denmark), to predatory and ultimately failed oligarchy (Hungary, Poland), to weak absolutism (France, Spain), or at the other extreme, strong absolutism

(Russia). The British case is particularly important in that it was the only one to produce a combination of *all three* elements of political development, a strong state, the rule of law, and political accountability. The Glorious Revolution that produced this remarkable outcome was itself, according to Fukuyama, the product of a unique combination of historical forces: the early solidarity and self-government at the local level resulting from the very early individualizing force of Christianity, the strength of Common Law traditions and the legal profession, the extraordinary cross-class solidarity in Parliament, and religion (particularly dissenting Protestantism) as a mobilizing force. Protestantism also played a major role in Denmark, he argues, in that it produced a literate peasantry capable of mobilizing in the defense of its own interests.

In the final section of the book, Fukuyama sums up the theoretical payoff of his vast tour through time and space and gives a brief preview of things to come in Volume Two. Somewhat disappointingly, however, he mostly reiterates the *premises* with which he started his inquiry to begin with: the biological basis of politics, the importance of ideas and of historical accidents and the ever-lurching danger of political “decay” either due to our biological proclivities toward nepotism and conservatism or to the strength of vested interests. Fukuyama warns us repeatedly that his is not “a genuine predictive theory, since outcomes are the result of so many interlocking factors” (p. 438). Fair enough. But a couple of pan-human proclivities plus a lot of historical accident does not really amount to much of a theory at all.

Moreover, the said proclivities turn out to do remarkably little of the explanatory work in Fukuyama’s accounts and where they do, they are not particularly original. I have no difficulty in principle with the proposition that institutions will tend to backslide towards patrimonialism “in the absence of other norms and incentives” (p. 450). But this does not strike me as a particularly novel observation. The question is whether we can say something more interesting about the conditions under which such “other norms and incentives” are successfully created and maintained—and Fukuyama has precious little to say on this. When it comes to the one major case of “decay” due to

institutional rigidity, the case of the French *ancien régime* being unable to reform itself, the causal mechanism turns out not to be our innate conservatism but a set of well-entrenched vested interests successfully blocking all major attempts at reform. This may be perfectly plausible but only because we have heard it so many times before, from precisely those rational choice theorists, among others, that Fukuyama heaps scorn upon at every opportunity he gets. Ideas, finally, surely matter, but how and when? There has been a growing consensus on this point among sociologists, political scientists, and even economists—but neither they nor Fukuyama have moved much beyond this starting point so far.

Finally, his explanation for the rise of accountable government in Northwestern Europe invokes precisely the same “social” factors—those to which processes of political development were not supposed to be reducible—that were the mainstay of the more carefully argued explanations offered by the likes of Barrington Moore and Michael Mann. The former is not cited at all by Fukuyama and the latter only once in connection with a secondary point. This is all the more stunning since Mann’s *The Sources of Social Power* covered almost exactly the same territory as Fukuyama does. In fact, for someone seeking to “recover something of the tradition of nineteenth-century historical sociology” (p. 24) Fukuyama displays painfully little familiarity with that tradition or its present-day heirs. He mentions Parsons once, as an exponent of the modernization theory that Huntington helped in “killing off,” and refers to him as “Weber’s protégé.” Durkheim, together with Marx, stands accused of claiming that religions were *deliberately* created for the purpose of binding communities together.

But then, this is clearly not a book intended for an audience of professional social scientists, much less specialists. The reader will find none of the careful weighing of the historical evidence for and against particular explanations that characterize the work of Moore or Mann. Fukuyama argues by means of anecdotes, hand-picked examples, and plain proclamations. This makes the book a relatively easy read, to be sure, but not a work of social science.