

Notes from the Editors

In this issue of the Review (108.1) we present a number of articles that illustrate the importance of cross disciplinary research in promoting innovations in the field. These include works that draw upon physical anthropology, theology, and genetics to add insights regarding political development, political ethics, and voting behavior. Further, consistent with our commitment to publish pieces that speak broadly to the field, in this issue there are a number of pieces that, although they appear to be focused on particular issues or countries, address themes that should have broad appeal to many different subfields in political science. In this way we hope to promote greater conversations across subfields, which we believe to be the basis for further innovation in our discipline.

As always, we continue to provide a brief introduction summarizing the basic arguments of each article that appears in the issue. The introduction is organized to provide the reader with a quick glimpse of the content of the issue, so as to pique the interest of the reader. Thus, rather than a synthesized essay, our introduction provides clear and straightforward summaries of each piece.

In this Issue

Our cover relates directly to the article “The Bones of Contention: The Political Economy of Height Inequality.” In this piece, which represents a real advance in the integration of the techniques of physical anthropology and political science, Carles Boix and Frances Rosenbluth provide intriguing new insight into human inequality on the basis of osteological data. They use height variance as indirect evidence of the distribution of resources within a society (with greater variance in height suggesting greater inequality), based on the assumption that income and social position permitted some to have more reliable access to food, shelter, and health than others in pre-industrial societies—and to grow taller as a result. The use of this osteological data permits Boix and Rosenbluth to examine human inequality for a range of societies and time periods that has not typically been investigated by scholars interested in the political economy of human inequality. Importantly, close examination of these data suggests that the impact of economic factors was mediated by military technology and political institutions.

The debate regarding the best method for selecting and retaining state judges continues even as judicial campaigns have become increasingly expensive, high-profile, and dominated by the participation of out-of-state interest groups. How have these “new-style elections” altered the effects of the selection method on judicial behavior? In “Judicial Selection and Death Penalty Decisions,” Brandice Canes-Wrone, Tom S. Clark, and Jason P. Kelly offer a carefully nuanced answer to this question. Utilizing an impressive new

dataset of death penalty decisions by state courts of last resort (from 1980 through 2006 with over 12,000 votes from over 2,000 cases), Canes-Wrone and colleagues show that the new judicial campaign context has created incentives for judges to cater to majority sentiment on the salient campaign issue of the death penalty. Contrary to conventional wisdom and many previous findings, they find that judges are significantly more responsive to majority opinion in nonpartisan than partisan election systems. Moreover, the evidence indicates that this result derives from judicial incentives, not simply differences in the types of judges selected between the systems. Similar effects are found for commission-retention systems, but the findings are less robust than those for nonpartisan elections.

In “Transforming Power Relationships: Leadership, Risk, and Hope,” James H. Read and Ian Shapiro ask how certain enduring conflicts can be brought to an end. Looking primarily at the case of South Africa’s transition to majority rule, they argue that seemingly irresolvable conflicts can be resolved if leaders come forward who are willing to take the risky step of negotiating their differences, and cultivating a new vision of the future for their peoples. As opposed to theories of conflict resolution that only look at “objective” factors, Read and Shapiro argue that the vital impetus for peace might come from leaders who are willing to engage in “calculated risk-taking in the face of imponderably complex circumstances,” an inherently nonquantifiable undertaking. This kind of “strategically hopeful action” can in effect transform a zero-sum situation into a positive-sum situation. Read and Shapiro outline a novel theory of transformative leadership that helps us to see conflict resolution in a new light.

Allison Carnegie’s article, “States Held Hostage: Political Hold-Up Problems and the Effects of International Institutions,” explains which states benefit most from participation in international organizations. Using the case of the World Trade Organization (WTO), she demonstrates that pairs of states that find cooperation difficult stand to gain the most from membership in international organizations. This is so, she argues, because international institutions help mitigate the impact of political asymmetries and reduce the likelihood that that more powerful states will “hold up” a weaker and politically dissimilar trade partner for political concessions.

David Cesarini, Magnus Johannesson, and Sven Oskarsson in “Pre-Birth Factors, Post-Birth Factors, and Voting: Evidence from Swedish Adoption Data” make a major contribution to the existing debate regarding “genopolitics,” which was a topic of an earlier forum that appeared in the Review in 2012. Using a unique data set derived from Swedish data and electoral turnout, the paper examines a large sample of adoptees, their siblings, their adoptive parents, and their biological parents. Using a simple regression framework

to decompose the parent-child resemblance in voting into prebirth factors, measured by biological parents' voting, and postbirth factors, measured by adoptive parents' voting, they find that adoptees are more likely to vote if their biological parents were voters and if they were assigned to families in which the adoptive parents vote. They also find evidence of interactions between the pre- and postbirth factors. In particular they find that the effect of the postbirth environment on turnout is greater amongst adoptees whose biological mothers are nonvoters. Finally, they demonstrate that the relationships between parental characteristics, such as education, and child turnout, persist even in the absence of a genetic link between parent and child. In many ways their findings suggest what is what might have been suspected in the first place—that it is neither exclusively genetics, nor exclusively environment, that determines political behavior, but a combination of both.

What are the challenges and consequences posed by the liberal ideal of the freedom to identify ourselves according to our own choices? In "Freedom, Form, and Formlessness: Euripides' *Bacchae* and Plato's *Republic*," Arlene W. Saxonhouse characterizes this ideal as "the escape from form" as she contemplates the answer to this question provided in these two strikingly different texts both from ancient Athens. The *Bacchae* captures the longing for an escape from form—and the disastrous consequences of an excess of such freedom, while the *Republic* defends forms (identities and boundaries) and insists upon them. Saxonhouse argues that "reading the *Republic* next to the *Bacchae* underscores the significance of the Socratic theory of the forms not only as an epistemological necessity, but as a bulwark against the political and social threats of a world in which forms dissolve." We want the freedom to recreate ourselves but we also long for the security of forms that enable us to know precisely who another may be and to interact with others having that knowledge.

In "How to Promote Order and Property Rights under Weak Rule of Law? An Experiment in Changing Dispute Resolution Behavior through Community Education," Christopher Blattman, Alexandra C. Hartman, and Robert A. Blair examine the impact that informal practices and norms have on governing disputes in postconflict societies. In particular, they examine the effects of mass education campaigns that promote alternative dispute resolution (ADR) on dispute levels and violence levels in post-civil-war Liberia. They find that in towns that received training in ADR practices and norms there were higher rates of resolution of land disputes and lower levels of violence than in towns that did not have training in ADR practices and norms, one year after the training occurred. In general, the results suggest that mass education can change conflict behaviors, and improving informal bargaining and enforcement behavior can promote order in postconflict environments. The lessons illustrated in this piece resonate far beyond Liberia itself.

In "Opening the Black Box of Social Capital Formation," Patricio Valdivieso and Benjamin Villena-Roldan introduce a rational choice model as the basis

for their empirical investigation. Assuming that participation in organizations has costs as well as benefits, they investigate what factors influence participation in associative life. The authors find that participation in different types of associations is driven by distinct sets of factors, and they show which factors influence participation in various categories of organizations. Importantly, Valdivieso and Villena-Roldan show that experiences that affect social trust negatively increase participation in associations, but also lead individuals to seek out specifically associations with others who share similar interests and values. In this, they conclude that their findings are more in line with the work of Eric M. Uslaner than with the "virtuous circle"—in which social trust and participation in associations mutually reinforce one another—proposed by Robert Putnam.

In "The Impact of Recentralization on Public Services: A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of the Abolition of Elected Councils in Vietnam," Edmund J. Malesky, Cuong Viet Nguyen, and Anh Tran take advantage of a natural experiment in Vietnam to test the effects of political decentralization on public service delivery. Although much work has focused on decentralization, there has been an increased effort at recentralization in many countries. Vietnam is a particularly interesting case in that its recentralization plan included piloting a removal of elected People's Councils in 99 districts across the country and stratifying the selection by region, type of province, and urban versus rural setting. This natural quasi-experiment allows for testing some of the core hypotheses regarding the decision to shift administrative and fiscal authority to local governments. They find that recentralization significantly improved public service delivery in areas important to central policy makers, especially in transportation, healthcare, and communications. This piece has important implications for the literature on centralization and recentralization, far beyond the test case of Vietnam.

"Max Weber and the Ethos of Politics beyond Calculation," by Shalini Satkunanandan, reopens some key questions regarding the place of morality and moral responsibility in Max Weber's political theory. While Weber clearly espouses a "hard-headed political ethos" in "Politics as a Vocation," he also holds to a moral vocation for statesmen. Against the interpretation that Weber's statesman is a cold-blooded follower of amoral expediency, Satkunanandan argues that Weber's hard-headedness is balanced with moral commitment. What Weber opposes in statecraft is not moral responsibility, but "calculable" moral responsibility. This is the responsibility characteristic of the bureaucrat, who rationalizes all things, or the ideologue, who believes that the purity of his motives is the only calculation he must make. "Incalculable responsibility" is a willingness to confront the world "as it really is," with all its unpredictability, accepting the unforeseen evil consequences of one's actions, along with the good. Weber's is not an argument against morality in politics, argues Satkunanandan; it is an argument against moral absolutism in politics.

In “Economies of Violence: The Bhagavadgītā and the Fostering of Life in Gandhi’s & Ghose’s Anticolonial Theories,” Jimmy Casas Klausen examines the philosophies developed by two of the major figures in the Indian struggle leading to independence from Great Britain. The two endorsed opposed tactics in this struggle, and the contrast between them, can tell us much about arguments for and against violence in many contexts. Both thinkers worked out religiously inspired theories of violence that placed it in a metaphysical and cosmic perspective. Both saw violence or harm (*himsā*) as a legitimate part of the cosmic order, and placed human action within that “economy of *himsā*.” Both sought to minimize harm. This famously led Gandhi to a virtually (though not wholly) pacifist stance, while Ghose was much more willing to endorse violence in struggles such as the push for Indian independence. The way that these similar approaches led to such different results is the theme of this fascinating, and enlightening, exercise in comparative political theory.

Guy Grossman and Janet I. Lewis in “Administrative Unit Proliferation” examine the question as to why developing countries increase the number of subnational administrative units. They contend that the existing literature fails to consider the impact of local actors on administrative unit proliferation. Rather, they argue that administrative unit proliferation occurs where and when there is a confluence of interests between the national executive and local citizens and elites from areas that are politically, economically, and ethnically marginalized. They further contend that, ironically, although the proliferation of administrative units often is justified in terms of decentralization, the actual result of such efforts is the centralization of power. This is because the proliferation of new local governments fragments existing units into smaller ones with less ability and less leverage in intergovernmental negotiations. Using data from Uganda, they find support for these propositions, although their findings have far reaching implications for other countries engaging in “decentralizing” reforms. In many ways this piece dovetails well with the Malesky, Nguyen, and Tran article that also appears in this issue of the Review.

Finally we close with a question: Is politics compatible with moral action? The question of “dirty hands” in politics is examined from a fresh perspective by Charles Lesch in “Against Politics: Walter Benjamin on Justice, Judaism, and the Possibility of Ethics.” This nuanced reading of Benjamin’s thought takes issue both with those who believe that Benjamin lacks any normative theory of ethics, and those who hold that religious ideas had little impact on his writing. Lesch’s interpretation finds a thinker who combines Kantian elements with Jewish theological categories to think anew about the preconditions of ethical life, and its relation to politics. In brief, not only is there tension between the ethical and the political, but the brute power relations of politics shows a tendency to colonize other spheres of life. The resulting teaching has broad implications for our political and moral thought and action today.

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