sibilities of 'configurative regionalism' is a heightened sensitivity on the part of those who do universalistic analyses to possible regional or cultural differences. Regional specialists, on the other hand, should make continual distinctions between local events and worldwide patterns; they should state their findings in the most universal terms possible. There is a need to use and develop more adequate formal models of the various ways in which particular regional contexts influence configurations.\footnote{Hayward R. Alker, Jr., “Regionalism Versus Universalism in Comparing Nations,” in Bruce Russett, et al., World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators (New Haven, 1964), p. 323. Also see Alker’s discussion of the “Universal Fallacy” and the “contextual fallacy” in his: Mathematics and Politics (New York, 1965), pp. 101-106; and the discussion of “interaction effects” in Hugh Donald Forbes and Edward R. Tufte, “A Note of Caution in Causal Modelling,” this Review (December, 1968), 1261-1262.}

We can never fully realize the potential of the American states for comparative political research if we attempt to build explanations based on correlations which are the result of statistical artifacts. Dye suggests that the distribution of resources within the state is more effective in shaping the character of political systems than in establishing the levels of public spending and service. The results of Table 1 provide little support for such a generalization; when the regions are taken separately there are as many significant correlations with measures of policy output as with measures of the political systems, and in both cases there are few strong relationships.

One of the virtues of the American states as objects of comparative analysis is that they are different. Some states are highly developed urban and industrial systems, others have vast unsettled stretches of land with total populations less than one fourth the size of New York City; some bear the impact of Southern history and traditions, others the influence of the Western frontier. One of our principal theoretical tasks is the creation of explanations for the way these differences, including regional differences, affect the political processes and governmental systems of the states. A truly universal theory would identify the common characteristics of states and also provide an explanation of their differences.

The University of Michigan

JACK L. WALKER

To THE EDITOR:

A great deal of the research on state politics in recent years has employed a comparative approach in which propositions are developed and tested against data derived from all fifty states. This represents a departure from earlier studies of “New England politics,” “Southern politics,” “Midwest politics,” “politics in Wisconsin,” etc. The Riley-Walker note suggests that the field of state politics is ripe for a debate analogous to the “comparative approach” versus “area studies” debate in the field of comparative government. I hope this debate will develop along constructive rather than argumentative lines.

It is true that the removal of the eleven Southern states from an analysis of the impact of inequality on politics and public policy reduces the size of the coefficients. Since the Southern states are the most unequal in the nation, their removal reduces the range of variation in our inequality measure. Removing the Southern states, therefore, reduces our ability to assess the full impact of inequality on political systems. Fortunately for the sake of analysis (albeit unfortunately for many inhabitants), the Southern states do provide us the opportunity to observe the political correlates of inequality. Their inclusion in our analysis permits us to view relationships between inequality and politics which would not be observable in subsets of states where the range of inequality is narrow.

Riley and Walker are quite wrong in saying correlations based on all fifty states are “statistical artifacts.” They are no more statistical artifacts than correlations based on 39 states, or 25 states, or any other number of states. Riley and Walker may choose to see whether a proposition developed in a comparative study of all fifty states applies within regional subsets, but such an exercise cannot detract from the validity of the general proposition as it applies to all fifty states. Their Table 1 does not contradict our findings that among the fifty states, where variation in inequality is substantial, inequality is independently related to a number of important political variables.

In short, I am interested in developing propositions based on all fifty states, propositions which describe the full range of system behavior in the American states. Riley and Walker develop some propositions which apply to regional subsets of states. Both are equally valid exercises depending upon the purposes of the researcher.

Florida State University

THOMAS R. DYE

To THE EDITOR:

It is embarrassing to have to defend the merits of one’s own work. I do so chiefly in the hope