

## Cal-Irvine Not Overrated by NRC

The University of California, Irvine was ranked as the #1 political science department in terms of per capita citations according to the citation data set used by the National Research Council to create “objective” citation measures of departmental reputation. In “Bugs in the NRC’s Doctoral Evaluation Data” (*PS*, December 1998), Nelson C. Dometrius, et al., make a number of important points about methodological flaws in the data set used to create the NRC rankings. They identified two particularly glaring errors that biased departmental evaluations upward: the misattributions to Gary King (Harvard) and S.C. Lee (UC-Irvine) of citations of work done by scholars outside of political science who have the same (last) name. The impression left by this article is that omitting the citations of Gary King and Sung-Chull Lee might eliminate both Harvard and UCI from the list of top-cited departments. This impression would be mistaken.

Since A Wuffle only recently dubbed UCI “the best kept secret in political science,” we were amused to be named, with Harvard, one of the two most overrated departments in the discipline. Nevertheless, we can say with confidence that, although deleting all citations to Sung-Chull Lee certainly drops UCI’s department from its position at the top of the per-capita citation rankings, cutting citations per faculty by a full 50% still puts it in the top 10 on this measure of faculty member’s research excellence. (We have not performed a similar calculation for Harvard’s department.)

The department of political science at UCI numbers among its faculty such eminent senior scholars as David Easton, Harry Eckstein, and Jack Peltason, as well as a host of highly productive and frequently cited younger scholars—citations to whom do not suffer from misattribution bias. Indeed, a study of departmental quality by Michael J. Ballard and Neil Mitchell (“The Good, the Better, and the Best in Political Science,” *PS*, December 1998), which does not suffer from the same flaws

as the NRC study, ranked UCI’s department 13th in terms of overall research performance. Considering that UCI has only had a formally constituted department of political science for 11 years, this is an accomplishment not to be sneezed at, especially since most of our younger faculty are now achieving their principal recognition. Moreover, since UCI is still a rapidly growing university, with continued growth planned for the department, we will only be getting better.

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## Political Scientists Need to Pay Attention to Developments in Biology

Congratulations for your boldness in publishing the article by Albert Somit and Steven A. Peterson, “Rational Choice and Biopolitics: A (Darwinian) Tale of Two Theories” (*March* 1999, 39–44). The authors’ main objective was to explain, if possible, why an evolutionary paradigm is rejected by the discipline in favor of the limited and incomplete paradigm of rational choice, which is, in any case, subsumed under the evolutionary umbrella. They offer eight possible explanations, ranging from the willingness to take as given that which is not given (that humans always act in their self-interest) to the snobbish view that, since advocates of biopolitics were associated with universities not thought of as prestigious while rational choice theories came from the ten to twenty most prestigious schools, it must not be worthy of attention. While Somit and Peterson are, I believe, correct, I would like to suggest two other reasons.

One is that the discipline, like other social sciences, has been dominated in the last forty years by a profound antievolutionary bias. C. Wright Mills asserted as much in noting that social scientists have no common denominator in their search for meaning: “Some consider themselves to be working in close parallel with chemists and physicists; others believe they share the aims, if

not the methods, of novelists and even of poets.” He specifically repudiated any justification for an evolutionary approach (1960, 1, 13).

Lucian Pye reinforced this in his 1989 APSA presidential address. He, too, said the discipline was divided into two approaches: the scientific approach, analogous to chemistry and physics, and the humanistic mode (1990, 4). In 1990, former president Gabriel Almond published his analysis of the discipline, and found four types of political scientists: (1) public choice people; (2) political econometricians; (3) humanists; and (4) “radical and ‘critical’ political theorists” who “lay about them with anathemas against the behaviorists and positivists.” (He questioned whether the latter should be perceived as “scholars or politicians.”) Neither he nor Pye recognized any political scientists working in the field of biopolitics.

In 1991, the Association spoke with two contradictory voices on the subject. John C. Wahlke, who had in his presidential address of 1978 implored the Association to adopt a more biologically oriented methodology, was, in 1989, appointed chair of the Political Science Major Task Force, a group that explored the program of courses necessary for creating a political scientist. Among other things, the Task Force found that, “A ‘new’ evolutionary biology has revolutionized thinking about the formation of social aggregates by primates and hominid ancestors of modern mankind.” In light of this, the members warned that, “insofar as political behavior and its consequences for people and social systems is an important object for political inquiry, the rapid advance in knowledge across a broad range of the biobehavioral sciences threatens to make political science obsolete if it does not impart such knowledge to its students” (Wahlke 1991, 52).

Resistance to this line of thinking was voiced swiftly and absolutely. In the same issue of *PS* that carried Wahlke’s report a series of articles and editorial comments followed the late Warren Miller, also a former APSA president, in arguing “Biology is largely irrelevant to the center of gravity of political science” (Hauck

1991, 4). Miller was spearheading the (eventually successful) effort to separate the social sciences from the National Science Foundation's Directorate for Biological, Behavioral, and Social Sciences. Miller based his argument for creating a Directorate for Social Sciences on his determination that the link between biosciences and social sciences is "scarcely visible" and that studying biological processes was "quite peripheral to [social scientists'] interests and needs" (1991, 9). Thus, with the exception of Wahlke and, more recently, James Q. Wilson (1993), no prominent political scientist has argued for a rethinking of our most basic methodologies since the 1950s.

The irony is that if Almond, Pye, Miller, and their cohorts were to shift the shoulders on which they stood from Newton to Darwin, most of their dichotomous thinking would disappear. The discipline could then focus on "what is human," as the humanists desire, and also satisfy its practitioners' desires to understand not physics but the variable, and even more complex, behavior of humans living in systems. Following this shift, a paradigm would emerge that would lead social scientists of all stripes to common perceptions of social existence without requiring them to surrender their unique identities or risk being swallowed by the natural sciences.

This leads to my second reason that political science scholars have ignored evolutionary theory: They

want to be social scientists without utilizing all the scholarship dealing with human sociality. My purpose is not to demean our forefathers but to emphasize how far our knowledge of human sociality has come in the last quarter century. In that time, besides the few political and social scientists working in biopolitics, a great many biologists (to the dismay and resentment of many social scientists) have incorporated human sociability into their paradigm, and, for the snobs among us, many come from prestigious institutions. Here I need only note that the most dramatic move to bring biology and social sciences together was made by Harvard biologist E. O. Wilson, who coined the term "sociobiology" in 1975. Shortly thereafter, biologist Richard Dawkins (Oxford) coined the term "memes" to allow scholars to describe cultural changes in the same way that "genes" allowed early twentieth-century biologists to describe organisms' evolution (1976, 205–15). Wilson and Lumsden (Harvard) followed Dawkins with the concept that cultures and biology coevolve (1981). Biologist William Hamilton (Michigan) contributed much to our understanding of cooperation in biological systems (see Axelrod 1984, chap. 5). Biologist Richard Alexander (Michigan) demonstrated that there is a biology of moral systems and argued that theories of inclusive-fitness and reciprocity "enable us to formulate testable hypotheses about aspects of altruism

that previously could not be investigated scientifically" (1987, 93). Biologist Bobbi Low (Michigan) forcefully defended the thesis that "conflicts of interest, if not open aggression, are universal among living things" (1993, 13). Biologist David Wilson and philosopher Elliott Sober (SUNY-Binghamton and Wisconsin, respectively) set forth the thesis that group selection exists for culture just as they maintain that it does for biology (1994). Biologist Michael Ghiselin (California Academy of Sciences) has gone so far as to claim that biological species are individuals with all that implies about group behavior (1997). And biologist Terrence Deacon (Tufts and Harvard) has marshaled overwhelming evidence that it was the problems of politics and governance (not random genetic mutation) that led to the evolution of humans (1997, 401). Surely these biologists are as entitled to study human societies as we political scientists are and, because they operate on a firmer scientific foundation than we do, are entitled to our attention, even if we only seek to refute them.

For the above reasons, I hope that Somit and Peterson have stimulated a discourse among us about the foundations of our discipline.

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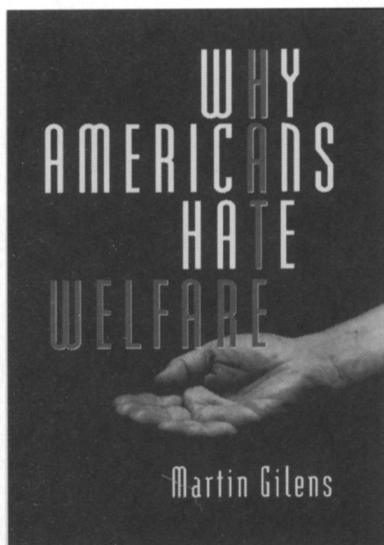
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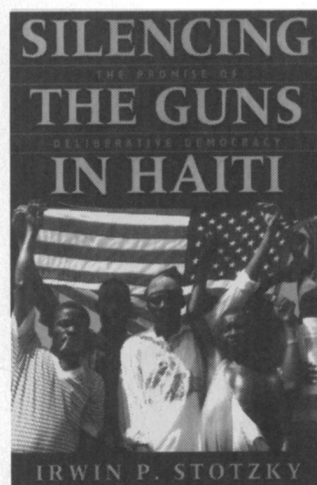
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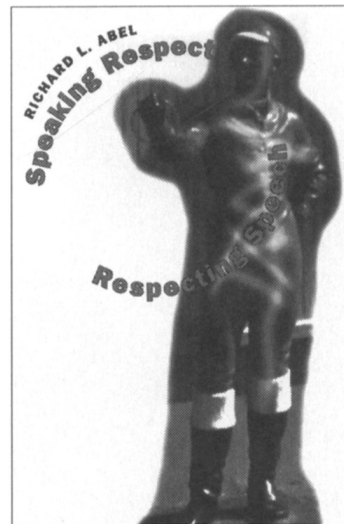
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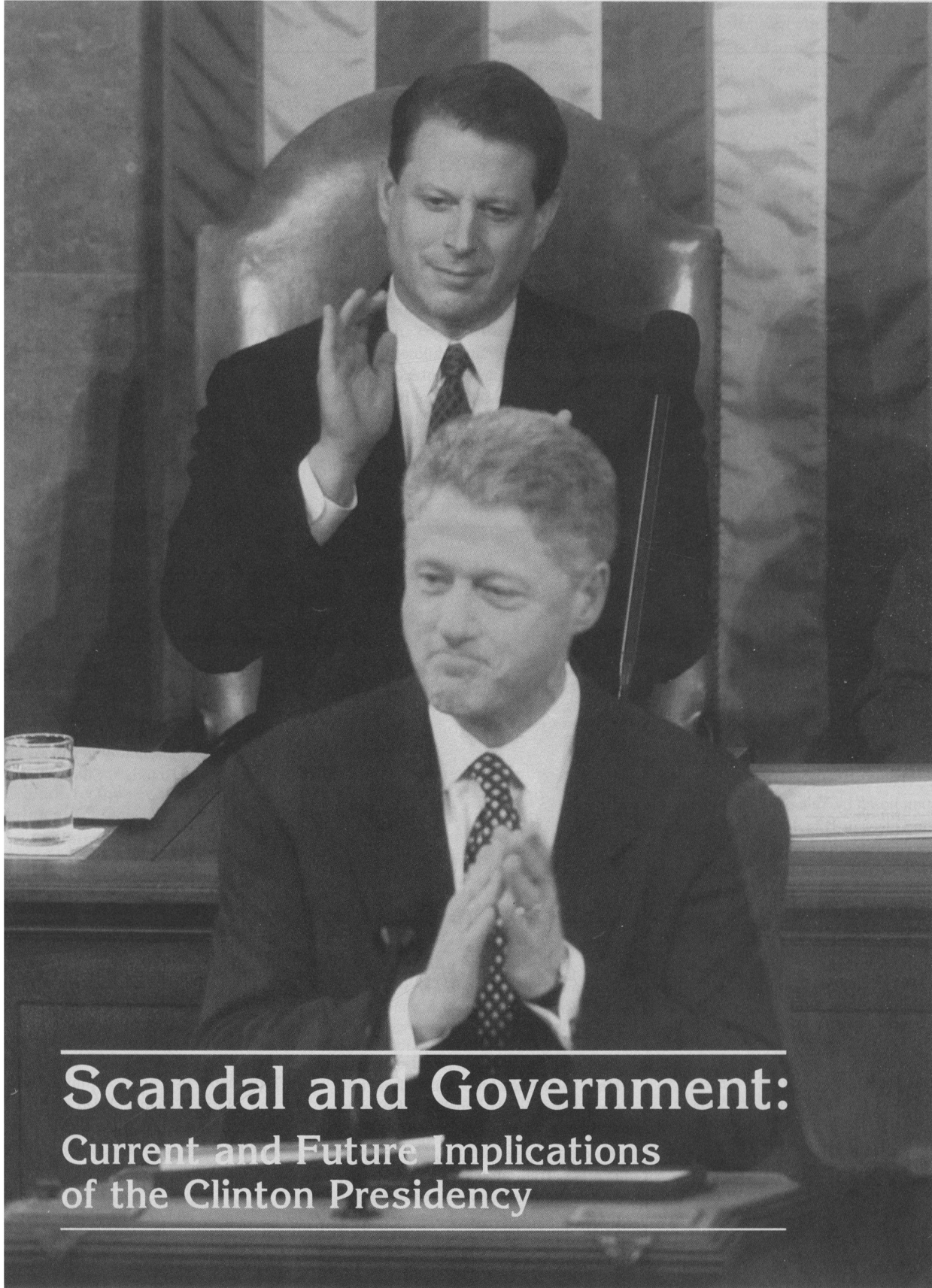
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President Clinton pauses before his 1998 State of the Union Address as Vice President Gore looks on.

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