

Fighting Words

How Political Scientists and the Big Foundations Defined “Democracy” during the Cold War¹

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When this lecture series was established 14 years ago, I thought it was a wonderful way to honor my dad. It's therefore a great and special privilege for me to give the 15th Hauptmann Lecture and to contribute some of my work to this annual event that honors my dad's service to Park University. My thanks to all of you who have helped make these lectures happen over the years.

My dad was the first professor I knew. He and my late mother made our home a place where learning mattered - and that made it just a little bit easier to go through my early years of school as “the nerdy kid.” It wasn't until I'd started college, though, that I really learned how to make the most of academic life from him. I remember him saying that one way to keep up his enthusiasm for teaching was to teach new things; as for teaching the same old stable of books, he'd say, “this becomes boring, you see.” In the years that I've been a professor, I've tried to emulate my dad by seeking out new subjects to teach and new topics for research. My topic

¹My thanks to my research assistants, Emma Kihato and Tim Hall, and to the Political Science Department at Western Michigan University for research support. I would also like to thank the Rockefeller Archive Center, the Bancroft Library at the University of California and the Ford Foundation Archives for granting me permission to quote from and cite documents in

tonight is one such new topic I took up only a few years ago, but one that has made me rethink a lot of my earlier work.

My talk this evening is intended to prompt some fundamental questions about the role of universities in democratic political life. Let me begin by making an assertion I won't spend a lot of time defending: what happens in universities affects politics. There are many pathways one could trace to show how this is so. One could focus on how people who practice "political" professions, including public affairs and the law, get their educations, their credentials and their identities as professionals from universities. One could also trace much of the political information, expertise and analysis that gets cited in public life back to universities. But what about universities themselves and the people who make them up? Where do their ideas, their commitments come from?

It's easy to concede that people in universities cannot be the unmoved movers in the production of ideas. Academics, like everyone else, are subject to influence and pressure; many of their ideas are neither original nor made from scratch. But itemizing where that pressure comes from, how strong it is and what its consequences are is rarely done in a comprehensive way - or in a way that tries to assess the meaning of this phenomenon for democratic political life. I want to make a start on filling this gap. Specifically, I'm going to discuss how some well-known political scientists' ideas about democracy during the Cold War grew out of programs initiated by private foundations and the federal government - rather than being "first moves" made by political scientists that later rippled out into the larger political world. More generally, I also want to speak to what the deeply dependent status of universities and the people who work

their collections.

for them means for democratic politics. And once we have a clearer picture of the position of universities in the production of political knowledge, what can we say about what universities do to help or hinder democratic political life?

Before I present you with specific examples, I'd like to spend a few minutes discussing the odd little idiom so often used to characterize universities - the "ivory tower." Let me start off by saying that I think calling the university an ivory tower is false and deeply misleading - universities in the U.S. are too deeply embedded in state and national political economies for the metaphor to be at all apt.² Indeed, it's a strain to see any parallels between what universities are today and the self-sufficiency and separatism so central to the image of the ivory tower.³ And yet, the image persists. Why might that be?

One of the reasons has to do with university people themselves. Let me give you my analysis of why many professors, myself included, have a love/hate relationship to hearing the place they work called an ivory tower.

On the one hand, when someone tells me I spend most of my time in an ivory tower, that person may be telling me that the way I spend my time is irrelevant to the doings of the wider world. Surely no one likes being told their work is irrelevant, especially when one likes to think otherwise. But on the other hand, calling universities ivory towers often carries a tinge of

²For an assessment of the degree to which research universities depended upon foundation and federal support during the Cold War, see Lowen (1997). For a discussion of the more recent rise in universities depending on corporate financial support, see Slaughter and Rhoades (2004).

³The origins of the image of the ivory tower as well as those of its pejorative connotations are obscure. In its modern usage, it appears in the work of the mid-19th c. French literary critic Sainte-Beuve as an image for a retreat from the wider world - but without any obvious pejorative connotations. For a brief discussion of this point as well as some speculation about how the image came to have pejorative connotations, see Daniels (1940, 678-679).

envy. If universities are even somewhat like ivory towers, that must mean they're beautiful and secure places to be - and that those who spend their time there are blissfully free to pursue whatever they wish, untroubled by the pressures that weigh upon everyone else.

As Jeff Schmidt (2000) argues in his excellent book, *Disciplined Minds*, professors rarely challenge their institutions being described as ivory towers because a part of the image - the part that makes universities seem like islands of autonomy - is so appealing, even with the charge of irrelevance thrown in. A big part of the appeal of that image, Schmidt suggests, comes from our *wishing* it were true - and from our knowing that it's not. Call it a feel-good fairy tale for grown-ups; we know on some level that it's a fairy tale, but it makes us feel good about ourselves reliably enough that we keep telling it (Schmidt 2000, 52-54, 71-73).⁴

Beyond this, I think it's important to see how the ivory tower is also a useful fiction for institutions that fund universities. Consider the case of the Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences, an academic research center located on land purchased from Stanford - a research center conceived, created and endowed by the Ford Foundation in the 1950s. Shortly after it opened its doors, an employee of top officials at the Ford Foundation was asked to report on what local residents were saying about the new center. She found that, among other nicknames, people in the area referred to the Center as "the Monastery," a detail she expected would please foundation officials; it indicated, she noted, that the locals thought the center "outside plain folks' orbit" (quoted in Amadae 2003, 79). Thinking of the Center as a "monastery" was, I think, useful to Ford in two ways: not only did it suggest that its activities were too otherworldly for ordinary people to care to grasp, but also that the Center was a world

⁴Thanks to Erik Freye for urging me to read Schmidt's book.

unto itself, self-contained and self-sustaining. In the 1950s, the latter was patently false - the Center depended on Ford for all of its money.

I now want to juxtapose this fantasy-laden image of the university to a few comments made about how U.S. universities in the 20th c. were becoming deeply dependent upon outside sources of funding. In the late 1920s, the British social scientist, Harold Laski, spent a few years in the U.S. and observed this dependence in its early stages. Here is how Laski (1930) saw this emerging relationship:

“[The foundation official] has no desire...to control the universities he seeks to benefit. The gifts are made; and it is, I believe, only in the most exceptional instances that any conditions of any kind are attached to them. But, with all the good will in the world, [the foundation official] cannot help controlling [the universities]...[H]ow, conceivably, can the teacher whose work fits in with the scheme of the prospective endowment fail to appear more important in the eyes of the principal or his trustees than the teacher for whose subject, or whose views, the foundation has neither interest nor liking?...What are his chances of promotion if he pursues a path of solitary inquiry in a world of colleges competing for the substantial crumbs which fall from the foundation’s table? And, observe, there is not a single point here in which there is the slightest control from, or interference by, the foundation itself....The dependence is merely implicit, but it is in fact quite final” (Laski 1930, 170-171).

Laski describes how those universities fortunate enough to attract foundation attention were giving up substantive control over their research and programs in exchange for endowments. Even more significantly, Laski emphasizes how smoothly such relations unfold: these are relations of control and dependence exercised without commands, ultimata or arm-twisting. This makes them harder to see for what they are, perhaps especially for those who stand to benefit the most from them - that is, university people themselves. But when university people do notice and then remark on these relations - as Laski does - what they say is especially telling.

I'd like to share another comment on the growing dependence of universities on foundation and government funding - this also by a university person; namely, Clark Kerr, in his Godkin lectures delivered in 1963, when he was still President of the University of California. In the particular section I wish to cite, Kerr is assessing the influence of the growth of federal funding on universities in the postwar years - and is voicing concerns about the consequent neglect of undergraduate education, over-specialization and plain old graft. Still, Kerr concludes, "With all its problems, however, federal research aid to universities has helped greatly in meeting national needs. It has greatly assisted the universities themselves. The nation is stronger. The leading universities are stronger" (1982, 68-69). Like many university people, Kerr liked feel-good perorations too. But to this particular one, he couldn't resist adding an ironic zinger of a postscript, in the form of a limerick. It goes like this: "There was a young lady from Kent/ Who said that she knew what it meant/ When men took her to dine/ Gave her cocktails and wine/ She knew what it meant - but she went." Kerr then comments ruefully: "I am not so sure that the

universities and their presidents always knew what it meant; but one thing is certain— they went” (1982, 69).⁵

Like Laski, Kerr also represents universities in a position that is clearly a subordinate one - in this case, subordinate to the government’s grant-giving agencies. And like Laski’s comment, Kerr’s limerick highlights that this is *voluntary* subordination - the young lady from Kent responds to inducements, not commands or threats. Why the men in the limerick - the funders - have resources the young lady (the universities) does not is, given the time, not questioned; a given in relations between men and women represents what was becoming a given in relations between big funders and universities.

Given that universities in the Cold War era were not autonomous, self-financed entities, but rather institutions deeply embedded in the U.S.’s political economy and heavily dependent on the government and private foundations for funding, it makes sense to look for the marks of that dependency in universities’ products - that is, in ideas and in scholars themselves. I think this phenomenon is worth investigating in a number of fields, ranging from the natural and physical sciences to education, journalism and business. I’m going to focus tonight, however, on the field I know - democratic political theory - in order to show you a few places where I think one can see most clearly the connections between an “academic product” and those entities outside the university that helped produce it. In each of the examples I present, I want to draw your attention explicitly not only to how these particular ideas about democracy were tied to foundation and government aims, but also (in some cases) how they have been presented

⁵Kerr credits Don K. Price (1954, 96) with the limerick. I thank Jeff Lustig for directing my attention to this passage in Kerr’s lecture. See Lustig (2000, 338) for another discussion of

principally as “ivory tower” products, in a way that deliberately obscures how they were fostered by entities outside the university.

Rational Choice Theory and RAND

Let me begin by discussing the Cold War origins of rational choice theory. Even if you’ve never heard of “rational choice theory” by this name, I’d be willing to bet that you have encountered some of the ideas and techniques associated with it. Cost-benefit analysis is one; the concept of the “free rider” is another. In the social sciences, rational choice theory is not only well-established - in some disciplines, especially political science, it’s dominant.⁶

Rational choice theorists argue that the most important political acts we engage in - informing ourselves about political parties and candidates, joining groups of like-minded people to advance a cause, and voting - are all best understood as rationally self-interested choices. When we perform any of these acts, we act as if we are weighing the potential benefits of taking a particular political action against the costs of doing so. Once we analyze the political choices people face in these terms, however, we’ll see that it’s in people’s rational self-interest to do very little politically. Our political communities are so big that the odds of our vote tipping the balance in the direction we prefer are hopelessly long; effective advocacy groups that press for causes we care about are either too big for our participation to matter - or are so small that our help won’t help them matter. The rational choice assessment of democracy, therefore, is that it

this passage.

⁶For a synopsis of rational choice by one of its most important theorists, see Elster (1986).

functions just fine with minimal, low-intensity citizen participation.⁷

I wanted to discuss rational choice theory not only because of its importance to contemporary political science but also because what many people have said about its origins turns out to be profoundly off-base. And I must say that I have to include myself among those many people who have been wrong about where rational choice came from. Here, then, are two stories about the origins of rational choice theory. The more common story - which I learned and echoed - locates the origins of rational choice theory in economics; some of its central tenets can be found in 18th c. liberals, like Adam Smith; others, in 19th c. British utilitarianism. In the 20th c., the founders of rational choice theory in the U.S. were principally (if not exclusively) economists by training. The perspective they developed proposed to explain a whole range of human conduct - from the personal to the political - in terms of maximizing benefits and reducing costs. Many of us outside of economics saw this type of explanation as an illegitimate incursion into what was supposed to be our turf. “Those economists,” we grumbled. “They’re such intellectual imperialists. They think their discipline can explain everything.”

What’s misleading about this version of the story of the origins of rational choice theory? As far as it goes, the story I told you isn’t wrong; it’s just incomplete - and incomplete in a way that illustrates a blind spot many university people have to where “big ideas” come from and who financed their creation. The story I just told you makes the creation and propagation of rational choice theory seem like a wholly academic matter - a struggle for explanatory dominance among the various social sciences. And, as such, this story doesn’t conflict with the ivory tower image - after all, no one ever said that people living in the ivory tower had to get

⁷The classic statements of these views may be found in Downs (1957) and Olson (1965).

along or that there were never disputes about who gets to live on the top floor. So what's missing?

What's missing is that rational choice theory originated in its 20th c. U.S. guise at the RAND Corporation in the years immediately following World War II - a story told admirably by Sonya Amadae in her recent book, *Rationalizing Capitalist Democracy: The Cold War Origins of Rational Choice Liberalism* (2003). The focus of RAND's work was strategic policy making, not economic theory (although a number of economists worked for RAND). This helps explain why rational choice theory was incorporated into political science so quickly and easily - when the theory was still on the drawing board, its creators were trying to address a series of explicitly political problems: how to fight a nuclear war, how to justify increased military spending to the American public, and how to discredit the political philosophy affirmed by the Soviet Union.

But it wasn't just RAND's substantive interests that made it easier for rational choice theory to gain acceptance in political science departments. A RAND-crafted approach to budgeting, the Planning-Programming-Budgeting system, was adopted by the Pentagon in the early 1960s and then, a few years later, by virtually all federal agencies (Amadae 2003, 62-75). This sparked a huge demand for RAND-trained people to do the work of analyzing the cost effectiveness of virtually all federal programs. Those who did this work reaped not only financial but also academic benefits: the contract work RAND staff members did for government agencies, like the Department of Defense, gave them just the kind of "grantsman" credentials many prestigious universities were looking for in prospective faculty (Amadae 2003, 74-75).

Rational choice theory is still powerful - perhaps even hegemonic - in political science today. People disagree about whether this is a good or bad thing; most, however, would agree

that it's true. But rational choice didn't just get its prestige through an "ivory tower" trial by debate, in which the sharpest, most elegant theory wins the day (Amadae 2003, 72-73). Instead, rational choice theory rose to prominence in part because of its founders' close connections to the state. And these connections are an undeniably important part of why rational choice - in all its guises - still sounds so authoritative today.

So what does this mean for the ideas about democracy rational choice theorists advanced? How can these be understood as part of the Cold War agenda that inspired RAND? Most importantly, by claiming a strong, positive connection between capitalist economic systems and democratic politics, rational choice theorists helped make the Cold War argument against the Soviet system. The rational choice prediction that rationally self-interested people will rarely find it worth their while to participate politically may seem like a gloomy conclusion to reach. But in the early years of the Cold War, this conclusion seemed reassuring instead - it promised an open political system that could remain free of disruptive mass movements and popular protest. And this peculiarly American wish - the wish for economic prosperity, popular sovereignty and political calm that pervades the rational choice theory of democracy has helped it stay where it is - at the center of contemporary democratic theory (Amadae 2003, 176-189).

The Rockefeller Foundation

Compared to government-created entities like RAND, private foundations had to follow a more circuitous path to support political research. Fundamentally, this was because foundations had bought their tax-exempt status at the price of engaging in overt political advocacy. But despite the prohibition against political advocacy, the big foundations in the 1950s - Rockefeller

and Ford - were still deeply engaged in financing political research (Roelofs 2003, 27-42). I want to turn now to discussing the political research the foundations financed - and how these research programs helped shape mid-century theories of democracy.

In 1955, Dean Rusk, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, charged his staff and advisors with an explicitly political mission: how could the foundation support democracy intellectually and ideologically? The mission, Rusk argued, was an urgent one: “I am just back from a conference in Europe where the question was asked, ‘Why are some of Europe’s best intellectuals attracted by Communism?’ This prompts me to ask a further question, ‘Should a study be done to clarify our ideas of what democracy really is?’” (Minutes of the Advisory Committee on Legal and Political Philosophy, March 21, 1955; RAC, RFA, RG 3, series 910, box 9, folder 78, p. 5).⁸ Rusk asked his staff to come up with ideas for what the foundation might do to shore up the philosophically and ideologically beleaguered political ideals of the U.S.: “The Europeans at this weekend meeting that I have been attending kept coming back time after time to the absence of a moral rallying point for European young people.....Is there any way in which [the Rockefeller Foundation] could expedite the work of those writers who might give people a rallying point?” (p. 7) Those who heard Rusk’s appeal understood that Rusk was asking for something big. One of the political scientists present (V.O. Key) dubbed the proposed program “[Dean Rusk’s] new Declaration of Independence” (p. 7). The first idea anyone had about how the foundation could help wage the ideological battle for the hearts and minds of European intellectuals was to sponsor a series of conferences - and then support the writing of a

⁸In subsequent references, all material from series 910 is cited as RAC-1. References to box and folder numbers are also abbreviated, so that box 9, folder 78 becomes 9:78.

book about democracy. Uninspired and uninspiring, we might say. Rusk, however, rejected this idea not because he thought it dull but because he saw it as potentially too risky (Inter-office memo, April 15, 1955, RAC-1, 9:78).

Rusk's caution was well-founded. The Rockefeller Foundation had been the focus of a damning critique by the 1915 Walsh Commission for illegitimately attempting to sway public policy; what is more, Congress had just concluded two investigations to determine whether foundations were exercising undue political influence (Roelofs 2003, 8-9). These investigations - the Cox and Reece Committee hearings - have been mocked for the McCarthyist zeal evident in some lines of questioning. Did social scientists call themselves social scientists because they were socialists, one questioner wanted to know? Another suggested that Ford Foundation sponsorship of programs overseas betrayed its officers' commitment to world government (Macdonald 1956, 27-35). Still, those who organized these hearings pointed to the growing power of foundations in academic and political life and demanded that their officials show how their programs deliberately foreswore political influence.⁹

Though cautious about how Rockefeller could help fight the ideological battle against Marxism, Rusk and other foundation officers by no means gave up on the project. Instead, they ended up developing a more direct strategy than the conference and book plan - they would send academics from the U.S. overseas (to "underdeveloped areas") in the hopes of winning over some of those intellectuals in danger of succumbing to the allure of Marxism (Minutes of

⁹For the reports of the Cox and Reece Committees, respectively, see U.S. House. 1953. Hearings before the Select Committee to Investigate Tax-Exempt Foundations. *Tax-Exempt Foundations*. 82nd Congress, 2nd sess.; U.S. House. 1954. Special Committee to Investigate Tax-Exempt Foundations and Comparable Organizations. *Tax-Exempt Foundations*. 83rd

Meeting of LAPP Advisory Committee, March 12, 1956, RAC-1, 9:79). This marked a new phase of the Rockefeller Foundation's program to clarify "what democracy really is."

The evolution of this portion of the Rockefeller Foundation's program in political research illustrates how nominally distinct institutions - foundations, universities and the federal government - all worked so closely together that it is nearly impossible to distinguish the aims of each. U.S. foreign policy was undoubtedly aided by such programs. By helping to design programs of study in political science and public administration, political scientists sent abroad were also trying to establish American norms of democratic governance. Bringing countries in Africa, Latin America and South Asia into closer relations with the U.S. was another common aim - not only would the countries receiving this assistance now look to the U.S. for training political elites; political scientists sent abroad sometimes even helped local officials tap into U.S. foreign aid programs (viz. the case of Eugene Lee as discussed in Robert Scalapino to Gerald Freund, February 17, 1964, RAC, RFA, RG 1.2, 200S, 568:4859, p. 3). To speak of political scientists' views about democracy in the "developing world" in isolation from foundation programs and foreign policy would therefore be misleadingly partial. These ideas were no ivory tower productions, but jointly conceived and jointly executed by academics, foundations and the federal government.

Behavioralism and the Ford Foundation

Another approach to the academic study of democracy nurtured by both the federal

government and private foundations is behavioralism - that is, the scientific study of what people do and say politically, mostly by means of statistical analyses of survey data. In 1950, the Ford Foundation initiated a huge program to encourage the development of the study of “individual behavior and human relations” in twelve U.S. universities. For the time, the grants were immense

- \$300,000 in some cases. What is more, all were unsolicited; the lucky universities were simply informed by Ford that they had been awarded this money for the purpose of developing academic programs in the behavioral sciences (Letter to Robert G. Sproul from Burt J. Craig, September 29, 1950, Grant 50-005, Ford Foundation Archives; “Report on ‘A Program in Behavioral Science Research’, Instituted by the Ford Foundation in the Summer of 1950,” n.d., p. 1. Report # 003025, Ford Foundation Archives).¹⁰

The archived records of the administrators of one of the lucky universities - U.C. Berkeley - reveal that this grant perplexed administrators almost as much as it pleased them. Shortly after U.C. was notified it had received the grant, President Sproul wrote to faculty in the social sciences asking them to submit proposals for how to spend this money (Letter, 21 December 1950, from Sproul to UC faculty in the social sciences, Office of the Chancellor Records, CU-149, box 54, folder 9, “Center for the Integration of Social Theory,” Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).¹¹ Faculty came up with a wide variety of suggestions, ranging from establishing a center for survey research to a center dedicated to

¹⁰In subsequent references, “Ford Foundation Archives” is abbreviated “FFA.”

¹¹In subsequent references, “Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley” is abbreviated “Bancroft.” I omit the call number of the collection and provide box and folder numbers in the form “box ##: folder##.”

interdisciplinary social science theory (Letter, 11 January 1953, from Burdick to Kerr, Office of the Chancellor Records, 54:26, “\$300,000 Ford Grant to University, Uses of,” Bancroft; Letter, 21 January 1954, from Kerr to Sproul, Office of the Chancellor Records, 54:26, “\$300,000 Ford Grant to University, Uses of,” Bancroft). That people within the university disagreed at such a fundamental level about whether Ford wanted to support fine-grained empirical survey research or broad, interdisciplinary theorizing about society indicates how amorphous behavioral science still seemed to many in the early 1950s. In retrospect, such confusion is not surprising. The program’s head, Bernard Berelson, believed the purpose of the program was to build something new rather than to support well-established ways of doing social science - an approach he later conceded “might have been a little too initiatory” (Berelson 1972, pp. 71, 77).

So where did behavioral science or behavioralism come from? Again, I’d like to contrast two different accounts of its origins. One focuses on how behavioralism arose as a “protest” movement, led by young political scientists rebelling against the stale, old ways of doing political research. The other focuses on how behavioralism emerged out of the Ford Foundation’s desire to extend some aspects of the work done by social scientists for the federal government during WW II - mainly in the areas of propaganda and psychological warfare - into the postwar university.

The first of these stories has been dominant largely because it has been told by dominant people - that is, people with considerable power in postwar political science. For instance, several past presidents of the American Political Science Association - Heinz Eulau and Robert Dahl - spoke and wrote about behavioralism as a “protest movement” launched by young political scientists in the 1940s and 50s against all approaches to political research that were

musty, fusty and lacking rigor.¹² This version of the story presents the rise of behavioralism as the outcome of an inter-generational struggle within political science, in which the behavioralists' fight for acceptance becomes a story of triumph in surprisingly short order (Eulau 1991, 188). By the early 1960s, according to this version, the protest is already a success, "incorporated into the main body of the discipline" (Dahl 1993, 261).¹³

As with the "ivory tower" story about the rise of rational choice theory, this way of talking about the origins of behavioralism is wrong mainly because it's incomplete. And as with the story about the rise of rational choice theory I argued against, this story too is incomplete largely because it presents disagreements among academics - ivory tower conflicts - as if they were the primary sources of the rise of behavioralism. Telling the story that way, however, grossly understates what the Ford Foundation did to establish the behavioral sciences in the postwar academy.

I mentioned a moment ago that the Ford Foundation made grants to a dozen universities in 1950 to develop programs in the behavioral sciences. Substantial as they were, these grants were just a hint of greater things to come: during the 1950s, Ford spent a grand total of 24 million dollars on the behavioral sciences (Ford Foundation 1957, 32-34). So why was behavioral science one of Ford's priorities? What did those most directly responsible for crafting this program and spending this money hope to achieve?

Based on my study of the Ford Foundation's archived papers, I think those who crafted

¹²Dahl was president of the American Political Science Association in 1966-1967, Eulau, from 1971-1972.

¹³See Dryzek (2006, 489-490) for a cogent challenge to this story, including its reliance on an implausibly quick "reversal of fortune."

the Behavioral Sciences program believed behavioralism was not only a sound, new approach to doing social science; they also believed that it promoted a new professional ethic among social scientists - one that was non-partisan but also decidedly authoritative. Here is how Donald Marquis, a psychologist who was one of the architects of Ford's program, put it: "The development of a vital behavioral science in foreign countries should serve to create among the intellectual elite a method of independent objective analysis of social and political problems which would serve as an alternative to the emotional and demagogic [sic] approach. Indeed, it may be true that the successful maintenance of a democratic state demands a body of public servants who are capable of objective, dispassionate and scientific examination of policy questions, and a public who will follow such leaders" (Donald Marquis, "Report on the Behavioral Sciences in Western European Countries," September 1951, p. 10. Papers of Bernard Berelson, box 1, folder 5, "Behavioral Sciences, 1951: Development of Program Area V," Ford Foundation Archives). As Marquis's comment reveals, behaviorists believe their approach to social science gave them legitimacy as political experts.

Another reason why I believe Ford made behavioral science one of its priorities was that several Ford officials who had worked for the state in various capacities during WW II believed that closer ties between the federal government and social science would benefit both - and that making the social sciences more "behavioral" would make this happen more quickly and smoothly. Behaviorism promised concise and usable results - extensive analyses of social and political problems could be summarized in statistical tables that policy makers (at least the ones who understood statistics) could review in a short amount of time. By providing such strong incentives for universities to develop programs in behavioral science, Ford acted as a kind of

institutional matchmaker - it sought to make the temporary connections between social science and the state more permanent (Amadae 2003, 34-39).¹⁴

So how do traces of this history turn up in how behavioralists understood democracy? I should say that behavioralism is now so woven into the fabric of American political science that it's hard to isolate a set of ideas about democracy that are distinctively its own any more. But in the 1950s, behavioralists did have an identifiable approach to democratic theory - and that approach was a decidedly minimalist one. For instance, behavioralists subjected some well-established ideas about democracy to a thorough pruning: representative democracies, they said, were not actually ruled by the majority or the popular will - nor should they be (Dahl 1956, 128-133). Instead, democracies are redefined as systems in which "ordinary citizens exert a relatively high degree of control over leaders" (Dahl 1956, 3). But given that behavioralists believed they could show most citizens to be either indifferent to or confused about political matters, how could any "control" these citizens might exercise over political elites be legitimate?

This view of democracy not only gave priority to elites over ordinary citizens; it gave that priority a scientific stamp of approval. To be sure, the behavioralists were not the first group of American political scientists to do this - the Progressives had done something similar in the early years of the 20th century. But the behavioralists offered something new: a way for leaders to analyze what large numbers of people knew and believed about politics. They offered a way to

¹⁴Bernard Berelson, the director of Ford's Behavioral Sciences program, explains the origins of the Foundation's commitment to the behavioral sciences by noting that H. Rowan Gaither (who oversaw the transformation of the Ford Foundation into the U.S.'s largest foundation in the 1950s and became its president from 1953 to 1956) learned of this approach during his war-time work for the M.I.T. Radiation Laboratory and while chairing the RAND Corporation. Berelson (1972, 3-4).

analyze the messy, inconsistent and partisan ideas ordinary people had about politics that could determine which of these ideas were truly dangerous and which could be safely channeled or otherwise managed by the “democratic process.”

The resemblance between these ideas and techniques and those developed for the purposes of propaganda and psychological warfare during the Cold War is not just coincidental: a number of academics contributed to both (Simpson 1994, 125-132; Simpson 1998, xi-xx; Needell 1998, 12, 23-24). To read the ideas now associated with behavioralism solely against the background of an inter-generational ivory tower dispute would be to miss both Ford and the federal government’s role in supporting this approach to doing social science - as well as the connection between behavioralism and techniques devised for explicitly political purposes (Simpson 1994, 3-14). Here again, the image of the ivory tower is profoundly misleading. While the image would have us think of the university as self-contained and jealously guarding its autonomy, recent historical research shows that boundaries between the university and the government during the Cold War were so porous that it seems misleading to insist on drawing them at all (Simpson 1998, xii-xiii).

Conclusion

To conclude, I now want to step back from the specific examples I’ve presented in order to say something about the broader implications of the close ties between universities, foundations and the federal government for democracy today. For a start, I think it’s safe to say that these ties aren’t going to be loosened or disappear any time soon. It looks like political research will continue to be funded by private and governmental entities and will therefore

continue to be influenced by their aims.

At the beginning of the postwar period, a historian who took part in a classified government project on how to conduct psychological warfare and propaganda operations behind the Iron Curtain worried about the long-term effects of the kind of work he had done on U.S. universities and on democratic politics. “The single purpose of the garrison state tends, naturally, to absorb the attention of all intelligences—whether in industry, government, or university. This concentration on a single problem or set of problems will tend to reduce not only the variety of intellectual work, but will tend also to reduce...curiosity” (Elting Morison, quoted in Needell 1998, 26). More pointedly, this historian asked, “can we maintain democracy in a garrison?” - especially a garrison that prizes secrecy? (Needell 1998, 25-26).

Although these comments were made at the beginning of the Cold War over half a century ago, I believe the concerns that prompted them are still fresh and valid today. Of course, universities aren't the only source of political ideas in this country - but they are an important source of them. And they are perhaps the most important arbiters of what counts as political knowledge and expertise. This is precisely why it's vital to see that universities are no ivory towers - and that therefore what their researchers investigate and how they do so is profoundly affected by the aims of private foundations and government agencies.

I'm not optimistic that university people will offer fuller disclosures of their ties to their funders of their own accord any time soon - largely because doing so would mean giving up the myth of full creative autonomy, along with a lot of grants. But I do believe that the dependent status of universities and the consequences this has for what we think we know and what we think is possible in politics ought to become a public issue. That would mean asking tough

questions about what goes on in universities - about the provenance of the dominant political ideas they purvey and about who funds the “political experts” they produce. And it would also mean, especially for public universities, that people claim a greater share in deciding how they are run. Would all this threaten academic freedom? On the contrary - if done persistently and widely enough, it may be the best way to enhance it.

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