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VOLUME 1 (2022)

EDITORIAL FOREWORD

It is an honor and privilege to be writing the introduction for the first volume of this first-of-its-kind undergraduate research journal—*The Philosophy, Politics, and Economics Review* (PPER). The journal aims to inspire interdisciplinary research by publishing some of the best work in PPE produced by undergraduate students worldwide.

In this current volume, we present the work of students from our home institution, Virginia Tech, as well as the University of Virginia, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. In future volumes, we hope to be able to accept an even greater number of high-quality submissions, both from the U.S. and abroad.

The articles in this volume move from abstract to concrete, from theory to practice. In the first article, Netanel Ben-Porath defends the importance of postmortem legacy for well-being. He introduces a novel version of perfectionism to argue that events can impact our well-being even if they happen after our death. In the second article, Zeb Dempsey employs moral foundations theory. He analyzes President Reagan’s War on Drugs speeches to illustrate effective campaigning for political issues. In the third article, Adam Cooper analyzes the U.S. presidential voting system. He argues that the current system is flawed and suggests an alternative with a system of representative randomness. In the final article, Joud Tabaza discusses the elimination of bread subsidies in Jordan. She shows that a long-term gradualist approach to reform can be more effective than a short-term ‘big bang’ approach.

The PPE prism is one of interdisciplinary thought that allows scholars to engage with social problems ethically, politically, and economically. By looking at problems through these three disciplinary lenses, and by combining them, a holistic approach arises that is more adequate to address the complex social problems of the twenty-first century.

The process of editing this first edition of the PPER has been stimulating and enlightening. It has been an honor to be a part of what has the potential to be a highly prestigious journal. I would like to thank my fellow peer editors and the faculty members who mentored us throughout the process as well as Virginia Tech Publishing. It was a completely new undertaking for most of us and we had a lot of learning to do along the way. That said, I am proud of the effort everyone has put into making this journal possible and of the high quality of the final product.

The first volume that now lies in front of you is one of great intellectual thought and exemplary research that is characteristic of the field of PPE. We hope you enjoy reading this inaugural volume and it encourages you to further your own interests and studies in PPE.

I look forward to the journal’s future and the work of my peers after I graduate. I hope we have left a positive mark on the field of PPE and the university we call home.

Nikolas E. Filip

DOWNLOADS

In addition to the web version, this journal volume is available for download in the following formats:

PPER Volume 1 (PDF Print).

PPER Volume 1 (Ebook). Compatible with all eBook readers except Kindle.

EUDAIMONIA AND KLEOS: AN ANALYSIS OF LEGACY'S CONTRIBUTION TO WELL-BEING

Netanel Ben-Porath

Can events that happen after our death affect our well-being? In this article, I examine this question by focusing on the example of postmortem legacy. Contrary to hedonistic and Epicurean positions I present arguments for the importance of legacy for our well-being. Afterward, I show that all prominent theories of well-being—hedonism, desire-satisfactionism, objective-list theory, and traditional perfectionism—fail to account for legacy's virtue. In light of this, I turn to offer a variation to perfectionism that adopts a social perception of human nature. I claim that this social variation of perfectionism is not only able to account for legacy's virtue but that it is also attractive in its own right.

1. Introduction

Can events that happen after someone's death affect her well-being? This is the kind of question that the answer to may alter the way we judge ourselves and our lives. It can equally influence how we perceive the lives and decisions of others.

In this article, I will answer this broader question by focusing on one useful example. I will ask if, and how, postmortem recognition or appreciation of one's life can change her well-being. Of course, while presented here as an example of a broader philosophical question, postmortem recognition, or legacy, is no small matter. Leaders and politicians spend years trying to shape their legacy. Scientists and scholars pass hours crouching over their desks attempting to come up with the theory for which their names will be taught in classrooms long after their deaths. Parents dedicate their lives to improving the well-being of their children, hoping to be well remembered in return. Everyone from time to time wonders how they will be remembered by their loved ones when they pass away. Our legacy is something that is very dear to us. But why?

In section 2, I illuminate different aspects of the question of legacy and conclude that we should accept the influence of postmortem recognition on our well-being. In section 3, I show that hedonism, desire-satisfactionism, objective-list, and perfectionism, the most widely held theories of well-being, all fail in granting a full and satisfying explanation for legacy's worth. In section 4, I present a variation of perfectionism that considers humans as social creatures. I offer intuitive justification for this theory and show how it can serve as a theoretical framework to account for postmortem events' influence on well-being. I also discuss in what way it contradicts modern economic thinking. In section 5, I discuss some concerns and implications of my theory. Section 6 concludes.

2. The Influence of Postmortem Recognition on Well-Being

The paradigmatic case that instructs our discussion is the life-story of Vincent Van Gogh, who lived in the second half of the 19th century. Van Gogh was a troubled man who suffered from deep depression, severe psychotic episodes, and frequent delusions that led to several hospitalizations in mental health institutions. He also suffered financially, socially, and physically. He lived in solitude, neglected his health, and survived only thanks to financial support from his brother. Van Gogh found some relief in painting. However, his work was utterly ignored, and during his lifetime he was not only considered a madman but also a failure (Britannica 2021). Committing suicide at the age of 37, Van Gogh did not know that he would become such an iconic cultural figure, celebrated for his artistic achievement, industrious work, and impressive stubbornness. Because today creativity and misery, and ingenuity and insanity, are often viewed as going hand in hand, Van Gogh's character has become a personal inspiration for many.

The fundamental question we are set to answer is whether Van Gogh gained anything from the fact that, after his death, he and his work were celebrated. Does this fact make his life any better, or is Van Gogh's well-being identical to his well-being if he would have received no postmortem appreciation of his work?

On the one hand, it seems that it is impossible that Van Gogh gained anything. After all, he was never aware of the fact that he would become famous posthumously and his life was never actually affected by this posthumous fame. His life experience would be exactly the same if he did not become famous, and thus it seems odd to claim that his personal well-being could somehow have increased by his posthumous fame. This is called the 'experience requirement,' and it appeals to the intuition that in order for something to affect our well-being it must by some way affect our subjective experience (Gregory 2016).

But there is an even greater oddity. When the world started appreciating Van Gogh, he was already dead. In other words, he did not actually exist. If Van Gogh did not exist, and still does not, and never will again, how can it be that something improves *his* well-being? There is no *he* anymore! This claim, first proposed by Epicurus, does not only deny the possible goodness or badness of any after-death events but actually renders death itself neutral (Bradley 2009). Thus, it cannot be that how highly we think of Van Gogh has any influence on his well-being.

On the other hand, we have a feeling that Van Gogh does gain something from our admiration of him. The fact that people now study every detail in his life, appreciate his work as a unique human accomplishment, and think about him long enough to write a whole article inspired by him, thrusts some positivity into his life. This is evident in the simple fact that it seems reasonable to envy Van Gogh for his legacy—and we envy achievements we think add to well-being. Indeed, this observation is not unique to Van Gogh. We seem to think that being appreciated and loved after death has a similar effect on any human being. I am sure that, even if the reader does not aspire to gain universal recognition such as Van Gogh's, at the very least she feels it is important that she will be well remembered by her loved ones. A person's life would be worse, that is, filled with less well-being, if the person does not have a positive legacy.

Looking at the same idea from a different angle, if we hold that Van Gogh did not benefit from his postmortem recognition, then we are actually committing to the claim that, from Van Gogh's point of view, the fact that he became an international symbol of art and achievement means nothing at all. His life was exactly as good as the life of any psychotic, depressed, failed person that lived in the 19th century. Imagine someone approached you and told you that you must choose between two options: you can choose to have a life, and afterlife, like Van Gogh's, or you can choose to have a life and afterlife of another person, Van Fogh. Van Fogh also lived in the 19th century and was just as miserable and a failure as Van Gogh was. However, differently from

Van Gogh, Van Fogh was completely forgotten by everyone – he never was nor never will be celebrated like Van Gogh. If postmortem recognition does not matter, then you should be completely indifferent between choosing to become Van Gogh or choosing to become Van Fogh. In fact, if Van Fogh was just marginally happier than Van Gogh, for example if he ate one more piece of pie during his lifetime, then you should opt to choose his life over Van Gogh's life. The value of the piece of pie outweighs the universal admiration you could have gotten if you chose to be Van Gogh.

You could accept this proposal, thereby foregoing eternal glory for a piece of pie. But this is an unintuitive position. We seem to think that Van Gogh's life is not just another miserable life. We believe admiration is worth *something*, certainly more than a piece of pie. The fact that Van Gogh is considered to be a successful painter adds some kind of goodness to his life—a goodness that we should somehow account for, challenging as it may be.

One might claim that the way we have described the situation induces us to view things from the point of view of Van Gogh. However, when we do so, it is difficult to differentiate between our supposed ignorance as Van Gogh and our knowledge of history. We try to imagine the situation as if we do not know what will happen after our death, but in fact, we *do* know what happens because we are the creators of the thought experiment. So, our intuitions get mixed, and we make choices that we would not have made if we were truly ignorant about what would happen after our death.

We can address this challenge by describing a case where we have an external point of view on the situation. Imagine someone named Elsa approaches you about Albert, who is a scientist. Albert came up with a brilliant theory, the kind of theory that would change the history of science forever. He was thrilled about his achievement, however, before being able to publish it, he fell very ill and died. Elsa finds Albert's papers by accident, and now she intends to send them to a scientific journal for publication. Elsa tells you she is considering erasing Albert's name from them and sending them anonymously to the journal. This means that while the whole scientific world would celebrate Albert's ingenious revelations, he will never be recognized for their discoveries.

If your intuitions are like mine, you probably have a strong feeling that deleting Albert's name is wrong. Someone might think that the wrongness of the actions stems merely from the fact that Elsa omits or hides the truth. But if that was the whole case, then the wrong would be perceived to be committed either against the scientific community, doomed to ignorance by Elsa, or it could be thought as a violation of some deontological law regarding the status of truth. It would not be bad for Albert because Albert is not the one deprived of the truth.

But this is clearly not the case, or at least not the whole case. Our intuitions guide us to think that Elsa's action is wrong at least partially because it hurts Albert himself. But, notice that Albert did not specifically ask for the papers to be published under his name, nor does Elsa put her name instead. This means that the mere deprivation of postmortem celebration of Albert's work as his harms him in some way, even though Albert would never know about it and does not even exist by the time Elsa makes the decision. Following this line of thought, even though Albert is already dead, our judgement of Elsa's potential action reveals that he would be better off with a positive legacy rather than without one.

But it might be argued that it is wrong to erase Albert's name, and it is wrong because it is unfair to Albert, but still postmortem recognition does not matter to his well-being. When discussing the implication of disability on well-being, Elizabeth Barnes (2014) advocates for a non-interference principle that could be applied here. According to her, even when an agent should be indifferent between two states of the world, it is forbidden for us to actively engage in chang-

ing his fate in any major way without his explicit consent. So, maybe Albert is indeed indifferent about what the scientific community will think of him after his death, but still erasing his name would be doing wrong to him because it would count as an unjust interference.

To address this concern, consider Rachel, a devoted mother of two. Rachel is deeply committed to her children and she sacrifices a great deal to take good care of them. Imagine that after her death a document is revealed that raises serious suspicions that she had stolen from her office during her life. Rachel's whole town is filled with rumors about Rachel and people condemn her for her alleged actions. Rachel's children, however, knowing their mother well, know that this cannot be true and that she did not steal anything.

One might think that Rachel's well-being is unaffected by the rumors because suspicions against her rose only after her death. Since she is indifferent, according to the non-interference principle, her children must not attempt to alter this natural development and clear her name. That would be interfering without her consent even though she would not benefit from it. But this does not seem plausible. Of course, we believe that her children should attempt to clear her name from the hearsay. This is because we feel as if Rachel is hurt in some way by this development, and her children should be committed to protecting her, and her well-being, by fighting off the allegations.

If the intuitions I have presented thus far resonate with the reader, at this point, the reader should feel as if there is a strong reason to hold that what people think of us after our death matters, regardless of our in-life knowledge of it. Denying that events after death in general, and postmortem recognition in particular, can affect our well-being forces us to maintain that our intuitions are wrong in the cases I present. The deniers must also prefer Van Fogh's piece of pie over Van Gogh's universal glory. Committed hedonists will opt to bite the bullet here and accept these unintuitive implications. However, for the rest of us, this analysis should motivate us to understand why postmortem recognition could be good for us. I now turn to formalizing this intuition more carefully.

3. The Failure of Central Theories of Well-Being to Explain Legacy's Importance

A reasonable place to start in order to determine what theoretical framework could potentially explain why a good legacy may be good for us are the prominent existing well-being theories. Clearly, hedonism, the theory that posits that well-being equates to having pleasant experiences, does not suit our purposes. Hedonism does not only entail the experience constraint, but it is the theory's core assumption (Gregory 2016). A hedonist cannot accept that legacy matters for well-being, as it has no hedonic value (Bradley 2016).

Desire-satisfactionism is a theory which, broadly construed, asserts that someone's well-being increases with, and only with, the desires she fulfills. This theory also cannot account for the goodness or badness of legacy. First, it is unclear that Van Gogh's or Albert's desires play any decisive role in their stories. We can imagine that they have never thought about their legacies (unlikely, but possible), so they never formed a special desire regarding what people will think about them after death. I am not sure that it matters at all to the fact that we would still think that they gained something from having a positive legacy. According to the logic we presented, Van Gogh gains from our keen interest in him, regardless of if he was mentally stable for long enough to formulate for himself this desire. The fact that Rachel's memory is not tainted by false accusations benefits her even if she never imagined this as a possibility worth contemplating during her lifetime.

Desire-satisfactionists can respond to this objection by claiming that contingent desires do not matter. What really matters for well-being is satisfying the desires that would have been made

by an informed and rational version of us (Heathwood 2016). Therefore, it does not matter if our protagonists never actually formed desires about legacy, it only matters that if they had all the relevant information, and they were thinking rationally and clearly, they would have wanted it. This is the source of legacy's goodness.

But imagine that the informed version of Albert reaches the conclusion that he actually wants to be forgotten. Imagine Albert is having a moment of clarity just before his death, and in accordance with what his ideal self would say he leaves a note stating clearly that he does not want people to know he is the author of his work. However, Elsa, believing with all her heart that Albert is wrong in his decision, decides to send the paper to the journal signed with Albert's name anyway. Is it bad for Albert? According to desire-satisfactionism it is bad, insofar as Albert's will did not materialize. But on the other hand, it looks as if Albert still gains in some other manner from the fact that now the scientific community praises him. We do not feel that the fact that his informed self did not want to be published completely cancels the value of his publicity. So, our intuitions go against desire-satisfaction theory.

If your intuitions become hazy at this point, think of the famous writer Franz Kafka. Kafka left all his work in the hands of his good friend Max Brod, clearly ordering him not to publish it. We can assume that Kafka was fully informed and rational when he made his decision because we have no reason to think otherwise. Brod published Kafka's works anyway. We seem to think that Kafka profited in some way from Brod's action, even though it went against his (allegedly idealized) will. We can even see Brod as acting as a *better* friend for Kafka by choosing to dismiss his will and this can only be maintained due to the fact we feel Brod has somehow benefitted Kafka. This would not have been the case if Brod ignored other wishes of Kafka, for example if he buried him in a different location than he specified or re-allocated his inheritance. In these cases, we would think that denying Kafka's wishes would be wholly bad for him. All of this points to the fact that in the case of legacy Kafka has two independent goods: getting what he wants and receiving glory. Brod granted Kafka the latter, in the price of denying the former.

When describing relations between rational desires and good death, Campbell (2020, 614) argues along similar lines:

Many people will reject the idea that these features of death are good for a person *if and only if* they or their idealized counterpart desires them, and they occur. Imagine a man who dies from accidentally shooting himself with a gun that he himself just loaded. Most people will think the embarrassing nature of his death makes it worse for him, and this apparent badness does not dissipate if it comes to light that this particular man would in no way have minded dying in this pointless and embarrassing way, or for some reason desired that kind of death... This example draws out the fact that desire-fulfillment theory has implications that are counterintuitive for many people.

Just like the person's death in Campbell's example will always be somewhat embarrassing, having a positive legacy seems to be always at least partially good, independently of contingent or rational desires. Thus, desire-satisfactionism cannot have the full explanation we are looking for.

If both subjective theories fail to grasp what we are after, we need to turn to objective theories. According to objective-list theory, there is a list of non-reducible and objective aspects of the good life, and fulfilling them leads to the good life. Perhaps one of the traditional objects on the list can explain legacy's worth?

When describing objective-list's failure to grasp what is a good death Campbell offers us a list of items prominent objective-list theories enumerate (Campbell 2020, 617). Out of the items that

appear there regularly, it seems we have a somewhat plausible candidate to explain the value of recognition: achievement. According to this line of thought, we value Van Gogh and Albert because of a great artistic or scientific achievement.

However, we must separate achievement from recognition because true achievement can take place even if never recognized. For example, Albert achieved his scientific discovery regardless of our knowledge of this fact. As far as achievement contributes to well-being, Albert would enjoy it even without our acknowledging his achievement. Therefore, in order to claim that achievement is the force driving recognition's value, the objectivist should claim that recognition in itself is a sort of achievement, independent of prior accomplishment achieved in life.

But claiming that gaining postmortem recognition is a sort of completely independent achievement is also an odd claim. Think of what constitutes an achievement. You will probably agree with Bradford (2015, 12) that "achievements have at least this characteristic in common: that they are difficult." This is a plausible claim, which Bradford (*ibid.*) demonstrates well using this example:

Consider Jim, our one-armed friend who successfully ties his shoes. Why does this count as an achievement for Jim, but tying my shoes with both my healthy hands does not count as an achievement for me? One feature that appears to distinguish his achievement—and, I will contend, all achievements—is that it is difficult. If tying my shoes presented a particular difficulty for me to overcome, as it does for Jim, then my success might count as an achievement too.

Now think of Albert or Kafka. They indeed worked hard to discover a scientific theory or write magnificent novels. But they spent no extra effort in order to become famous for it. Their publication was independent of their actions and determined only by Elsa and Brod. So, how can it be considered an achievement of theirs? Rachel's case makes this fact even more salient—her legacy is dependent only on the actions of her children, but not upon her actions. If the falsehood about her was to be disproven, then it should actually be considered as her children's success, not her success. This means that postmortem recognition depends on events that are out of the dead person's control, sometimes even being a product of pure luck. Calling legacy in these contexts an achievement will not reflect that fact that true achievement must involve rigorous effort. Thus, this is not a good explanation to legacy's worth.

We could reach the conclusion that if we cannot explain legacy's worth through achievement, some item should be added to the list in order to account for it. For example, Kagan's list stands out in relation to the rest as it includes fame and honor, which certainly could include legacy under it. That will be fair play, but it will also reflect the persistent disadvantage of objective-list theory. That is, it would be a move that lacks a fuller theoretical explanation of why indeed we should consider legacy as a good thing (Prinzing 2020). If we will ask *why* legacy is an independent and irreducible good, we will always be left unanswered. If we seek to gain a deeper understanding of why posthumous praise is valuable, we need to turn to another theory.

The final prominent well-being theory is perfectionism. Perfectionism equates well-being with fulfilling our human natural capacities. Usually, we think of human nature as something that should be understood on the individual level. That is, we believe it can be described through a list of predicates that hold for a single subject. For example, we could claim that someone is a human being if, and only if, she holds rational capabilities, has a physical body of some kind, and has emotional qualities of some type. If we hold this kind of view on human nature, then manifesting being human would be exclusively dependent on individual capacities, as indeed most

perfectionists hold. So, continuing the previous example, if someone is a human being, then the perfectionist would claim that she can flourish only through obtaining intellectual skills, practicing physical traits, and enjoying emotional states.

However, perfectionism fails in explaining the presented intuitions about postmortem's influence on well-being. As Epicureans emphasize, a dead person no longer exists, and thus we cannot describe his well-being in terms of some individual action, trait, or state.

Notice that this is actually in line with the analysis of the virtue of legacy. We have not claimed that the quality of legacy is determined by what we do after death. Rather, our analysis revealed that legacy is important to us, in the sense it reflects how *others* relate to us after death. Van Gogh is better off not because he demonstrated postmortem capacity of some sort (obviously), but because the rest of the world has formed a favorable attitude towards him. Rachel's well-being is not dependent on her actions, but on the beliefs of her environment. So, it cannot be that legacy's worth is explained by relating solely to individual capacities, as traditional perception of human nature implies. If the perfectionist wishes to explain legacy's virtue, she should hold a notion of human nature that is not manifested solely through individual predicates. Rather, she ought to have a perception of human nature that some aspects of it may be manifested through the beliefs of others.

4. Humans-As-Social-Creatures Perfectionism

Perfectionism thus far has described human beings as completely individualistic. Not only can we think of humans as independent entities, but they can flourish on their own as long as they fulfill a set of requirements. They can manifest their full human potential without the presence of anyone else. It is true that humans can survive outside of a society alone in the wilderness and, in this sense, we can imagine a human as an individual. However, think of yourself living in complete solitude, disconnected from any kind of society. Most of your time and energy will be spent collecting food, maintaining shelter, and protecting yourself against predators. You would lack any sort of language, a necessary condition for abstract reasoning and rich internal discourse. You would never enjoy a profound relationship with anyone, let alone friends, family, and children. As authors such as Hegel and Sartre claimed, you would not even have the notion of the self without the other's gaze (Sartre 1943). When pondering about this possibility we are left with the question: What distinguishes humans from other animals when they exist alone? More importantly, are those things part of how we truly conceptualize humanness? I believe the answer is no. Those very things that are deprived of us when we cease existing in a group—reasoning, interacting, becoming aware of oneself—are the things that make us human. Thus, part of being truly human is belonging to a group, identifying with some people, and cooperating with them. Humans should be understood as creatures that by nature belong to societies.

This should especially concern perfectionists. After all, perfectionists strive to fully materialize human aspects of life. If this is deprived of humans when viewed as individuals, then perfectionists should shift their view, and comprehend humans as social creatures.

According to the proposed logic, by the very nature of belonging to a society, humans have a social role and a social status. Within societies, people judge each other according to shared norms, pay each other differentiating amounts of respect, and designate to one another varying social roles. These are conditions that allow for a feeling of belonging, management of interactions, and a productive cooperation between humans. Moreover, quite intuitively we can assert that attaining higher status means manifesting well the social aspect of human's nature. A king ruling his land enjoys his social nature more than his slave, who is quite literally enslaved by his

social identity. Thus, according to the perfectionist, having higher communal rank contributes to well-being, since it can be considered as perfecting the social aspect of human nature.

It is important to note that one's status is not determined by one's actions, but rather by how society relates to him. For example, a slave may think he is a king, and act like one, but unless treated as king, it will never be true, and the same holds in the other direction. So, when we view humans as social creatures, we commit ourselves to claiming that one's flourishing, at least in the social aspect, is dependent on others' relation to him. In that sense, we add to the regular view of human nature as manifested merely through his capabilities, a layer that is manifested through other humans' relation to him. Accepting this perception of human nature of flourishing can, at last, explain the worth of postmortem legacy. Because one's status is not dependent on himself, but on others, it can be determined even after his death, conditioned on if and how he is remembered and regarded. The more humans are appreciated, the higher their social status, the better they manifest their social nature, and all of this can happen to a person even after being dead. This explanation does not only pave a way to accommodate for legacy's importance, but it also grants a broader explanation of why it should matter.

Aristotle is considered to be the first perfectionist. In ancient Greece, a crucial ethical term, which was prominent in the writing of Homer, Heraclitus, and Plato, was the term *Kleos*—often translated to English as 'glory.' *Kleos* represented the ideal of being remembered for glorious acts. It was especially important for warriors, who, according to their ethical code, aspired to have *Kleos* over anything else. So much so that some of them took tremendous risks and even sacrificed their lives only to gain *Kleos*. This sacrifice seemed just in their eyes because they saw *Kleos* as a way of becoming immortal through existing as an object of memory of others long after death (Hooper 2015). Thus, perfectionism was actually developed in an intellectual atmosphere that hosted the idea that legacy can outlive a human being through shaping the way other people relate to the dead after death.

Merging together the Greek notions of perfectionism (*Eudaimonia*) and glory (*Kleos*), we are able to grant a description of human nature and definition of well-being that can explain how and why postmortem recognition is so important to us. Because our identity outlasts us, through other people, the way by which the subject is remembered can influence well-being after the person ceases to exist.

The idea that well-being is connected with social status is deeply rooted in ancient thinking. However, one should note that social perception of human nature stands in conflict with other, more modern ideas of the self. Specifically, it is not readily compatible with the widespread economic treatment of well-being. In economic theory, each agent has her own utility equation. This utility is a mathematical entity that embodies the agent's well-being. Moreover, this function is considered to be a mere representation of a set of existing preferences. So, each agent's utility function is construed in such a way that the more the world fits the agent's preferences, the higher her utility will be.

Such an understanding of well-being is very different from well-being perfectionism and seems to be a derivative of desire-satisfactionism. This is easy to see if we replace the term 'preferences' with 'desires'. Indeed, economics in general often implicitly assumes a desire (or preference) satisfaction theory of well-being. But more important to our inquiry is the fact that the economic framework disallows a truly social concept of well-being. This is not clear at first sight. On the face of it, the economist can claim that her theoretical framework allows for social perception to affect one's well-being. The economist can simply insert into the agent's preferences a preference about how well she will be treated by society. So, utility will go up the more a person is well-thought of. Is this not the same conclusion that was depicted above?

It is not. Let us say we can measure how much you are well-thought of and divide this measure into units ranging from 0-10. Each additional unit adds 1 to your utility. So, if you are very well-thought of you will have 10 more utility points than an identical person that everyone dislikes and no one appreciates. Now, let us also say that you really like cookies. That is, you have a strong preference to have many cookies and every additional 100 cookies you receive increases your utility by 1. This means that if I take away your social position, but give you 1,000 cookies instead, your well-being will be completely identical because the utility level will be equal. This example reveals more broadly that, in economic terms, all goods, including social goods, are assumed to be commensurable with each other. As such, even if one's social perception enters one's utility function, the value of it could always be replaced with a sufficiently large number of material goods that can be consumed alone, such as cookies.

The implication of this revelation is that fundamentally the economist always imagines agents as individuals, consuming goods according to their preferences. Among these individually consumed goods, it so happens that there are also social goods. But these social goods are not inherently different from other goods. Viewing legacy as commensurable with other goods contradicts the thesis that I am putting forward. I claim that what people think of us matters to our well-being because we are social creatures who cannot fully satisfy our humanness by ourselves. Social goods cannot simply be replaced with other goods because they are part of what makes us human in the first place. The idea that we can simply substitute social life with an individually consumed good does not resonate with social perfectionism. Thus, the idea of social perfectionism contradicts the economic perception of well-being because of its perfectionist and social elements.

5. Concerns and Implications

The position of social perfectionism was motivated by the need to account for legacy's virtue. However, this explanation is not free of difficulties and some troubling implications. In the following, I will deal with three salient concerns and refine the proposed theory to address them.

On the face of it, the proposed social perfectionist theory has a counterintuitive implication. It claims that our social rank is important to our well-being, and that this rank is determined by others' relations to us. This implies that we should care deeply about what people think of us not only after death, but also during our life. This is probably true to some extent—we tend to believe that having a negative social image is bad and having a positive social image is good, and one should generally strive to be well thought of. If a friend tells you that he is considered to be an unpleasant person at work, you would probably encourage him to try to put in the effort required to change his colleagues' perception.

However, what is worrying is that this line of reasoning may justify being overly concerned with self-image. We all know people who seem to be obsessed with how they are perceived, and that they act rigorously to persuade their environment that they are intelligent, confident, generous, or nice, sometimes more than they actually are. The paradigmatic example would be of the modern politician, who spends most of his time fostering a meticulous social image, trying to convince the nation he should be re-elected. Quite intuitively we reject the idea that this contributes to well-being, or that this is at all a desired behavior. If you have in mind such a person, I am willing to guess you would not wish yourself, nor your child, to be like them. Yet, our theory might imply that you should wish that. After all, as far as it works, striving to have a better reputation will increase your well-being according to the proposed theory. So, social perfectionism seems to be in trouble.

In response, one should note that claiming that the social aspect of our lives matters for our well-being does not mean other aspects are not important as well. A person should lead a life that

is balanced across different aspects of well-being. Thus, social perfectionism does not imply we should neglect other aspects of the good life just in name of social recognition. So, a politician who spends that vast majority of his time worrying about his public image is not flourishing, but rather is leading an awfully unbalanced life. Thus, we can reject the notion that people who are overly concerned with their public image are truly well off insofar as it causes them to neglect other aspects of the good life.

However, there is a further, more revealing, explanation of why being overly engaged with fostering in-life social image is not supported by social perfectionism. It lays in what Kauppinen (2008) calls diachronic perfectionism, and specifically in the sub-type of animal nature perfectionism (ANP). In the ANP variance of perfectionism “[t]he ideal timing of each activity is determined by the developmental stage of the individual and the natural rhythms of the human animal” (Kauppinen 2008, 4). Consequently ANP “takes seriously the fact that we are members of a biological species with specific patterns of development and decay, and natural rhythms.” And so, according to this theory “[t]here are certain things it is best for us to do as children, as youths, as adults, as retirees, and so on” (Kauppinen 2008, 5).

Kauppinen introduces this theory to explain why we might think that, for example, a young person should make career decisions so she will face challenging and meaningful tasks, while a retired person facing the same dilemmas may choose to opt for tranquility and time with family members. It is a reasonable explanation that indeed echoes our presumptions of how human nature develops gradually over time.

Using ANP theory, we can contrast between in-life recognition and postmortem recognition. After death, we exist *only* as objects of memory. This explains why postmortem recognition should be very important to us—it defines all of our identity after we die, when we take into account our natural “patterns of development and decay”. However, when we think of in-life recognition, this is not the case. The way people relate to us is still important, but not as important as it is after death because we still exist as independent individual subjects. So, according to this logic and using ANP’s framework, I claim that given our natural course of existence, while we should make decisions to enhance our legacy, we should be worried to a lesser extent about fostering in-life public image. According to this explanation, what is problematic in the politician’s behavior is that he seems to be missing the distinction between in-life and postmortem recognition. He grants huge importance to his in-life recognition, forgetting that while living it has a lesser importance.

Another concern might arise. We have asserted that postmortem recognition is important, but need it be based on truth? For example, say, in reality, Van Gogh is not the person who painted all the famous paintings we admire. Instead, it turns out that Van Fogh was the true painter and most of us just do not know this fact because of a mix-up. Is Van Gogh still benefiting from the fact that we admire him for something he did not do?

Intuitions may be hazy here, but I am prone to suggest that Van Gogh gains from any kind of glory, even if undeserved. One way to look at this is that, *prima facie*, there should be a symmetry between Van Fogh and Van Gogh. That is, obviously Van Fogh is disadvantaged by the fact that we do not admire him, even though he was the real painter (equivalent to the story of Albert). So, unless a strong counterargument is presented, it seems that there is no reason to think Van Gogh does not gain what Van Fogh loses.

A third and final concern arises with regard to when we can actually claim that someone has lived a good life. If we say that well-being can change after death, then it is unclear how we can determine one’s well-being because there seems to be no strict temporal limit to it. Someone could be well-remembered at one period of time and be completely forgotten at another period of

time, and then rediscovered, and so on. More generally, someone's well-being may change constantly, depriving us of the possibility to claim with assurance at any point of time that someone lived a good life, rendering the whole notion ambiguous and useless.

This concern, however, is ill-founded because judgements of well-being are always conditioned on time. Think of a living person. One can never say what a person's well-being will be at the end of her life: even if she lived a wonderful life so far, she might go through a terrible accident a second after one makes a judgement of her well-being. Still, knowing this, you probably feel comfortable saying that thus far her life has been good. This is a sensible statement that recognizes the epistemic limit of referring to the future. The same is true of a dead person. Why should it be problematic to simply say that thus far, the person's life and afterlife have been good?

Here is another example. Say, in 1,000 years from now, humanity develops a technology that is able to revive dead people. This would be the equivalent of re-remembering a forgotten person in term of well-being. Does this future fact discredit all of our well-being judgements at the moment? No. It just emphasizes that all well-being judgements are accumulative but not definitive. As far as the indefiniteness of the proposed perception of well-being goes, it should be a concern to the classical perception as well.

6. Conclusion

In this article, I presented arguments in favor of viewing legacy as a factor that affects well-being, even though it is determined after death. I showed that hedonism, desire-satisfactionism, objective-list theory, and traditional perfectionism all fail in explaining the value of post-mortem recognition in a satisfactory manner. As a response, I introduced the idea that human nature is social and I developed a social variation of perfectionism that can accommodate the view that legacy impacts well-being. This variation is not only helpful in explaining legacy's value, but is also appealing in its own right.

There are three implications to this analysis. First, I have shown that legacy matters to our well-being. This fact has some important implications on how we should guide our lives. Specifically, it emphasizes the fact that when we develop our career, interact with our friends, and take care of our family, we should be aware that these activities can benefit our well-being not only while living, but also after it.

Second, and more broadly, the discussion paves the way into claiming that postmortem events beyond legacy may matter to our well-being. For example, it may be that incidents that happen to someone's kin may affect her well-being even after death. Further research could investigate new ideas and directions relying on the developed theoretical framework.

Finally, the argument in this article implies that we should view humans as social creatures that interact in societies and play different social roles. This consideration leads us to conclude that identities can outlive the subject as objects of others' memories. Paired with perfectionism, this consideration allowed us to cross the barrier of death and show that our well-being can change even after death.

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MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY: PLURALISTIC FRAMING AND REAGAN'S WAR ON DRUGS

Zeb Dempsey

Moral Foundations Theory (MFT) is a theory of moral psychology created by social psychologists. The theory claims that humans have five biologically ingrained 'moral foundations' that are affected by social learning and personality. While initially made for cross cultural studies, MFT became predominantly associated with political psychology after researchers found that liberals and conservatives tend to rely on different moral foundations. In this article, I test a claim that I call the 'pluralistic framing hypothesis.' The hypothesis states that we should expect broader levels of public support for policies backed by rhetoric that draws on a wider range of moral foundations. To test this hypothesis, I study Reagan's rhetoric during the war on drugs. My findings show some initial support for the pluralistic framing hypothesis and, based on these findings, I argue that MFT offers important guidance for increasing support for policies of public interest.

1. Introduction

In the wake of George Floyd's death on May 25, 2020, a massive wave of protests erupted in support of the already existing Black Lives Matter movement. The well-established debates surrounding police brutality saw a level of attention that they had not seen before. The goal of the protests was clear—we need to reduce the level of police violence, especially as it is directed at black people in the U.S. The major question was what policies could we enact that would make a difference. One of the major proposals was 'defund the police.' While many people latched on to the idea of defunding the police, support for it among the general public was low (about 28% in June) and opposition remained fairly high (about 58%, "Poll: Voters oppose" 2020). Yet, around the same time, about 67% of Americans supported Black Lives Matter ("Support for Black Lives Matter" 2020).

As a matter of convincing the public, the defund the police movement was not able to get nearly the support that they needed even when a large percentage of Americans supported combating police violence. In general, if we want to determine how to implement a policy solution, we need to ask not only what the best policy solution is, but also how we can convince the general public to support that solution. It then seems worthwhile to ask what makes a rhetorical strategy successful or unsuccessful at gaining public support in general.

Optimistically, we might think that gaining public support for a policy is just a matter of creating and spreading the strongest argument in favor of the policy. However, as ethicists and political philosophers have had to recognize for thousands of years, strong arguments do not

guarantee an end to disagreement. Even if we think our arguments are supported by the strongest reasons, people still end up disagreeing with us. To determine how to make a more effective case for policies, we cannot just try to find the strongest academically backed reasons in support of the policy. We have to determine what makes the general public respond positively and negatively to arguments and rhetorical campaigns. Why do people respond differently to the same arguments and rhetoric, and how can we change our rhetoric to gain a larger level of public support for policies that we favor?

To begin to answer this question, I use Moral Foundations Theory (MFT), which is a theory of moral psychology developed by social psychologists that has gained some degree of popularity recently. According to MFT, we have five moral foundations which are biologically ingrained in us, but which are expressed differently in individuals as a result of social learning and individual personality (Graham et al. 2013). A number of studies have found that the people's scores on the moral foundations questionnaire are predicative over and above political ideology for voting behavior and political attitudes (Frank and Scherr 2015; Dickinson et al. 2016). Some scholars have argued that, as a result, we may be able to increase support for a given policy if we broaden the number of foundations expressed in the rhetoric supporting it. There has been relatively little work, however, testing this claim, and the work that has been done has primarily been in labs.

To test this claim, I explore a case study of the presidential rhetoric of Ronald Reagan from 1984-1988 surrounding the 'war on drugs.' I look at the war on drugs, because previous work has argued that Reagan's rhetoric had a large impact on public opinion at the time (Hawdon 2001). As such, it offers a good opportunity to look at rhetoric that was successful (on its own terms at least). I argue that, given the broad impact Reagan's rhetoric had on public opinion, we should expect Reagan's rhetoric to express a broad range of moral foundations.

The structure of this article will be as follows: In section 2, I give a brief review of the theoretical commitments of MFT and the empirical evidence that it has produced. I argue that based on MFT we should expect broader support for a policy when the rhetoric supporting that policy draws on a broader number of moral foundations. Given the amount of the public who viewed the drug issue as a morally salient issue from 1984-1988, we should expect Reagan's rhetoric to draw on a broad number of moral foundations. In section 3, I give a brief overview of the literature on presidential rhetoric during the war on drugs. In section 4, I use the Moral Foundations Dictionary to assess the moral content of all of Reagan's speeches involving drugs from 1984-1988. In addition, I analyze recent literature in support of defunding the police to provide a baseline for comparison. My findings suggest that Reagan's rhetoric employed a wide range of moral foundations to frame the war on drugs. In section 5, I offer some concluding remarks.

2. Moral Foundations Theory and Practice

2.1 Theory

Moral Foundations Theory rests on the idea that we have a certain number (five in the standard version of the theory) of 'moral foundations.' The foundations are basic functional systems that each react to a specific sort of moral stimuli. Together they constitute a "first draft" of morality (Graham et al. 2013, 12).

The five traditional moral foundations are Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation. Each moral foundation is seen as evolutionary adaptations to social coordination problems (Graham et al. 2013, 38). The first word in each word pair represents the virtue of the foundation and the second represents the vice. The first two foundations (Care/Harm and Fairness/Cheating) are called the "individualizing" foundations because they respond to the protection of individuals (Graham et al. 2020, 5). The other three

foundations (Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, and Sanctity/Degradation) are called the “binding” foundations because they relate to maintaining group cohesion (Graham et al. 2020, 5).

This “first draft,” however, is not biologically hardwired. Rather, it is “organized in advance of experience” (Graham et al. 2013, 7-8). Our brains are made to process and react to certain sorts of moral stimuli more than others. An individual’s specific tendencies to react to certain kinds of moral stimuli are somewhat like taste. What sorts of food any individual likes is not biologically determined. It is in part a product of cultural upbringing and personal experience. Our taste receptors, however, are still built to respond to certain sorts of food. Similarly, MFT assumes that our “first-draft” of morality makes us organized to respond to certain kinds of moral stimuli. Even so, our cultural upbringing and personality can change how we respond to those stimuli person to person, and group to group (Graham et al. 2013, 19).

You can think of our moral foundations almost like a sound mixer. We have a set number of moral foundations, but social learning and individual experience ‘slide’ the foundations up or down. Thus, someone can be heavily affected by moral stimuli relevant to the Care/Harm and relatively unaffected by moral stimuli relevant to the Sanctity/Degradation foundation, and vice versa. This is a simplification because social learning can also affect the “current triggers” of a foundation (Graham et al. 2013, 12). For example, two people can both be highly sensitive to eating habits they find disgusting, but which eating habits they find disgusting depend on the etiquette norms of a given culture. However, researchers typically focus on the effect social learning has on the intensity of a foundation in an individual.

Defenders of MFT maintain that our moral dispositions are rarely consciously constructed through careful reasoning. They instead adopt the Social Intuitionist Model (SIM), which states that most moral evaluations occur rapidly in evaluative feelings as a result of automatic processing (Graham et al. 2013, 10-11). Most conscious moral reasoning on SIM is post-hoc rationalization of intuitions. Putting this together, MFT sees human morality as inherently value pluralist, based on biologically ingrained, yet plastic, functional systems shaped by social learning and personality, and largely revealed to us through intuitions generated by automatic processing.

For the purposes of this article, we do not need to accept MFT as a whole. Instead, we only need a way to categorize moral content in rhetoric in order to study how moral content in rhetoric relates to public opinion. Thus, MFT may, for example, fail to adequately characterize explicit moral reasoning, but so long as much of our moral judgement comes from knee-jerk intuitive reactions, the analytical tools of MFT may still be predictively valid. Thus, MFT, even if theoretically flawed, may still offer a useful way of characterizing rhetoric.

2.2 Practice

While MFT was created to study cross cultural differences and perhaps the most discussed finding of MFT is that liberals and conservatives rely on different moral foundations (although studies also found that there were at least two other groups which could not be included into the typical liberal and conservative groupings, Graham et al. 2013, 19-22). Researchers found that liberals tend to rely primarily on the individualizing foundations (care and fairness). Conservatives, on the other hand, express the foundations more evenly, but rely particularly on the binding foundations (authority, loyalty, and sanctity).

Leaning on this finding, Jonathan Haidt, one of the main figures of MFT, claimed rather dramatically that when conservatives argue based on the foundations of sanctity or authority liberals only hear “theta-waves” (Haidt and Graham 2007, 99). In other words, when liberals and

conservatives' arguments rely on foundations that the other does not express in the same way, their arguments just sound like nonsense to each other.

Building on this finding, researchers have shown that a person's score on the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ) can predict support and compliance with policies over and above a person's political ideology (Graham et al. 2013, 20). Two independent studies found, for example, that a person's MFQ scores were particularly predictive of their compliance with COVID-19 regulations, even when controlling for political affiliation and a number of other factors (Chan 2021; Graham et al. 2020). Similar studies found that MFQ scores are predictive of people's overall voting behavior (Franks and Scherr 2015).

As a result, some authors have argued that these findings may help us understand how to increase support for policies among non-supportive groups. As Chan (2021, 8) puts it:

The strength of Moral Foundations Theory is that it explores people's underlying intuitions. By understanding the moral foundations relevant, we offer guidance concerning how to design and frame public health communications that are aimed at increasing uptake of behaviors.

If we understand which foundations are associated with low levels of support and compliance, the idea goes, we can determine how to increase support and compliance by reframing or restructuring policies in ways that play off the moral foundation expressed by the non-supportive group.

Expanding the argument, different groups of people rely on different moral foundations, that means that different groups of people will be affected differently by the same kind of moral stimuli. As a result, if we rely heavily on only one or two moral foundations, we run the risk of creating rhetoric that is fundamentally unmoving for certain segments of the population. In order to broaden support and/or compliance with certain policies, we should develop rhetorical strategies that employ a broader set of moral foundations. If this is true, then we should expect broader levels of public support for policies backed by rhetoric that draws on a wider range of moral foundations *ceteris paribus*. I will call this the 'pluralistic framing hypothesis.'

Limited work has been done to test the effect of MFT-guided framing on people's opinions, which has offered some mixed support for this idea. Feinberg and Willer (2013) found that framing environmental issues with conservative moral foundations could almost eliminate the difference between liberal and conservative pro-environmental attitudes and increase conservatives' belief in global warming. However, a more wide-ranging study by Day et al. (2014) showed that MFT guided framing could entrench people's opinions on an issue, but found much more limited support for the hypothesis that targeted framing could shift people's opinions.

These studies are undoubtedly important for establishing a causal relationship between moral foundations, framing, and public opinion, but crucially they were both conducted in laboratory conditions. Thus, it is not clear that we can draw valid inferences from their results to large-scale rhetorical campaigns. It seems important, then, to study how moral foundations in actual political rhetoric influence the public's attitudes in real life scenarios. This will require sacrificing a degree of internal validity, but hopefully it will allow for a greater degree of external validity. In the next section, I discuss the literature on presidential rhetoric in the war on drugs.

3. Presidential Rhetoric and the War on Drugs

The 'war on drugs' started in 1971 after Nixon declared in a speech that drugs were the 'public enemy number one.' After Nixon's resignation in 1974, however, federal concern with combatting drug use declined dramatically. Ford simply did not think that stopping drug use was a real-

istic goal and generally neglected the issue. Carter even pushed to decriminalize possession of small amounts of marijuana (Nielsen 2010, 463). Public concern with drug use also seemed to decline during the Ford and Carter administrations with opposition to marijuana legalization falling from around 80% in 1975 to under 70% in 1978 (Nielsen 2010, 474).

This general decline in federal and public concern over drugs reversed dramatically, however, after Reagan took office. By 1982 Reagan had again declared war on drugs, and during Reagan's administration the public increasingly saw both drugs and drug users as a major threat to American values (Nielsen 2010, 464). Most important problem polls showed that almost no one thought drugs were the most important issue facing the country in 1984. By 1987 around 15% of the public listed drugs as the most important problem. This number increased until 1990 where it spiked to almost 70% (Gonzenbach 1992, 138). By the end of 1990, however, the number dropped dramatically (Gonzenbach 1992, 138).

The second wave of the war on drugs (during the Reagan and early Bush administrations) saw a significant increase in federal spending meant to combat the drug trade. The Anti-Drug Abuse act of 1986 alone allocated \$1.7 billion to the war on drugs (Nielsen 2010, 464). The allocation of funding also shifted to combat the supply-side, as opposed to Nixon's war on drugs which focused more on demand-side prevention. Yet, even with the significant amount of funding that the war on drugs had, the number of people who thought that too little was being spent on combating drug addiction increased between 1986 (60.7%) to 1989 (73.8%) (Nielsen 2010, 474).

Based on data from the National Institute of Drug Abuse, the level of drug use, however, had actually decreased consistently between 1979 to 1990 (Hawdon 2001, 420). While, on some measures, the severity of drug abuse did increase between 1986 and 1989, the level of public concern about drugs is not consistently correlated with any measure of severity (Beckett 1994, 442). As a result, the dramatic increase in public concern from 1984-1990 does not seem to be explainable in terms of objective features of the drug problem. Sociologists have labeled this as a "moral panic," which is "the widespread feeling on part of the public that something is terribly wrong in their society because of the moral failings of a specific group of individuals" (Hawdon 2001, 420).

According to Hawdon, the moral panic was created and sustained by the presidential rhetoric surrounding drug use. It was created, on this account, through Reagan's use of communitarian rhetoric. According to Hawdon (2001, 425):

Communitarianism, at least in its extreme, emphasizes the group over the individual and argues that the collective has rights independent of, and sometimes opposed to, the rights of individuals.

The president used communitarian rhetoric to turn drug traffickers and users into 'folk devils,' labeling them as moral deviants standing in opposition to the welfare and values of the collective. As the war on drugs went on, the president's rhetoric then shifted from primarily communitarian to a combination of communitarian and individualistic, and partially framed drug addiction as a disease. Finally, at the beginning of the Bush administration and near the end of the moral panic, the presidential rhetoric became primarily individualistic.

Hawdon's analysis is certainly insightful. However, it relies on subjective analysis and the definition of communitarianism is vague. From the perspective of MFT, communitarian rhetoric, as Hawdon uses it, can encompass rhetoric drawing on a wide range of moral foundations, including the individualizing foundations. For example, infringing on the rights of individuals to protect the collective could be justified by citing the harm to individuals in the collective (drawing on the Care/Harm foundation), or it could cite the authority of the state (drawing on the Author-

ity/Subversion foundation). Thus, Hawdon's analysis does not offer much insight into the moral foundations used in the rhetoric.

Moreover, the president's rhetoric is certainly not the only influence on public opinion. A study by Stringer and Maggard (2016) suggests that media exposure also has a strong impact on how the public thinks about the drug problem. While the level of drug use was decreasing, 1980 saw the introduction of crack, which received significant media attention (Nielsen 2010, 464). It has also been argued that the causal relationship between public opinion and the president is the reverse. Public opinion is really what drives the president's concerns (Gonzenbach 1992, 132-3). All these claims may collectively be true. A study by Gonzenbach (1992) suggests that the causal relationship is triangular. Both the media and presidential rhetoric influenced public opinion, but what the president and the media focused on depended in part on the concerns of the public (Gonzenbach 1992, 143). However, a study by Beckett (1994) shows that, while public concern and state initiative generally move in parallel, changes in public concern tend to follow changes in state initiative rather than the other way around (Beckett 1994, 442). There seems, then, to be good evidence that the presidential rhetoric did impact public opinion even though the causal relationship is not exactly tidy.

The presidential rhetoric surrounding the war on drugs from 1984 to 1990 provides a good case study for analyzing the impact of the moral foundations used in rhetoric on public opinion. We know that the president's rhetoric did have an impact on public opinion. More specifically, we know the president had an impact on how the public viewed the drug problem from a moral perspective.

Drug issues in general also offer a good case study for framing. Wendell and Tatalovich (2021) found that marijuana legalization was a 'mixed' or latent morality policy, i.e. it is an issue that is in between purely moral and purely instrumental. It is not a given that the public will view drug issues as a moral concern. Based on the pluralistic framing hypothesis, given the impact on public opinion that Reagan's rhetoric had, we should expect Reagan's rhetoric to employ a wide variety of moral foundations. Had Reagan used a limited number of moral foundations in his rhetoric it is not clear that it would have been able to create substantial moral concern in as much of the population as it did.

Like any case study, this is unlikely to firmly establish any sort of universally generalizable causal relationship, but it offers an opportunity to test the pluralist framing hypothesis in the field. In the next section, I discuss my preliminary data collection and findings.

4. Preliminary Findings

4.1 Methods

In order to study the moral foundations used in Reagan's rhetoric surrounding the war on drugs from 1984-1988, I analyze all drug-related speeches Reagan made during that period using the Moral Foundations Dictionary (MFD), which was created by Graham and Haidt. The MFD associates words with a given foundation, and classifies the word either as a virtue or vice of the foundation. For example, violence is associated with the Care/Harm vice; family is associated with the Loyalty/Betrayal virtue; abandonment is associated with the Fairness/Cheating vice and the Loyalty/Betrayal vice, etc. The MFD produces a tally of the total number of words that fall under each vice and virtue of each foundation. For example, if there were five words that fell under harm-virtue, then the score for harm-virtue would be 5. Given the simplicity of the score there are a clear number of issues that need to be addressed.

First, we do not want to count phrases like, 'the democrats want you to believe that this policy is unfair' to count towards the fairness score of the rhetoric. There is no good automatic way of

doing this. As such, I have gone through and manually removed phrases where moral words are not actually being used in the way that the MFD typically assumes they are. Second, if a speech talks about more than just drugs, we do not want to count the moral rhetoric associated with the non-drug related speech towards the overall analysis of the drug-related rhetoric. As a result, I have removed parts of speeches I have found to be irrelevant. This makes the results somewhat subjective, because there are difficult questions about relevancy. Are passages about communism in the middle of a speech on drugs relevant to the drug rhetoric? Arguably they are because they may affect public opinion about drugs by associating drugs with communism. These are difficult questions that may be answered differently by different individuals. Third, I have decided to keep repeated uses of the same speech. For example, Reagan gave the same ‘say no to drugs’ speech in 1986 a substantial number of times. I have decided to keep each use of the speech in order to capture the frequency of the kinds of rhetoric used.

Because this method only analyzes individual words, there are certainly some drawbacks. Several scholars have argued that the ‘just say no’ campaign made the public view drug use as a morally culpable act by framing use as a personal choice. The MFD clearly cannot offer that sort of analysis. As such, the results should be seen as more of a proxy measure because the words are evidence of framing, not framing itself. Still, this method allows for more objective analysis of substantial amounts of data, so it has merits on that account. The speeches can be found in the Public Papers of the President of the United States, which compiles all public speeches of every president since Herbert Hoover.

To measure the ‘spread’ of the moral foundations, I have adapted the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI). The HHI is used by economists to measure competition in a given market by measuring the relative size of firms. To measure the HHI of a sector, one finds the market shares of each firm in the market, squares them, and then adds them together. The HHI is closer to zero in markets with many firms with equal market shares and increases towards the theoretical maximum of 10,000 when a single firm dominates the market. The HHI can be used to measure the spread of the rhetoric’s moral foundations if we replace market shares with the percentage of moral words a given foundation takes up. I will call this measure HHI’. If rhetoric uses moral words from more foundations and uses them around even amounts, then the HHI’ will be low. If the moral words primarily cluster around one foundation, then the HHI’ will be high.

To give a baseline for comparison, I have used the same procedure to analyze 10 articles written in support of defund the police.¹ Given the low support for defund the police, we should expect a higher HHI’ for the defund the police articles than for Reagan’s war on drugs rhetoric based on the pluralistic framing hypothesis.

4.2 Results and Discussion

The moral content of the speeches, as analyzed by the MFD, was initially somewhat surprising, but consistent with overall expectations. In four out of five years, the most frequently used moral foundation was fairness, followed by authority. The exception was 1988 where sanctity rather than authority was the second most used foundation. Overall, words that fell under the fairness foundation took up 36.7% of all moral words. Care/Harm was 5.6%, Loyalty/Betrayal was 15.5%, Authority/Subversion was 22.1%, and Sanctity/Degradation was 20%. I expected to see care and sanctity as the primary foundations since those are the foundations that would cover the threat

1. The Reagan study came from approximately 10,000 pages of Reagan speeches. For the purposes of this article, I was unable to make an equally in-depth study of the defund the police articles. The analysis of these articles should be seen merely as a baseline for comparison and is not intended as a full representation of the defund the police movement.

of drugs to general welfare and American values. The large number of fairness related words appears to reflect Reagan's emphasis on the war on drugs as a matter of justice.

Overall, the speeches included a fair range of moral foundations as measured using HHI'. The average HHI' was 2075. The HHI' for 1984 was 1883, it was 2178 in 1985, 2039 in 1986, 2166 in 1987, and 2104 in 1988. For comparison, the HHI' of the articles defending defund the police was 2773, making it higher than both Reagan's average HHI' and his high HHI' in 1985. Moreover, so long as we restrict rhetoric to only the care and fairness foundations (which are the two foundations primarily endorsed by liberals), the lowest HHI' we could get is 2500. This supports my hypothesis that Reagan's rhetoric relied on a wide range of moral foundations.

More qualitatively, the moral content of Reagan's rhetoric ranges from emphasizing the corrupt influence of drugs on American values (reflecting the sanctity foundation) to emphasizing the harm that drugs cause to drug users (reflecting the care foundation) to arguing that punishing drug traffickers is a matter of justice (reflecting the fairness foundation) to arguing that drug use is a threat to law and order (reflecting the authority foundation). Reagan's rhetoric, then, relies both on the individualizing and binding foundations, expressing both the threat that drugs pose to individuals as well as the threat that they pose to the social fabric. This finding does not necessarily clash with Hawdon's analysis that Reagan's rhetoric was communitarian because Hawdon's use of communitarian does not line up with the binding foundations.

In general, it appears that Reagan's rhetoric cannot be unified into a single message. At points there even appear to be obvious inconsistencies in some of Reagan's expressed views. One example is this excerpt from an interview in August 1986:

I do think that as a part of a campaign of the kind that we're talking, where you're going to want to identify the users in order to be of help to them, in this program now of turning them off on drugs, why, then, I think that we're going to be—my own view is—far better off if we do as the military did and offer them—you can come in and you can ask for help and you won't be punished if you will agree to take the help to try and cure you.

Here Reagan is explicitly talking about drug use as a disease to be treated rather than as a personal choice that ought to be punished. This quote is in stark contrast with a comment he made in a 1984 speech:

I made a point last year which some of our critics jumped on, but I believe it has merit. Government bureaucracies spend billions for problems related to drugs, alcoholism, and disease. How much of that money could we save, how much better off might Americans be if all of us tried a little harder to live by the Ten Commandments and the Golden Rule?

Here, drug use is explicitly framed as a personal choice, rather than a disease. Drug users, alcoholics and victims of the AIDs epidemic are supposedly costing our society because of their failure to abide by Judeo-Christian moral rules.

It seems entirely possible that Reagan's rhetoric had a large impact on the public because of this variation in his rhetoric. It allowed him to frame the issue using a pluralistic set of values and this helped in part to make the moral panic around drugs possible. The war on drugs was framed as a fight for the maintenance of America's upstanding religious way of life, as a fight to keep our children safe, a fight for the re-establishment of law and order, and for just punishment of the offenders. This allowed drugs to become a morally salient issue for a public with a diverse set of moral concerns. No individual needed to view the drug issue in each of those ways, but so long as

they bought into one of those framings, the drug issue could become a morally salient issue for them.

5. Conclusion

Just creating a policy alone will not do anything. Just creating an academically strong justification for a policy alone may not do anything. If we want our policy proposals to have an effect, they need to be passed and, in order to be passed, they need to gain public support. MFT offers a way of determining what may be missing from the rhetoric that is employed to convince the public that a given policy is worth its support. Common experience seems to show that what is a morally salient reason for us may not be a morally salient reason for another person. The potential importance of MFT is its promise to provide a framework for finding out what sorts of reasons are morally salient to groups that do not share our moral intuitions.

This initial study of Reagan's rhetoric certainly cannot establish a causal relationship between the moral foundations employed in rhetoric and public support. There were certainly other factors behind the moral panic from 1984 to 1990. Nevertheless, the presidential rhetoric had its role in producing the panic and, given my initial results along with preexisting empirical work in MFT, it seems plausible that the reliance on multiple foundations was crucial to producing widespread moral concern during Reagan's war on drugs. Had the issue been framed as only a matter of harm, or only a matter of protecting the American way of life, it is unclear that the public would have reacted in the same way.

If we want to improve our rhetorical strategies, the pluralistic framing hypothesis suggests that we ought to frame the issues in a number of different ways drawing on a variety of moral foundations. Doing this would help make the policy issue morally salient to a diverse group of people with diverse moral concerns. This does not mean that simply reframing the issue will solve the problem. For starters, some policies are more explicitly moral than others, giving us less ability to reframe the issue (Wendell 2021). For example, the public had a largely negative reaction to Reagan's zero tolerance policy due to its excessive intrusiveness (Hawdon 2001, 432).

However, insofar as reframing is possible, we ought to frame issues in ways that allow the public to grasp them on their own (moral) terms. The pluralistic framing hypothesis suggests (i) that in a population with diverse moral concerns, making the policy issue morally salient is only possible if we frame issues in multiple ways, and (ii) that MFT offers a useful guide towards understanding what moral concerns are prevalent other than our own.

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REPRESENTATIVE RANDOMNESS: THE CASE FOR A RANDOMLY WEIGHTED VOTING SYSTEM

Adam Cooper

Free and fair elections are a powerful tool of representative democracy, providing citizens with a unique opportunity to express their political ambitions. Yet, the United States' current electoral process for federal congressional elections often leads to the selection of members of Congress who are elected only by a small portion of those eligible to vote and who are often woefully uneducated about the candidates they are voting upon. This article proposes a novel institutional reform to the United States' federal congressional electoral process. To improve voter representation, the article argues for the institution of a randomly weighted voting system that would help achieve better democratic outcomes in federal congressional elections. The suggested voting system would increase voter turnout, involve more informed voters, select more representative politicians, and would ultimately improve the democratic autonomy of elections.

1. Introduction

The Washington Post's chief correspondent Dan Balz (2014) once wrote: "To too many Americans, the system appears broken, rigged against them or both." Free and fair elections are a powerful tool of representative democracy, providing citizens with a unique opportunity to express their political ambitions. Yet, the United States' current electoral process for federal congressional elections leads to unrepresentative members of Congress who are elected by a small portion of those eligible to vote (FairVote) and who are often woefully uneducated (Glynn 2017) about the candidates they are voting upon. During midterm elections, this problem is pronounced, with voter turnout rates remaining under 50% since 1914 (FairVote). The idea of voting might be a cultural cornerstone for many Americans, but our current electoral system has placed this process in jeopardy.

Since the United States Supreme Court's decisions in *Citizens United* (Lau 2019) and *Samples* (2012), money has played an increasingly prominent role in American elections. These two cases led to the rise of super Political Action Committees (PACs) that can contribute unlimited amounts of money to political efforts (Kreig 2012), so long as none of these efforts are coordinated with the campaigns that they are supporting (Martin 2008). Given the high correlation between money spent on political campaigns and electoral victories, political contributions have become the *de facto* identifier of political success in many races. Currently, "for House seats, more than 90 per-

cent of the candidates who spend the most win” (Koerth 2018). In the words of Lawrence Lessig (2019), we have a system of “Tweedism” in which those with power (in the form of money or political capital) effectively choose which candidates voters can select.

Hyper-focused online campaign advertisements, particularly on social media platforms, have also allowed those with money to dramatically influence how their fellow citizens vote (Wong 2018). In the 2020 general election, \$2.1 billion were spent on these type of advertisements (OpenSecrets). ‘The people’ might be voting for whom they want as their representatives, but not before their choices have been pre-selected by political elites and further manipulated by powerful campaign material online.

Additionally, in races where money does not predict success (eg. Jamie Harrison’s 2020 election loss to incumbent Lindsey Graham in South Carolina), the race is already so uncompetitive that it is futile to even attempt to defeat the incumbent (Kinnard 2020). Indeed, “senate races are often predetermined, with over 80 percent of incumbents reclaiming their seats since 1964” (OpenSecrets). This scarcity of competitiveness is prominent. The Cook Political Report claims that “417 of 435 congressional races were uncompetitive as of 2016” (Kleinfeld 2018).

With such a predictable system that continuously leads to suboptimal democratic outcomes, some have thought that elections might not be the best tool for choosing representatives in representative democracies. Instead, democratic theorists such as Guerrero (2014) and van Reybrouk (2013), among others, have proposed a new system, or rather have argued for reinstating an ancient one: random selection of legislative bodies from the citizenry. Whether functioning in place of all elected bodies or in a supplementary role, randomly selected legislative bodies would be lawmakers, either completely removing or weakening the role of elected politicians in democracies.

Despite its growing popularity, sortition is fraught with many potential problems. Yet, this movement has introduced an important tool that might be used to improve the election process, rather than replace it: randomness. More specifically, the uncertainty that arises from random situations. Uncertainty is a powerful attribute of any system because it actively works against those trying to ‘game the system.’

Intuitively, uncertainty already plays an important role in our democratic procedures: uncertainty in electoral results drives voter participation (albeit insufficiently) and uncertainty in policy outcomes encourages political debate, among other things. However, uncertainty could also be used in our elections through a randomly weighted voting system.

The way elections currently function is problematic. However, this is not a judgement on whether elections *per se* are problematic. Rather, the way in which they currently function is democratically insufficient. Just because elections currently lead to suboptimal democratic outcomes (in terms of representativeness of those elected, etc.) does not mean they are not a viable mechanism for democratic selection. Elections are an important tool of representative democracy. They encourage participation in civic culture, function as a means of individual and group expression, supply legitimacy to those in power, and ensure government responsiveness at least during the time of elections (Victor 2018). Accordingly, randomly weighted voting best achieves the advantages of the randomness of sortition without losing the democratically important tool of elections. While gaining the benefits of randomness, this system also utilizes elections to “ensure that individuals remain a normative priority for those currently serving in government” (Jackson 2021).

With this system in place, voters would go to the polls on election day fully informed that their vote might be weighted more heavily than the normal one person, one vote. To be clear, neither voters nor campaigns would know which votes would be weighted more heavily until after the

election. Once all the votes are cast, some votes would receive the weighting, others not, all on a random basis. The candidate with the most votes in total, summing both the weighted votes ('supervotes'¹) and non-weighted votes, would be declared the winner. Those who received the random weighting in past elections would not be disadvantaged in receiving the random weighting in subsequent elections. There would be no calculation of the vote if the election were to happen without the random weights assigned, as this might serve to undermine the system.

In considering randomness as a tool of electoral reform and not replacement, this article argues that utilizing a randomly weighted voting system would help achieve better democratic outcomes in federal congressional elections. The suggested voting system would increase voter turnout, involve more informed voters, select more representative politicians, and would ultimately improve the democratic autonomy of elections.

2. Traditional Theories of Representation

Traditional theories of representation do not adequately "ensure that individual voters remain a normative priority for those currently serving in government" (Jackson 2021). More specifically, by tracing a view of Jane Mansbridge's (2003) models of representation, it is clear that insufficient attention is given to the equal consideration of all citizens.

Mansbridge (2003, 515) writes, "the traditional model of representation focused on the idea that during campaigns representatives made promises to constituents, which they then kept or failed [to] keep." She refers to this type of representation as "promissory representation." Yet, this model of representation rests upon the assumption of a "unidirectional responsiveness" (Disch 2011, 112) from representatives to constituents. Disch (2011, 100) refers to this as a "bedrock" norm, "the common-sense notion that representatives in a democratic regime should take citizen preferences as the 'bedrock for social choice.'" Yet, it is unclear that these citizen preferences, often described in some form of Rousseau's *volonté générale* (general will) exist exogenous to the institutions in which they are expressed (Jackson 2020).

Beginning in the early 1990s, as Disch notes (2011, 102), "research in public opinion and political psychology has taken what researchers call a 'constructionist' or 'constructivist' turn," which "contends that preferences are constituted in the communication that occurs during decision making, implying that choice is as much something that institutions effect as it is something that an individual makes." Indeed, the benchmark of "transcribing the will of the people" (Jackson 2021) that the traditional model relies upon seems highly dubious.

Mansbridge's (2018, 517) "anticipatory representation" that is "filled with reciprocal attempts at the exercise of power and communication, much of it instigated by the representative," is also problematic. This model does not offer a cohesive strategy to deal with the risk of "manipulation", and accordingly lacks explanation for why politicians would engage in educative, rather than manipulative, communication.

In later work, Mansbridge (2017, 2-21) outlines a concept of "recursive representation," arguing that we should stop thinking of the "representative's main job as policy-making and re-conceptualize it as communicating." Indeed, "running for election and winning is a better test of capacity to communicate than it is a test of policy expertise. A restructured division of labor, in which the elected representative did more communicating with both constituents and other legislators while the staff did more policy-crafting, would make recursive communication more possible."

Although Mansbridge's notion of "representative as interlocutor" which seems to be a distinct extension from her formulation of anticipatory representation, gives more consideration to the

1. This term was suggested by Professor Colin Bird (University of Virginia).

communication between constituents and representatives, there is still concern that “recursive communication” would not occur on a “genuinely equal basis.” Put simply, some citizens, whether through pressure groups, political donations, etc. have greater ability to exert influence in this relationship. Mansbridge notes of these “massive structural and political inequalities” that hinder this equality of communication.

In sum, most traditional theories of representation fail to equally consider the interests of all citizens. By focusing on “the will of the people” at large instead of individual equality, these models (i) overlook the structural conditions that contribute to the unequal consideration of citizens and (ii) provide inadequate examination of the role of individual citizens in contributing to democratic representation.

This article proposes to address directly these issues through a new voting system that introduces more uncertainty in elections than traditional voting systems, which incentivizes equal consideration of each citizen in the electoral process.

3. Equal Consideration and Randomness

3.1 Representation Through Democratic Autonomy

What seems most desirable is representation that not only maximizes communication between constituents and representatives, but also gives equal respect to each citizen in this relationship. Under this notion of representation, electoral reforms should focus on “procedures that allow us to understand ourselves as contributing equally in policymaking” (Jackson 2020) and provide us with an equal opportunity to have our preferences (however formed) taken into consideration. More specifically, Urbinati and Warren (2008, 395) classify representation as fulfilling the norm of “democratic autonomy” if “(a) individuals are morally and legally equal and (b) individuals are equally capable of autonomy with respect to citizenship—that is, conscious self-determination — all other things being equal.”

Furthermore, in order to treat citizens as equals, the quality of exchange between constituents and representatives should be dependent on “mutual education, communication, and influence,” rather than manipulation (Mansbridge 2017, 23). Although no institutional arrangement can guarantee this type of communication, aspiring to incentivize its possibility is reasonable.

Doing so might require an expansion of who and what matters in describing representation. As noted by Disch (2011, 107), “Pitkin (1967) sets the dyadic model [focusing only on those represented and representatives] aside to propose that political representation should be conceived as a “public, institutionalized arrangement,” one where representation emerges not from “any single action by any one participant, but [from] the overall structure and functioning of the system.” Although analyzing the communication between constituents and representatives is crucial in determining the democratic quality of the representation being provided, Pitkin’s conception recognizes that the entire “political environment,”² in which representation functions, including the political institutions, is also of utmost importance.

It is within this broader scope that Urbinati and Warren’s (2008, 395) concept of “democratic autonomy” becomes all the more important, recognizing that democratically legitimate representation not only “instantiates the principle that all affected by collective decisions should have an opportunity to influence the outcome,” but also that this opportunity is grounded in equality. With this in mind, we can examine institutional arrangements, and in the case of this article—randomly weighted voting—by analyzing if they uphold democratic autonomy or not.

2. As Disch (2011, 101) notes, “empirical researchers use the term ‘political environment’ to designate the ‘totality of politically relevant information to which citizens are exposed’ by various mediating institutions ... It functions for them as a way to speak of what normative theorists would call the ‘public sphere,’ without crediting that environment with the virtues of equality, openness, reasonableness, etc.”

To note, it seems clear that our current system of representation, and the electoral system that underlies it, does not satisfy this norm. Whether through special interest groups, political donations,³ or gerrymandered districts, among many others,⁴ citizens in the United States are not afforded equal opportunity for participation within our elections, effectively hindering the opportunity for democratically legitimate representation to occur.

The preceding discussion of representation should explicate the ideal of equality of consideration through maximized, equal, and educative communication as fundamental to legitimate representation in representative democracy. This article proceeds with the understanding that representation in representative democracy can be considered democratically legitimate if citizens enjoy “democratic autonomy” (as defined by Urbinati and Warren 2008, 395) in the “overall structure and functioning” (as established by Pitkin 1967) of the political system. Although no proposed reform will perfectly uphold this standard, reforms that improve on our current system merit at least some examination.

Considering both the voter-side and candidate-side impact of randomly weighted voting will demonstrate how the proposed system would help advance the norm of “democratic autonomy” in our electoral process.

3.2 Voter-Side Impact

The potential power afforded to each individual voter would incentivize higher voter turnout in federal congressional elections. Currently, voters’ individual power is infinitesimal in elections. As such, justifications for voting cannot rely on the instrumental value of a single vote. Instead, voting motivation often employs some vague platitude related to democracy—‘voting is an opportunity for change’ or ‘vote to make your voice heard’—requiring individuals to engage in a quasi-suspension of disbelief on election day. Randomly Weighted Voting (RWV) introduces an important change to the voting calculus of each individual.

Consider Texas’ 24th Congressional District, in which Beth Van Duyne (R) beat Candace Valenzuela (D) by a margin of 4,584 votes in the 2020 election (*The New York Times* 2021). To give an example under the proposed system, an individual who received a supervoter weighting of 1,000x to their vote might actually be the deciding vote in this election. Now, although a voter who received the 1,000x weight might be the deciding vote in a close election, it is not clear that the expected instrumental value of an individual vote would increase substantially.⁵ If a congressional district had 400,000 voters in a given election, and 10% of those voters received a 1,000x supervoter weighting, any one of the 40,000 voters who received the 1,000x weight could have been the deciding vote, in addition to the voters who did not receive the weighting. Thus, to claim that RWV significantly increases the potential instrumental value to an extent that would impact voter turnout is tenuous at best.

Yet, the preceding argument regarding the instrumental value of one’s vote is still valuable because of RWV’s impact upon the perceived, albeit actually insignificant, increase in the instrumental value of one’s vote. Indeed, there is a tendency of voters to “overestimate their own probability of being pivotal,” (Dittmann 2014, 36) and studies also have found that certain citizens

3. According to Prokop (2014), in 2010, 0.26% of the population contributed 68% of the political donations to congressional campaigns, exerting disproportionate influence over these races.

4. There are also institutional *de facto* weightings that exist within the United States. For example, as McCann (2020) clarifies, “it’s extremely likely that a Republican senator from Kentucky and a Democratic senator from Delaware will both be re-elected. But voters’ choices for senators in swing states hold much more power because they determine which political party controls the Senate.”

5. The standard public choice account of voting focuses on the instrumental value of a vote. Mueller (2003, 305) writes, “voting is a purely instrumental act in the theory of rational voting. One votes to bring about the victory of one’s preferred candidate.” He continues, “thus, in deciding whether to vote, a rational voter must calculate the probability that her vote will make or break a tie...”

(given cognitive biases, such as self-efficacy beliefs) are “prone to overestimate the impact of their actions” (Darmofal 2010, 167). Although RWV makes no mathematical difference in the voter’s calculus, perceived instrumental value may increase, and accordingly drive voter turnout.

Contrastingly, Alvin Goldman and Richard Tuck (in Brennan and Sayre-McCord 2016, 500-1) argue that this notion of “causal efficacy,” which implies that “one’s vote counts as causing the outcome if, but only if, one’s vote is pivotal — only if, one was to vote differently, the outcome would be different,” is highly questionable. Goldman and Tuck argue, “what matters in thinking about whether one’s vote might be the cause of the victory is not whether it is necessary for the outcome, but whether it is a part of what is, in the appropriate way, sufficient for it.” Accordingly, one’s vote can cause electoral victory even if that individual vote is not necessary for victory to occur. In opposition to the public choice account, “what is important is the *ex-ante* probability that one’s vote will be among those that are, in the appropriate way, sufficient for electoral victory.” RWV does not simply increase the instrumental value of a single vote. Rather, it increases the probability that a voter ends up in the causally determinate group of voters, in Goldman and Tuck’s view. The potential of a 1,000x weighting would dramatically increase this probability.

Indeed, “how voters behave is ultimately an empirical question. Yet, there exists no consensus” (Spenkuch 2017, 73). Building on Tuck and Goldman’s preceding argument, this article posits that what matters to citizens who choose to vote is not whether their individual vote will be decisive, but rather that the candidate they voted for will win, and thus their existence within the causally determinate group of voters.

This framing of the individual voter’s reasoning within the context of being part of the winning group of voters is not an abstract concept, but rather at the core of our current discussions surrounding elections. The 1,000x weighting is less important in terms of instrumental value, and much more crucial in terms of causal value, when considered in Goldman and Tuck’s view. RWV can thus be seen as motivating the individual within the context of participation in a group, significantly amplifying the potential for the individual to be in the winning group of voters, and ultimately empowering voter turnout.

Increased voter turnout, although important, is not the only benefit that this system would provide. Under RWV, individual voters would also be incentivized to become more educated about who they are casting their vote for.⁶ Of course, further empirical work is needed to substantiate this claim, but when trusted with more agency, we can expect that the majority of voters would take their duty more seriously. With a greater potential to have their vote be part of the causally determinate group of voters, and, for example, if one voter could potentially make the difference in deciding their representative in the House, it is plausible to assume that voters would take that responsibility more seriously.

Perhaps the single voter would still vote along her party lines, but the impact on the electorate would be significant. Armed with the potential that their vote could be randomly weighted, each individual would be prepared to justify their votes — whether because their votes may have swung the election or because it had a much greater impact than others’ votes.

By providing more agency and power to each individual voter to impact the “causal relation between the preferences of an actor regarding an outcome and the outcome itself” (Nagel 1975, 29)—in this case, between vote preference and election outcome—and utilizing powerful psychological tendencies, RWV would have a significant positive impact on voters, both in terms of turnout and education, in federal congressional elections.

6. A thorough discussion of what ‘more educated’ means is beyond the scope of this article. However, we can understand “more educated voters” as having additional knowledge of the policy positions and relevant political information about the candidates in a given race and engaging in more educative processes (such as viewing debates, reading articles about the candidates’ platforms, and directly engaging with campaigns) before voting.

Importantly, these two changes are crucial in view of Urbinati and Warren’s norm of “democratic autonomy.” With increased voter turnout, candidates are forced to give more consideration to a larger subsection of the population, furthering the idea of equalizing the contribution of each citizen in influencing political outcomes. With more informed voters, the benefit to the norm of “democratic autonomy” can be regarded in two ways. First, more informed voters are able to engage in more “considered judgement” of their own interests. When voters have more knowledge about the choices they are making in an election, they exercise more autonomy—they are better able to undertake “conscious self-determination” (Urbinati and Warren 2008, 395)—in fulfilling their individual interests in the decision-making process. Second, more informed voters are better able to engage in consideration of other voters’ interests. With more information about the interests of others (ex. how climate change disproportionately impacts citizens of lower socioeconomic status), voters can give more respect to other citizens when they vote.

Both of these changes are crucial elements of the proposed system: voters themselves contribute to representation that better fulfills the norm of “democratic autonomy” under RWV.

3.3 Candidate-Side Impact

The power of RWV lies in its ability to return power to voters during elections. As such, the impact of RWV upon candidates and their campaigns is significant. Primarily, by hindering candidates’ ability to predict where their votes will come from, campaigns will be at a substantial disadvantage if they cater to a select group or only focus on their base during elections. The uncertainty that random weighting gives rise to makes it far more difficult for candidates to know how best to win (where to physically campaign, where to spend advertising money, how to appeal to their base, etc.). With this system, every voter is now afforded much more potential power, forcing candidates to appeal to a broader range of voters in hopes of better improving their odds of winning.

Currently, political activity around elections is hyper-focused in the areas, or states in the case of presidential elections, where votes ‘really matter.’ The average voter in Michigan, for example, saw a substantially larger portion of the advertisements for both candidates in the 2020 general election (MLive Media Group 2020). This targeted campaigning is similar to focused advertising campaigns from large corporations. With an incredible amount of information about consumers, large corporations are not only able to influence consumer preferences, but actually dictate them (Kuenzler 2017). This erosion of what economists generally refer to as “consumer sovereignty” (Argarwal 2018) allows large corporations much more control in the producer-consumer relationship. Similarly, politicians are often able to dictate the “tastes” of their potential voters through highly targeted advertisements. Whether through detailed geographic data about where their potential voters are most likely to reside or microtargeting, broadly defined as “a marketing strategy that uses people’s data—about what they like, who they’re connected to, what their demographics are, what they’ve purchased, and more—to segment them into small groups for content targeting” (Nott 2020), modern campaigns and super PACs have an unprecedented ability to engage in the manipulation that Mansbridge (2018, 519) cautions against. Moreover, as Robbins (2020) notes, for competitive races, “more money will be spent by the candidates...but also by those who would like to influence the outcome.” She adds that super PACs tend to spend “for more calculated effect, focusing on competitive races.” With more money dedicated to these races, more highly targeted advertisements are produced.

Yet as information about where a potential voter, or, more specifically, where electoral power, is located becomes unclear, campaigns and other political entities will have a more difficult task determining where to allocate advertising money. As will be explained in the following prelim-

inary statistical analysis, RWV would only have an impact upon races that are decided by close margins. Since “parties and candidates do more to convince people and get them to the polls when races are closely fought” (Klarner 2015), making advertisements more difficult to target in these races (where the advertising is most likely to have an impact) will maximize the reduction in advertising efficacy, reducing opportunities for “manipulation” (Mansbridge 2018, 519). Put simply, money in politics is weaker without a sense of direction.

This notion of a weakened sense of where the candidates’ potential votes might lie, and the corresponding uncertainty about where to spend advertisement budgets, is a crucial feature of the proposed system. In this way, each individual voter is afforded more respect and consideration than under our current system, where candidates are looking to rally their voting bloc rather than appeal to a broader base of voters.

This uncertainty incentivizes candidates to broaden their appeal to a greater proportion of the population, effectively diffusing the power of money and privileged groups in elections and motivating candidates to be more inclusive in their campaigning efforts. The predictable, disproportionate influence of some voters over others—whether for geographical or issue-related reasons—is weakened under RWV. Both under RWV and our current electoral system, candidates will work to, obviously, attract as many votes as possible. Yet, RWV changes the way in which candidates would go about such a process.

Candidates’ confidence in the predictability of constituent behavior is significantly weakened under RWV. In close elections, some citizens might be, essentially, holding their representative accountable for actions which they do not approve. Politicians cannot rely on the diffusion of responsibility to hinder constituents’ ability to hold them responsible for broken campaign promises if any one of their constituents is able to do so. Thus, RWV directly reduces the collective action problem of holding representatives accountable, which currently enables politicians to remain predominantly free from constituency control for the majority of their time in office.

In short, the uncertainty of RWV encourages equal consideration of all voters. Candidates, campaigns, political groups, etc. will find it far more difficult to micro-target the potential electorate in any given race, forcing them to expand their campaigning efforts and engage in increased communication with more potential voters. This change would serve to further Urbinati and Warren’s norm of “democratic autonomy” in a considerable manner. By randomly weighting certain votes, RWV incentivizes candidates to expand their appeal to a broader base, campaigning in areas where, to voters who, and regarding interests that, they traditionally might ignore under our current electoral system. We can thus understand RWV as promoting an equally diffused, augmented enfranchisement, in the sense that it would encourage increased communication from candidates, specifically to a larger group of citizens, and equalize the value (from the candidate’s perspective) given to each vote, and hence the treatment of each citizen, in the electoral process.

4. Preliminary Statistical Modeling

Given the novel approach to electoral reform that this article takes—no system of randomly weighted voting has been seriously proposed before—preliminary statistical modeling is included to elucidate how RWV would function in practice.⁷ This work also serves to temper concerns that such a system would lead to chaos or complete uncertainty. The data clearly shows that the proposed system (and any future variations that subscribe to similar justification) would only impact close races, defined as races won by less than 5% (Klarner).

7. Although unused in political science, ensembled predictions and random weighting are commonly used in computer science to improve the accuracy of decision-making systems.

We used Python programming software to develop models (included as appendices) that show how changing one of three variables impacts the effect of RWV.⁸ The three variables under consideration are:

- (1) Percentage of Supervoters (those voters who receive the random weighting).
- (2) Size of Electorate.
- (3) Magnitude of Supervoter Weighting.

In order to isolate the impact of each variable, we held the other two variables constant in each model:

First, given that (1) the average size of a congressional district based on the 2020 U.S. Census is 761,169 people (Epstein and Lofquist 2021) and that (2) “in recent decades, about 60% of the voting eligible population vote during presidential election years, and about 40% vote during midterm elections” (FairVote), we used a baseline electorate size of 400,000, unless otherwise noted.

Second, we used a baseline supervote weighting of 1,000x, unless otherwise noted.

Third, we used a baseline supervoter probability—the odds that any individual voter received the supervoter weighting—of 3%, unless otherwise noted.

The y-axis in each model indicates the probability (if multiplied by 100 to become a percentage) that the winner under our current voting system would still win if the election were to be conducted under the specific RWV conditions. One minus that value, and then multiplied by 100 to become a percentage, is the probability that the election, if conducted under the specified RWV conditions, would be ‘flipped’ (cause the candidate who won under our current voting system to lose).

The x-axis in each model indicates the margin of victory (as a percentage) under our current voting system. In each model, the rate of ‘flipping’ increases as the margin of victory becomes smaller.

8. All modeling for this article was completed by the author and Jefferson Grigsby (a mathematics and computer science major).

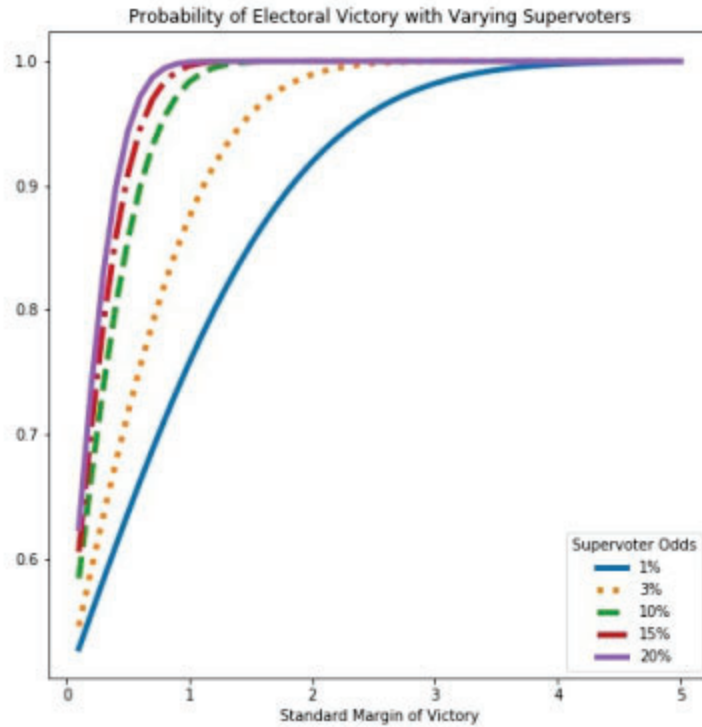


Figure A

Figure A shows five different RWV systems, altering the probability that any individual voter receives the supervoter weighting (1%, 3%, 10%, 15%, and 20%). Counterintuitively, the election becomes more random—we can observe a greater probability of election flipping over larger margins of victory—as the percentage of supervoters decreases. This effect can be attributed to the sample of supervoters displaying more randomness as it becomes smaller.

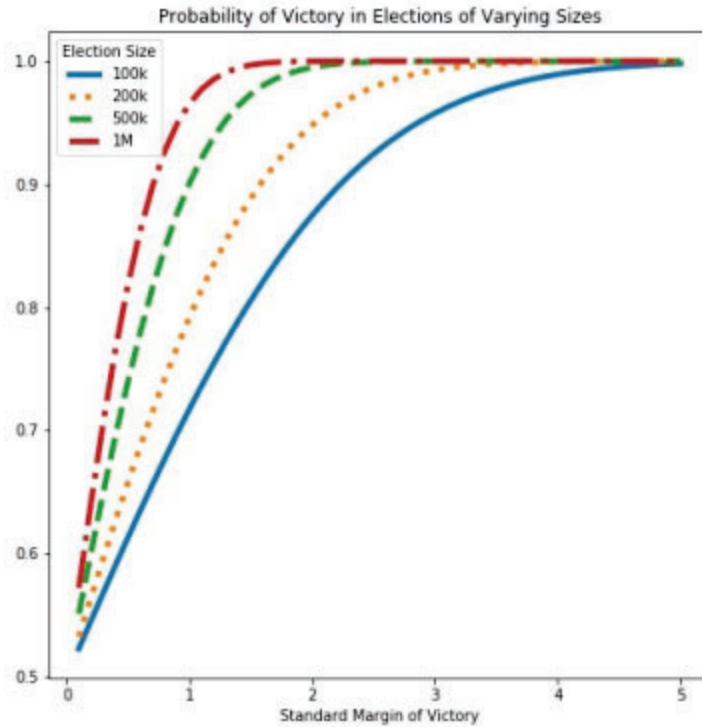


Figure B

Figure B shows four different RWV systems, altering the size of the electorate (100,000, 200,000, 500,000, and 1,000,000). With more total voters, the impact of any given random weighting is diluted. As demonstrated in the model, a 3% supervoter probability, 1,000x random weighting would have a much larger impact—a greater probability of election flipping over larger margins of victory—in an election with 100,000 total votes than an election with 1 million total votes. Thus, to preserve an equal impact upon various elections, the weighted system used would have to be a function of the size of the electorate. This scaled weighting, as determined by the size of the electorate, allows the proposed system to retain an equality of function—a consistent rate of ‘flipping’ an election outcome—across various electorate sizes.

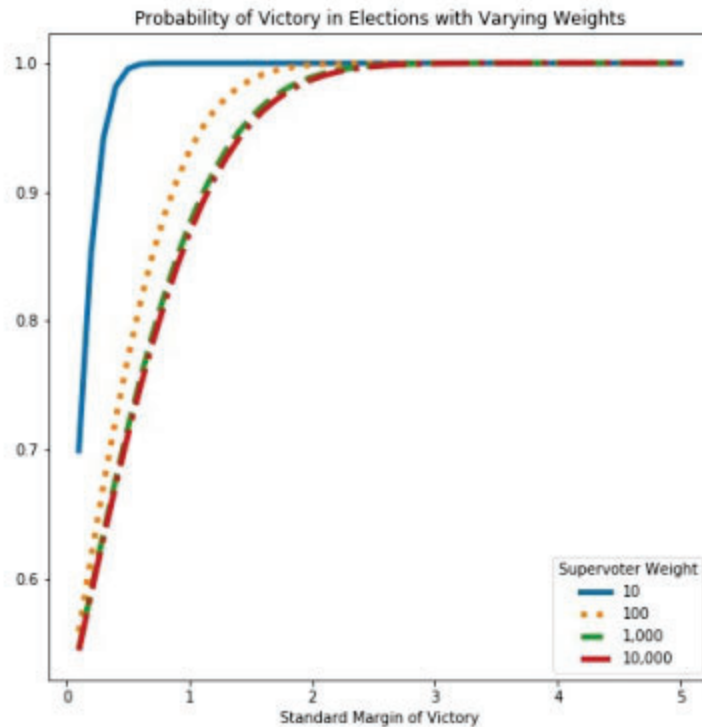


Figure C

Figure C shows four different RWV systems, altering the magnitude of the supervoter weighting (10x, 100x, 1,000x, and 10,000x the non-weighted vote). As the model shows, the greater the supervoter weighting, the greater the probability of election flipping over larger margins of victory. It is also important to note that the supervoter weighting has a diminishing effect at larger weighting values, as shown by 1,000x and 10,000x weighting curves being nearly indistinguishable from each other in the model.

The models presented in this article (for a mathematical explanation of the three models, please see the Appendix) should not be considered conclusive. None of this data is intended to specify the exact parameters of an RWV system. Rather, it is given to provide readers with a preliminary idea of how the proposed system would function in practice—under what conditions can we expect an election to result in a different outcome than under our current electoral system. Further research is necessary to find a weighting system that is:

- 1) Not too large as to offset the effect of the randomness or to make elections surrender completely to randomness. If the random 1,000x weighting were applied to 50% of all citizens, it would appear rational for candidates to proceed as normal in any election.⁹
- 2) Not too small as to have a negligible effect in all elections, and
- 3) Not too complicated for the general public to understand.

5. Conclusion

Randomly weighted voting does not claim to be a catch-all solution to the current problems in our democracy. Nevertheless, it offers an institutional reform that is deserving of further examination and may promote further inquiry into what other reforms might improve our electoral system. In this article, I have argued that more randomness and less certainty could make our democracy better off. However, more work is needed to fully substantiate this claim with regard

9. This implication evolved from a discussion with Professor Alex Guerrero (Rutgers University).

to the democratic system of the United States. This article merely aims to provide a first step in a promising direction for democratic participation in elections.

Appendix

Let x_i represent the vote of the i th member of the electorate. One candidate is represented by the positive votes ($x_i = 1$) and the other by negative votes ($x_i = -1$). The outcome of the election is the normalized sum of these vote values across all N voters:

$$x = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{i=N} x_i \tag{1}$$

This represents the true (non-random) margin of victory. The outcome of the randomized election is determined by randomly weighting individual votes according to a random supervoter variable \mathbf{R} :

$$\hat{x} = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^{i=N} \mathbf{R}(p, \gamma) x_i \tag{2}$$

Where \mathbf{R} is defined by two parameters p and g . p is the probability that a given vote will become a supervote, while g is the multiplier that supervotes receive. For example, a RWV election in which 3% of the votes are counted 1,000 times has $\mathbf{R}(.03, 1000)$. Using the expected value of $\mathbf{R}(p, g)$ we derive the mean and standard deviation of random election outcomes \hat{x} :

$$E[\mathbf{R}(p, \gamma)] = p\gamma + (1 - p)1 \tag{3}$$

$$\mu(x, p, \gamma) = x(p\gamma + (1 - p)) \tag{4}$$

$$\sigma(p, \gamma) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N}(p\gamma^2 + (1 - p)) - (p\gamma + (1 - p))^2} \tag{5}$$

The probability of the negative candidate winning the election is the cumulative distribution function for the normal distribution $N(\mu(x, p, g), s(p, g)^2)$ evaluated at a tied election ($\hat{x} = 0$).

$$W(x, p, \gamma) = \frac{1}{2} \left[1 + \operatorname{erf} \left(\frac{0 - \mu(x, p, \gamma)}{\sigma(p, \gamma)\sqrt{2}} \right) \right] \tag{6}$$

The probability of the positive candidate winning the election is the complement probability $1 - W(x, p, g)$.

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SLOW AND STEADY WINS THE RACE: HOW THE GRADUALIST APPROACH ELIMINATED JORDANIAN BREAD SUBSIDIES

Joud Tabaza

Jordan's bread subsidy policies have long been regarded as the last red line in the social pact between the government and the people. Previous implementations of lifts in bread subsidies under the direction of the International Monetary Fund have led to notorious bouts of political upheaval in what people remember as the 'bread riots' of 1989 and 1996. Yet, the Jordanian government resolved late in 2020 that it would eliminate the bread subsidy policy with no public turmoil in sight. This article argues that this policy transformation's success is the product of a gradualist approach to structural reform in contrast to the 'big bang' approach of previous attempts.

1. Introduction

"If bread is no longer considered a red line, no lines will remain," wrote the Editor-in-Chief of Jordan's daily national newspaper, *Al-Ghad*, amidst Jordan's 2013 food policy debate (Ghunaimat 2013). Journalists, policymakers, and members of the public alike have long regarded Jordan's bread subsidy program as "the last red line" in the social pact between the government and the people (Martínez 2018). With a population of 10.1 million and a 2019 GDP of \$44.5 billion ("Jordan" 2021), Jordan imports 800,000 tons of wheat annually, with an average annual consumption of 90 kilograms per capita ("*Iqtisadiat urdoniyah*" 2017). In the eyes of Jordanians, bread has value that extends beyond nutrition and calories: it has a communal and symbolic power that different strata of society share, and that testifies to the long cultural history of bread in the region. Moreover, bread has long been synonymous with the people's perceived right to subsistence and the obligation of state authorities to provide it (Martínez 2018).

This perceived right is rooted in the precedent that the Jordanian government set in the late 1960s when it led efforts to subsidize staple foods, providing strategic commodities such as wheat and sugar to the public. This state-led economic development model ultimately collapsed in the face of a national fiscal crisis fueled by the regional recession of the mid-1980s and accumulating debt. As the government resorted to international financial institutions for budgetary relief, it was forced to prioritize structural adjustments that included the removal of subsidies. By 1992, Jordan managed to eliminate most of its food subsidies, with the notable exception of bread—not only because bread is a staple but because it commands such a symbolic power (Martínez 2014a). On multiple occasions in its recent history, the Jordanian government attempted to remove bread

subsidies in accordance with the direction of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which advised indebted developing countries to make policy shifts to reduce their budget deficits and improve their positions to meet loan obligations. Such attempts have repeatedly led to episodes of political instability—notably in what people remember as ‘bread riots,’ such as those that took place in Jordan in 1989 and 1996 (Martínez 2018).

Over the past 25 years, Jordanian analysts have described governmental efforts directed at modifying bread subsidies as not only a waste of time but also a “recipe for revolt” (Ersan 2017). They have claimed that the political and socioeconomic importance of bread goes far beyond the government’s financial expenditure on the program, which amounted to 265.34 million Jordanian Dinar (JD), or 374.25 million USD, in 2014. For the better part of the past two decades, the government has found itself caught between the IMF’s austerity-related sanctions and the sociopolitical sensitivity of bread subsidy reform. This is noteworthy given that the government has long been eager to avoid stoking hostilities of the kind that may jeopardize its stability (Martínez 2020).

Despite this politically charged historical backdrop, the Jordanian government resolved late in 2020, while the COVID-19 pandemic was raging in Jordan and worldwide, that it would phase out the bread subsidy policy entirely, effective in 2021 (AlDbeibseh 2020). This exceptional decision came with no notable public turmoil in sight as of May 2021. While the elimination of a half-century-long practice of subsidizing bread may initially come across as quantum leap, I argue here that this policy transformation—and its sociopolitical sustainability to date—has been the product of a slow and gradual approach of structural reform that took place over a period of 25 years. In other words, the end of the bread subsidy in 2020-21 did not follow the kind of ‘big bang’ approach that occurred in the elimination attempts of 1989 and 1996. I will further argue that this difference in approach, in the 2020-21 measures, compared to the earlier 1989 and 1996 measures, illustrates that the bread welfare program in Jordan may not have drawn as rigid a ‘red line’ as observers long assumed.

This article draws on an existing body of chronological journalistic evidence that documents the evolution of bread welfare policies and the sentiment surrounding them, public governmental data including consumption statistics and budgetary laws, and international development reports that track Jordan’s economic reform. It further examines the existing academic literature on approaches to economic reform and the historical significance of bread subsidies in the country, especially in relation to past bread riots.

I begin by providing a brief overview of the history of bread subsidies in Jordan, before examining the ‘big bang’ approach of the bread riots of 1989 and 1996, while underlining the sociopolitical foundations of bread’s significance. I then introduce the Jordanian government’s deliberate implementation of slow gradual structural reform for the past 25 years, while emphasizing the political arguments, strategies, and foundations that policymakers used to supplement this approach. Next, I demonstrate how this more nuanced approach has driven the difference in reception by the people. Finally, I discuss possible health and socioeconomic implications of this decision for the Jordanian public.

In this article, I use the terms bread subsidies, flour subsidies, and wheat subsidies synonymously as Jordanian authorities also do. I will later explore the subtleties of how these subsidies were enacted and the relevance of such mechanisms to the interchangeability of the terms.

2. A Brief History of Bread Subsidies in Jordan

In the early 1960s, Prime Minister Wasfi Tal led Jordan’s commodity subsidizations efforts in an attempt to “rationalize the economic foundations of Jordan’s patrimonial state” (Kingston 2001, 116). This state intervention took form in supply and price regulations on imported strate-

gic commodities that included wheat, petroleum, and sugar initially, but that ultimately also covered coffee, tea, cigarettes, powdered milk, poultry, cheese, and rice (Baylouny 2008). Initially, Jordan's welfare programs primarily supported East Bankers or Transjordanians in contrast to Jordanian citizens of Palestinian descent (Baylouny 2008). The former formed the state's main support base and were often thought of as the mainstay of the regime (Baylouny 2008; Harrigan et al. 2006). As domestic inflation and the cost of living saw a rise in the early 1970s, welfare state efforts further grew to support public sector workers who consisted mainly of Transjordanians and were constrained by modest growth in salaries. But this expansion's benefits reached Jordanians at large and was institutionalized in the creation of the Ministry of Supply in 1974 with a mandate to dispense staple goods (Andoni and Schwedler 1996).

For twenty years following the enactment of wheat subsidies, the price of bread was regulated through the government's sale of imported wheat to flour millers at market prices, who in turn sold different varieties of all-purpose flour to bakeries at subsidized prices. The Ministry of Supply (later the Ministry of Industry, Trade, and Supply) reimbursed the millers for the discounted difference. Bakeries then sold subsidized bread to the public at roughly fixed government-set prices. Bread prices increased only slightly from 0.05 JD per kilogram in the 1960s to 0.075 JD per kilogram in the late 1970s (where 1 USD corresponded to 0.36 JD in 1960s and 0.32 JD in the 1970s prior to the devaluation of the JD in 1989) (Martínez 2014a; Baylouny 2008; "Jordan exchange" 2021).

In the early to mid-1980s, the global collapse in oil prices induced a regional recession and a corresponding decline in Jordan's two primary revenue flows: labor remittances and oil-driven foreign aid (Karmel et al. 2014). As its revenues declined, Jordan's national debt simultaneously accumulated such that by 1988 its debt was twice its GDP (Ryan 1998). The extent of the country's crisis was heightened when it stopped making payments on bilateral government loans (Ryan 1998). This decline in income and dramatic increase in debt meant that the country's state-led model of economic development (as well as that of many of its Arab socialist neighboring countries) was not sustainable as the regime confronted a fiscal crisis. As a result, Jordan resorted to what policymakers saw as the only source of relief: international financial institutions such as the IMF for assistance to renegotiate and reschedule its debt payments. The IMF's budgetary relief was conditional on a negotiated structural adjustment program that involved curtailing the country's public expenditures via cuts in state employment, in addition to "phasing out poorly targeted and costly subsidies and directing the savings toward public investment and better-targeted safety nets for the poor" (International Monetary Fund 2013). The IMF based its analysis on the assumption that the kingdom's high levels of debt were restricting its spending freedom on commodity subsidies, which the IMF tended to characterize as an unnecessary, unsustainable, and inefficient form of public expenditure (Martínez 2014a). In fulfillment of the adjustment program agreed on by the government and the IMF in 1989, Jordanian authorities phased out or curbed most subsidies by February 1992, with the only universal food subsidy remaining in sight being the bread subsidy (Martínez 2018).

3. The Big Bang Approach: The Bread Riots of 1989 and 1996

On 15 April 1989, in an "incredible lack of foresight," the Jordanian government announced a series of measures required to meet IMF lending conditions, including the freezing of public wages, salaries and employment, and an immediate increase in the prices of petroleum products (Wilson 1994, 87; Harrigan et al. 2006). Three days later, a subsequent increase in food prices proved to be the last straw in a series of cumulative successive adjustments that only spanned a few days. Riots erupted in the southern governorate of Ma'an and stretched out to other regions

of the south, north, and even to university students in the capital of Amman. Rioters demanded not only the reversal of the policy, but also a new prime minister (Wilson 1994). Most of the rioters consisted of Transjordanians who were “amongst the first losers of the IMF-promoted reforms” due to their higher dependency on state employment and welfare programs (Harrigan et al. 2006). After four days of the worst episode of violence in Jordan since the Black September events of 1971 (a conflict between Jordanian armed forces and militants of the Palestine Liberation Organization; (Cowell 1989)), the official casualty toll was eight deaths and eighty-three injuries (Wilson 1994). Additionally, the government grew conscious of the ensuing vulnerability of its Transjordanian support base. While the vast majority of proposed policies remained in place, the IMF’s request for “complete elimination of all food subsidies” was not carried through when King Hussein intervened to reverse course (Harrigan et al. 2006).

Heeding the people’s warning in 1989, the government only chose to provisionally lift bread subsidies on 13 August 1996 in compliance with new IMF guidelines. Immediately after the decision, bread prices almost trebled from 0.075 JD per kilogram to 0.25 JD per kilogram (Ryan 1998). Increased bread prices also affected animal fodder and, indirectly, dairy prices (Ryan 1998). Residents in the southern governorate of Karak rioted against the move and the incumbent prime minister for two days until the army enforced a strict curfew (Andoni and Schwedler 1996). After a new prime minister was appointed, he chose to scale back the increase. Still, the retail price almost doubled in 1996 at 0.16 JD per kilogram of standard quality bread made from local flour (Martínez 2018). This backtrack in price hikes was subsequently accompanied by a cash transfer program through the National Aid Fund (NAF) to compensate the poor for the decreased subsidy levels (Sdravovich et al. 2014). However, because the 1.28 JD per Jordanian per month transfer allowance was essentially offset by similar increases in the prices of dairy products, it only managed to ease a fraction of the people’s sudden economic hardship (Ryan 1998).

Many citizens indeed saw the measures taken in 1989 and 1996 as unwarranted ‘overnight’ changes – a radical ‘big bang’ or shock therapy approach. In this approach, the government implemented market liberalization policies quickly, in a concentrated period of time, influenced by the urgency conveyed by the IMF as opposed to taking a gradualist approach that would have spread various reforms over an extended period (Wei 1997). After decades of dependence on government-sponsored bread, the abrupt decision that altered people’s relationship with the most basic foodstuff was not well-received. To add to the radicality of the reform, the government did not take actions to condition the expectations of the public in 1989, with little outreach or transparency (Sdravovich et al. 2014). The result was public confusion with respect to the purpose of the changes. In 1996, meanwhile, the government’s mitigation strategy consisted of parliamentary approval of the lift in subsidies, and cash transfers to the poor (Sdravovich et al. 2014). But even then, the change came across as extreme, given the short time span, meager dispersed allowances, and lack of communication with the public (Ryan 1998).

The big bang approach has succeeded in other countries and settings, such as in 1985 Bolivia when the government used shock reform to end hyperinflation (Wei 1997; Cachanosky 2015). In less than 100 days, the Bolivian government liberalized exchange rates, significantly reduced employment in public companies, eliminated price controls and subsidies to public companies, and negotiated a debt swap with the IMF (Cachanosky 2015). In contrast to Jordan’s case, Bolivia’s shock reform process was associated with strong credibility and minimized resistance (Cachanosky 2015). But more importantly, said credibility and lack of resistance were driven by preexisting widespread political support for radical economic reform at all levels of society, especially compared to the alternative of no reform (Cachanosky 2015). Not only did no support of this kind exist in Jordan in 1989 or 1996, there was actual resistance to reform and a preference

for the current state of affairs due to the adverse perceived consequences that the bread subsidy removal had on the average citizen, suggesting a possible cause for the failure of the shock approach in the country. Even though authorities claim to have led greater awareness campaigns to highlight the necessity of the change in 1996, the people rejected these exogenous shocks because they perceived them to rapidly threaten their routine, stability, and economic security (Ryan 1998). Some individuals' protests not only entailed objections to changes in bread prices, but also to the government's hasty dismissal of a sacrosanct contract—a bread pact. Many viewed the bread subsidy as part of the status quo and perceived the government's actions as a violation of the 'old way of doing things' and a breach of the established government-citizen trust. This prefaced and engendered an overall culture of skepticism and lack of confidence in governmental institutions and policy, along with apprehensions about changes to come.

4. The Gradual Structural Reform Approach: 2007-2020

After two significant bouts of local upheaval and the subsequent recapping of prices, the bread subsidy remained largely unaltered for about 10 years. It did, however, face a harsh test amidst the dramatic rise in global food prices of 2007-8, when the skyrocketing price of the government's imported wheat became infeasible within the existing subsidy structure, thus prompting authorities to revisit food welfare policies (Maharmeh 2017; Saif 2008). Guided by the shortcomings of its radical big bang approach in 1989 and 1996, I argue, the government put an alternative gradualist course to the test by resorting to the selective introduction of various incremental changes and spreading them over an extended period of time (Feltenstein 2003). This approach was mainly driven by domestic strategies under IMF oversight. The IMF provided greater guidance on necessary reform objectives, and more discretion to the local government on the mechanism of achieving those objectives in comparison to its active involvement in earlier attempts. Proponents of this approach—which, indeed, did prove more effective—highlighted its potential in avoiding sudden disproportionate reduction in living standards at the outset of adjustment implementation. It further allowed for trial and error and mid-course adjustment in reform programs, which helped authorities gain incremental credibility. This credibility served to temper forces of resistance and increase programs' chances of survival.

Jordan's gradualist measures commenced in 2008 when rather than unconditionally lifting the universal wheat subsidy, the cabinet made the decision to limit the wheat subsidy to only one variety of flour. Namely, it supported all-purpose, unified flour of 78 percent extraction rate, known locally as *almuwahad*, in contrast to the original universal program which had encompassed all types of wheat. The mechanism of the subsidy enactment relative to previous years remained unchanged: imported *almuwahad* flour was sold at free market prices by the government to local millers, who sold it at discounted prices to bakeries and got reimbursed for the difference. Policymakers further passed legislation that made it illegal for *almuwahad* flour to be used for anything but the cheapest bread, which is sold to the public at fixed prices (Maharmeh 2017). This decision was preceded by a strong emphasis from the government and the media on the regressive consequences of the universal wheat subsidy (Martínez 2018). Specifically, they highlighted that it unjustly supported the luxurious consumption habits of upper-class and middle-class citizens who purchased sweets and expensive bread made using subsidized flour rather than the poverty-stricken for whom the subsidy was intended (AlFarawati 2007).

From a social justice perspective, if the purpose of the bread subsidy was to equalize access to resources, then the state of subsidies at the time could be rightfully considered not only inefficient and regressive but also unjust. This stems from the large body of journalistic evidence that illustrated how the subsidy fostered consumption habits that led to misallocation of resources

from the under-served, who the bread subsidy was designed for, to those for whom it was not meant for. By emphasizing the needs of the poor and the inherent mismatch between the developmental objectives of the subsidy and its tangible effects, the government managed to legitimize its austerity argument, persuade a broad swath of the Jordanian public and preempt dissent. In comparing it with previous attempts at reforming the subsidy, socioeconomic analyst Husam Ayesh described the policymakers' strategy in defending the move via utilizing common values of fairness and social justice as "smart" (AlFarawati 2007; Martínez 2018).

With the first sign of a successful reform in place, the subsidy program remained intact until the influx of Syrian refugees into Jordan redirected it to the public attention in 2013. The trigger of the debate, which lasted for two years, was the request of the IMF to curtail the subsidy due to its concern that a welfare program intended to benefit Jordanians—as agreed on by the government and multilateral institutions—was disproportionately aiding the country's non-Jordanian population. This population included 3 million Egyptians, Iraqis, Palestinians, and Syrians (refugees or otherwise) (Martínez 2014b). Some of these groups had assistance programs of their own, and, therefore, did not warrant targeting by the subsidy program (The World Bank).

The government thereby leveraged this phenomenon to subtly decouple and delegitimize the role of the bread subsidy in its traditional form in the social pact it had with Jordanians. It carefully placed more emphasis on the need to provide targeted support to Jordanians of all descent, as opposed to sustaining an inefficient blanket subsidy that inadvertently supported unintended beneficiaries (Martínez 2014b). In view of this, governmental bodies in tandem with policymakers, local experts, and analysts launched analyses and investigations into the efficiency and net impact of bread subsidies in their current form for the public. The findings were used as the main grounds for the government's subsequent public arguments to promote the need to reform the subsidy to target its Jordanian beneficiaries before taking any concrete actions.

The backdrop to the government's narrative was a volatile regional neighborhood battling unrest amidst the Arab uprisings. Social protection experts argued that the surrounding instability largely influenced the government's approach (Osorio et al. 2017). It grew conscious of the need for nuanced reform and learned from other countries' uprising experiences that abruptly removing subsidies can cause resistance and unrest and therefore a gradual approach that emphasized a more efficient channeling of benefits was more effective (Osorio et al. 2017). The people of Jordan, on the other hand, witnessing the turmoil of their neighbors, chose to abandon protests and grew more amenable as they noticed the government's consciousness in designing reforms that aimed to better target them as beneficiaries (Harris 2015).

A study conducted and publicized by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Supply reported in 2017 that subsidized bread was primarily consumed by non-Jordanians, who accounted for a third of the population and were not targeted by the program, and that 10 percent of subsidized flour was wasted due to mismanagement and poor storage practices (Maharmeh 2017). State authorities further strengthened their case for adjustment by citing estimates that only 13 percent of the subsidized bread was consumed by the needy, while 12 percent was consumed by wealthier segments of the society (Duwayri 2016). Minister of Finance Umayya Toukan argued in 2014 that subsidies structurally encouraged perverse incentives: "Currently, flour is wasted, smuggled, and used illegally. Government interventions inevitably create market distortions" (Martínez 2018). As of 2015, 25 percent of the subsidized flour was illegally used in other bakery products or the production of non-subsidized bread that was sold at high prices.

An investigation into bread consumption patterns found that in ten out of twelve Jordanian governorates there existed a flour surplus wherein supply exceeded demand by 152 tons or 35000 JD per day. This excess supply enabled the rise of a black market for the sale of flour by bak-

eries and millers at almost four times its subsidized price. This black market appealed locally to food factories and was smuggled to neighboring countries that suffered from high wheat prices or insufficient supplies. Proponents of the welfare program attributed these practices to the government's lack of oversight, but—while acknowledging the need for increased surveillance—the Minister of Industry, Trade and Supply cited a shortage of supervising cadres as the main limiting factor (Maharmeh 2017).

While pushing this narrative, policymakers “toyed with ideas [for reform] with great caution for fear of the public’s reaction” (Ghunaimat 2015). One proposed idea was that of a ‘smart card,’ wherein bread prices would be liberalized, and government agencies would reimburse beneficiaries of the subsidy program the difference in price, allowing them to withdraw cash from ATMs across the country. Another alternative was direct cash transfers to eligible citizens. All the while, the government repeatedly emphasized that all options were on the table as it cautiously read the public reaction. Media reports indicated that the government always had one foot out the door, as was the case when it withdrew its suggestion to implement the smart card proposal in 2015 when bakers, consumer protection groups, and activists condemned it on grounds of the plan being unclear and infeasible to implement, especially when it comes to utilizing the technology required in underserved rural areas (Martínez 2014a; Martínez 2020). During this debate in 2015, the same journalist who described the bread subsidy as a “red line” in 2013 commented on the government’s different reform proposals by writing “The problem is timing ... postpone the [removal of] subsidies until better times are here” (Ghunaimat 2015), implying that after two years of public debate and open public policy experimentation the question was no longer *whether* to lift the subsidies, but *when* to lift them.

Government bodies seemingly deemed January 2018, when Jordan was hit by a lack of foreign grants, as “better times” when they announced their decision to lift the existing price restrictions on bread, increasing its market price between 60 and 100 percent. Simultaneously, they proposed to supplement this increase in price with targeted cash supports for the impoverished starting 1 February 2018 (Al-Khalidi 2018). The cash supports were expected to amount to 171 million JD in total and be delivered to around 6.2 million Jordanians and Palestinian refugees through electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards (Khraishy 2018), with state authorities fostering promises of better targeting of those in need and a reduction in fraud and waste (Al-Khalidi 2018).

Still, a 2019 United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF) report contended that in 2018, by international standards, Jordan was a big spender on non-targeted commodity subsidies with inadequate allowances for poverty-targeted social assistance programs because the bulk of social assistance spending in cash supports was allocated for the bread subsidy. This was supported by the fact that cash transfers were delivered to around 80 percent of Jordanians, which exceeded the 15.7 percent poverty-stricken segment (“Geographic” 2020). Accordingly, in an attempt to better target bread-related cash transfers and slowly ease people’s dependence on them, the government gradually increased the selectiveness of its benefits eligibility criteria, which consisted of 57 indicators to gauge households’ socioeconomic needs. In 2019 and 2020 the number of recipients decreased to 5.8 million and 4.5 million beneficiaries respectively (Alfaqr 2021).

After years of foreshadowing and incremental adjustments, authorities quietly implemented the complete phase-out of the bread subsidy program and its associated bread-specific cash transfers in December 2020, effective for the fiscal year 2021. No formal public announcement ensued, but state authorities tacitly slipped the decision into the general budget law for 2021, which allocated no allowance for said transfers, in contrast with previous years (“General Budget” 2021). This policy was endorsed in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country as the

cabinet simultaneously announced 280 million JD worth of welfare assistance to support sectors and workers hit by the pandemic, which officials cited as a more justified form of public spending (AlDbeibseh 2020). In April 2021, some Jordanians on social media demanded the restoration of the subsidy program. But, in line with the underlying case for the gradualist approach which predicts an increase in the likelihood of policies surviving, the Minister of Social Development responded by saying that any move to restore the subsidy would be “highly unlikely” (“Jordanians” 2021).

5. Discussion and Implications

What will the complete end of the bread subsidy in 2021 mean for Jordanians in the short-term and long-term? Answers will vary according to the extent of people’s reliance on governmental support. Nevertheless, experts and journalists have discussed broad implications for the population at large, some of which the country has started to face, and some which remain to be put to test.

Socioeconomic analyst Hussam Ayesh, who previously commended some of the government’s past reform policies, suggested that the subsidy removal would not only increase the price of bread as a staple item, but would also trigger spillover effects to increase the prices of other basic goods (AlQaralah 2015). Accordingly, on the economic front, many experts attributed the increase in inflation in the previous years to the removal of the subsidy. Specifically, inflation rose in 2018 to reach 4.5%, up from 3.3% in 2017. This further engendered an overall decrease in consumer purchasing power, deepening the financial miseries of many, and increasing both the depth and breadth of the national percentage of people living below the poverty line (“Geographic” 2020). It remains unclear whether the government’s alternative targeted cash transfer supports will be sufficient to offset the impact of this decline in purchasing power. Additionally, some journalists argued that from the perspective of those who were long sustained by the subsidy, its removal signaled the government’s prioritization of international debt obligations and austerity over upholding its longtime commitment to support those who depended on it. This shift in expectations came across as a breach of trust and increased the distance between program beneficiaries and the governing authorities; thereby reinforcing an overall sentiment of skepticism and mistrust when it comes to policies that concern their economic well-being (Sweidan 2020).

On the commercial level, higher prices led to an overall decrease in demand for bread by 50%. In parallel, bakeries saw an increase in production costs (“Inkhifad” 2018). While bakery owners expressed distress caused by the difficulty of sustaining their operations with the drop in demand, the government announced that it managed to eliminate the black market for wheat and cut waste in bread that “used to go to garbage containers,” according to Prime Minister Hani Mulki (“AlMulki” 2018; “Inkhifad” 2018; AlDbeibseh 2020).

But this fall in demand for bread raises questions on the health front. What did the bread subsidy’s maintenance and removal entail for its recipients? A 2020 working paper by United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) suggested that food subsidy programs in the Middle East and North Africa have significant implications in reducing the relative price of a commodity such as bread, which is considered an energy-dense food item. Cheaper bread may encourage people to overconsume it, while discouraging the consumption of relatively more expensive nutrient-rich foods (Abay et al. 2020). In Egypt, which has implemented a bread subsidy program since the 1920s, researchers were able to link its high obesity rate with said subsidy (The Economist 2018; Abay et al. 2020). But no studies have explored a similar link in Jordan. In fact, the direction of the health impact of the subsidy removal in the country could go in either direction.

It is plausible that some of the drop in demand for bread was, in fact, due to Jordanians curbing wasteful and unnecessary consumption that was being fueled by the greater accessibility of bread as an inexpensive food item. This drop in demand, in isolation, could lead to better health outcomes. But if this decrease in demand is accompanied by a substitution effect, wherein the drop in consumption of bread is replaced by consumption of another food item, then the net health impact would depend on the nature of that substitute (e.g., are people opting for more nutrient-rich foods or cheaper, less nutritious items?). As a result, the overall health consequences of the subsidy removal in Jordan remain insufficiently researched and unclear thus far.

6. Conclusion

Jordan's 60-year story with its bread subsidy program has no doubt revealed the nuanced significance that the staple item has held in people's imagined right to subsistence and the function of authorities to provide it. Inevitably, it is also a story of a 'last red line,' which once seemed bright and clear to both the Jordanian government and the Jordanian people. Under the pressure of its budgetary adjustment program, the Jordanian government's radical 'big bang' policy attempts at erasing subsidies in 1989 and 1996 and the associated bouts of sociopolitical unrest merely reinforced the bread subsidy's significance. Mindful of the limitations of the former approach, state authorities' subsequent employment of the slow gradualist approach for a period of more than 20 years has made all the difference. What was once a 'recipe for revolt' metamorphosed into what now looks, in 2021, like a recipe for realistic reform.

In this case, a combination of trial and error ultimately led policymakers to the gradualist path, but the question of which approach is optimal for subsidy reform in other contexts remains a delicate one. As they weigh the benefits of each approach, policymakers must repeatedly make a tradeoff between the unnecessary social and economic costs associated with the big bang approach and the possibility of incomplete inconsistent reform associated with gradualism. The impact of context-specific social, political, and economic factors on not only the choice, but also the development of a reform approach makes this question a predominantly situational one.

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