Book Reviews

Norman H. Nie, June Junn and Kenneth Stehlik-Barry *Education and Democratic Citizenship in America*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London xxi+**268**

Political scientists consistently find positive correlations between educational attainment and some important political variables: levels of political engagement, and political knowledge; aspects of political identity like the 'well-formedness' of political values and consistency of partisan or ideological allegiance; and assent to or articulation of such values as diversity and liberty. In this book Norman Nie and his colleagues present an admirably clear model (with illuminating discussion of the technical problems and procedures involved) of the education effect in the United States, constructed from data from the **1990** Citizen Participation Study and tested retrospectively against other, including some international, data.

The relationship between education and political identity activism and expertise are currently relevant, and problematic, in a number of policy and political contexts. First, from a liberal or social democratic point of view, 'what is the power of 'education' (formal schooling, socialisation, and more general political culture) in relation to other social and political institutions in stabilising democratic institutions and arrangements?' Second, there is continuing focus on the young. Political science tends to find that young people are apathetic, disengaged, relatively ignorant. In social research it is difficult to sort out what is an *age effect* and what a *cohert effect*. A recurring and familiar worry is that the 'younger generation' – the **1960**s generation, or the **1980**s generation, or the immediate post-communist generation – are or will be too hedonistic, or too materialistic, or too cynical, for responsible governance and citizenship. Third, there are varying policies about 'politics' in education. In some states there is a strong presumption that school is a proper site for the rehearsal of such practices as respect for flags and icons of leaders. In many countries educational curricula conventionally or statutorily include subjects such as civics, citizenship studies and other kinds of political education. It is also common for educationalists to emphasise the importance of pedagogical style and modes of school governance in preparing children for their roles as citizens, or subjects. There continues to be tremendous ambivalence about politics in education – anxiety from the right about left partisanship in the teaching profession, and suspicion from the left that 'citizenship studies' and the like can only be a mask – perhaps not even that – for the ideological processes of teaching the ruling class to rule and the working class to defer.

Addressing these political problems generates a number of research questions. What effect will increasing entry into higher education have on

political processes? For authoritarian regimes, is education the thin end of a democratic wedge? What difference does curriculum content or pedagogical style, really make? These beg the more general question: How, exactly, does 'the education effect' work? It is an outstanding virtue of this study that it goes a good way to answering that question. The researchers try to get to the mechanisms that link variables. Only this way can survey research serve policy, and errors, or worse, about outcomes be avoided.

In brief, they find as follows: '' . . . education influences *political engagement* by allocating scarce social and political ranks that place citizens either closer to or further from the centre of critical social and political networks that, in turn, affect levels of political engagement. The rank to which individuals are assigned is the result of the impact of education on a long train of life circumstances, including occupational prominence, voluntary associational membership, and family wealth. For political engagement, formal education works as a sorting mechanism, assigning ranks on the basis of the citizen's *relative* educational attainment . . . not the absolute number of years attained, but the years attained compared to those against whom the citizen competes . . . Education has an entirely different effect on *democratic enlightenment* and develops instead cognitive proficiency [which] enables citizens to understand the long-term trade-offs necessary in democracy.'' (p. **6**) The researchers are, understandably, pleased to find that analysis of international data reveals the expected (given the model) relationship between relative education and 'political attentiveness', and between absolute education and tolerance for freedom of expression of unpopular views, in seven selected countries, including Hungary in **1990**. (p. **182**)

An important implication of this is that with increasing entry into higher levels of education in democratic societies we *should not* expect to see increasing levels of political engagement; but we *should* expect to see increasing support for and understanding of democratic political institut-ions.

A number of questions spring to mind. Some are about the detail of the mechanisms at work, and involve the wish for more disaggregation. Some are about comparability between the USA and other polities. For instance, a more differentiated analysis of political participation in the UK by Parry and colleagues showed that the education effect varied between different kinds of participation (party political campaigning against direct action for instance). The findings about the importance of networks and associations is unsurprising, and consistent with some of the most interesting recent empirical and theoretical work on social capital. Detail is needed about how 'political culture' (modes of public and interpersonal life, and their interactions with religion, popular culture, consumption patterns and so on) constructs social networks and positions individuals in different political systems including non-democratic ones. Nie and his colleagues suggest that it is education as such that matters – not this or that kind of school or curriculum. But other American research by Schweinhart and Weikart has shown that variation in pre-school pedagogy impacts on voting rates in adulthood. No doubt the model will be tested on other datasets, and more detailed research will be forthcoming.

All in all, Nie and his colleagues have made a readable and crystal clear contribution, accessible to undergraduates, of great interest to political scientists, and relevant to policy makers.

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Michael Power, *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*, Oxford, Oxford University Press **1997** £**19.99**, ISBN **0-19-828947-2**

After the information society and the risk society comes the audit society. Such a society, according to Michael Power, is dominated by a political culture that mixes distrust of informal sourcers of information and 'unauditable' collegial self-control with an exaggerated trust in audit processes. So audit has expanded from its modest origins as a craft process for checking financial regularity into a cure-all technique of contemporary regulation, quality control and public management. But audit risks turning into a fatal remedy because it creates incentives for auditees to respond in dysfunctional ways and because over-emphasis on 'formal, generalizable systems of control' (p. **141**) is often a recipe for organizational disaster. Moreover, the efficacy of audit itself as a source of 'comfort' about the working of organizational control systems is impossible to show, even (perhaps especially) in audit's source domain of financial oversight, where a major expectations gap is repeatedly found between what is demanded of audit and what auditors actually produce. The shape of the cost-assurance function and even the knowledge base involved in audit is essentially obscure. The paradox of audit is that it is not itself reliably auditable, and the audit society relies on a decent silence about precisely what the audit emperor is wearing.

This is a book for the times, at least in the United Kingdom, where the army of public auditors of various kinds has nearly doubled over the past two decades while the public service has shrunk. It will resonate instantly with hard-pressed UK public-sector professionals (school and university teachers, local-government and health service workers) whose organizations and working practices have been turned upside down in the pursuit of accountability, defined as auditability. It is wide-ranging and perceptive, showing the fruitfulness of Power's original training in critical philosophy combined with his later specialization in financial accounting. Power is not the first or the only scholar to have tracked some of these trends (he draws heavily on the work of Pollitt and Day and Klein, for instance) but he has 'framed' them in a dramatic way that synthesizes public and private sector trends and an impressive range of social-science literature. Thus, the book provides the most coherent challenge to the audit explosion that has been offered to date.

Still, this impressive book leaves some important questions unanswered. Power concedes (p. **143**) that the evidence presented is selective rather than systematic. A more even-handed account of the audit society would need to consider the positive as well as negative side of audit. The 'evidence' Power offers for the dysfunctional effects of audit is impressionistic. The practices he describes are almost all taken from the UK, but he does not discuss whether

there is something distinctive about Britain, for example its tradition of informal regulation of the City, politics and bureaucracy, and its peculiar structure of quasi-independent national inspectorates of local services, that has caused audit to expand further than in other countries. Some of the functions pursued by specialized audit institutions in the UK, such as regulating prisons, are performed by courts of law or other regulators in other institutional traditions. How does that affect the audit society? Nor is it clear from Power's account whether contemporary Britain is the first major audit society, or whether there are historical parallels, for example in the mania for inspection of public bureaucracies in post-revolutionary France or Britain in the 1830s under the influence of Bentham and Chadwick.

Further, it might be asked whether the overarching concept of 'the audit society' masks major differences in different subcultures of auditing and accountability. Power says the audit society implies an increasing focus on second-order control systems, checking management control systems rather than directly observing the auditability of output, but that feature is by no means universal. Some of the most controversial auditors of the contemporary UK public service, like government inspectors declaring schools to be 'failing', prison inspectors making dramatic pronouncements about gaol conditions or expert panels assessing the quality of university research, look directly at the product – what happens in the classroom or prison or research that is produced – not just at the paper trail around it. Some audit systems are collegial and socially close to the systems under scrutiny, while others are hierarchical and socially distant. A less aggregative social-science 'take' on the audit society would be concerned with identifying differences in who audits what and how, and why in some cases audit is reflexive and auditee-friendly, while in others (like school inspections) it tends to be direct, threatening and punitive.

Finally, Power has disappointingly little to say – squeezed into three pages of his concluding chapter – about effective alternatives to the audit explosion that he criticizes. He points rather vaguely to the need to augment informal control and communication systems in organizations and to feed empirical social-science knowledge about the effects of audit into the process, but concludes (p. 146) that only a major change in political culture could check the rise of the audit society. If the dysfunctions Power notes are to be checked, we need more specification of middle-range weapons to limit and redirect audit systems than are offered in this interesting and provocative diagnosis.

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Brian Kahin and James H. Keller (eds.), *Coordinating the Internet*, Cambridge, MA., MIT Press, 1997, 401 pages, ISBN 0-262-61136-8 (pbk.) £21.50.

When large corporations perceived that the Internet was becoming a major advertising forum, domain names, which are the addresses by which humans locate computers on the Internet, became contested property. Initially, the Internet administrators had allocated names to anyone who applied on a first come, first served basis, without a requirement to demonstrate trademark

ownership. Fearing litigation, they adopted a 'safety first' policy of suspending any domain name if a complainant could demonstrate prior trademark ownership of the disputed name in any country. The policy did not conform to US trademark law, which requires to uphold a claim of infringement not merely similarity of names but proof of danger of confusion to the customer. Some companies and individuals rushed to apply for trademarks in Tunisia, when it was discovered that the authorities there could register them in a few weeks.

Brian Kahin and James Keller present here a smørgasbord of articles relating to the establishment of an international legal and institutional framework for the Internet. The problem of domain names receives more attention than any other issue, not only because it has been the occasion of legal disputes, but also because it lies at the crux of the Internet's central governance problem: how to develop legitimate policy for a medium that has become global over a timescale measured in months rather than years? 'Extrinsic' issues such as content and service regulation, taxation, liability for acts of users and jurisdictional problems are eschewed in favor of topics which the editors see as first-order priorities: models for governance, rules for the use of domain names, efficient address utilization, settlements between service providers for interconnectivity, and service quality metrics.

Articles concerned with the domain name system bring out institutional histories which explain why the mechanisms for resolving disputes are so unclear. A private company, Network Solutions, administers, and charges for, the registration and maintenance of domain names in the international (and by default US) domains, which include all addresses ending in the now prestigious *.com* suffix without country specification. An open committee, the Internet Engineering Task Force, a professional organization, the Internet Society, and the Internet Assigned Numbers Authority, which makes decisions about number assignments and the delegation of national domains, have formed the International Ad Hoc Committee, which proposes to set the rules and select new top-level domain names for a revised system. However, there is little consensus on what form a revised system should take and who should administer it. Most contributors to this volume agree that the Internet needs to be brought into the framework of both US and international public policy on information infrastructure, and that existing multilateral organizations such as the International Telecommunications union and the World Intellectual Property Organization have an important role to play. Some argue that the domain name system is an anachronism from the days when the Internet served a village-sized community, and it is time to replace it with an international directory system, like global telephone books. Andeen and King draw parallels between the Internet and the development of telephony under the Bell Corporation. In their view, the Internet and telephony will become so intertwined, as companies in the two industries begin to provide one another's services, that an addressing scheme must eventually come under the remit of a single, global authority.

Gillet and Kapor offer a beginners' introduction to the technological and cultural coordination mechanisms of the Internet. The Internet Protocol, which is the rulebook by which computers exchange information on the net, ensures that **99** percent of transactions are carried out without any need for operator intervention. It is the remaining one percent of administration which

offers room for controversy. Johnson and Post argue the case for decentralized decision-making based on consensus-building amongst interested parties, allowing consumers 'voting with their electrons' to choose which networks they will join. Gould acknowledges the traditional strengths of Internet administration based on a shared social ethos, but foresees that 'real-world principles of administrative decision-making' will need to be applied to the existing Internet institutions. Rutkowski argues that the Internet is a global phenomenon, and as such it requires 'constant efforts to reconcile the different approaches taken by various sovereigns.' The Internet, he stresses, is not a sovereign, and 'governance must rest with the will of sovereigns.'

The other major issue presented in the book is that of settlements, payments between Internet service providers for interconnectivity. The current system operates on a 'sender keeps all' basis, meaning that it costs nothing to send a message, apart from the telephone bill, and Internet service providers exchange information on the basis of bilateral agreements amongst themselves. The problem is that big service providers gain less from bilateral exchanges than little ones, and those who have invested in the provision of routes are reluctant to open traffic to all comers. Farnon and Huddle present the arguments for charging service providers for connectivity, each according to the number of routes which it brings to the exchange.

The editors have striven to give the floor to competing points of view without losing technical focus. This allows the reader to build up an accurate picture of the current debate, or to pick and choose according to particular interests. Presumably to help non-specialists most articles provide plenty of background, but the fact that the same information is repeated by different authors can at times interrupt the pleasure of reading.

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