

A Short Reply to Zipp and Fenwick's
"Is the Academy a Liberal Hegemony?"

By

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[Per instructions of the *POQ* editor, this reply is confined to 1000 words.
A longer reply is linked from the reference Klein and Stern 2007.]

In the Fall 2006 issue of *POQ*, John F. Zipp and Rudy Fenwick published "Is the Academy a Liberal Hegemony?," an article openly framed as a reaction to "right-wing activists and scholars" (304). The scholarship they cite is principally ours (Klein and Stern 2005a; Klein and Western 2005). They arrive at findings about ideological ratios said to be "far lower than the ratios found by Klein ..." (309).

Unfortunately, ZF misrepresent us. We wrote and submitted a full reply, but the Editor Peter Miller asked us to keep to 1000 words. Here we refer to analysis contained in the longer reply, available online.

1. Klein and Stern 2005a reports on our survey of six scholarly associations.¹

One question asked about voting during the past ten years. We concluded as follows:

“Based on the investigations done here, we offer the following broad claim: *In discussing the one-big-pool D[emocratic] to R[epublican] ratio for the social sciences and humanities, 7 to 1 is a safe lower bound estimate, and 8 to 1 or 9 to 1 are reasonable point estimates.*”

ZF write that our studies “treat party identification or voting behavior as equivalent to political ideology” (p. 306, also 304, 316). They then take data on self-characterizations (liberal/conservative) to be refutations of our findings. They say we “ignored much better data and research,” namely liberal v. conservative studies. They acknowledge that “liberal” \neq Democratic and “conservative” \neq Republican, but they imply that *we* hold that “liberal” = Democratic and “conservative” = Republican. Thus, they criticize a strawman who says that the *L:C* ratio is 7 to 1. ZF do not challenge what we actually said. Indeed, when they get around to addressing the *D:R* ratio in “an interesting aside” (p. 314), they themselves imply that their *L:C* data would accommodate *D:R* results like ours.

How did ZF slip into misrepresenting us? We believe that the source of their error is the “liberal versus conservative” framework. They perceived that we impute ideological content to our results—particularly as our survey included 18 policy questions, giving us a good reading of policy views. ZF carelessly assumed that we were saying that “liberals” outnumber “conservatives” 8 to 1. Nope, that’s not something we ever said or suggested. In fact, the cluster analysis in Klein and Stern 2005b shows four

¹ Survey homepage: <http://www.gmu.edu/departments/economics/klein/survey.htm>.

familiar ideological groups: progressive, establishment left, conservatives, and libertarians—names we gave based on each group’s policy-opinion profile.

It is as if ZF shined a circus spotlight on our Democratic-to-Republican results, producing a shadow, and then refute that shadow, as though we had projected it. In our scholarship we have striven to escape “liberal versus conservative.” But, ZF seem intent on dragging research findings down into those formulations. In our full reply (Klein and Stern 2007), we analyze the Carnegie data (used by ZF) and GSS data to show how poorly the self-descriptions “liberal,” “middle of the road,” and “conservative” map to voting, we show that nothing in ZF casts doubt on our findings, and we elaborate on why “liberal versus conservative” is so impoverished. Also, we ask why ZF ignored relevant research, notably Rothman et al 2005.

2. We said, “for the social sciences and humanities.” We never suggested that such estimates applied to the entire faculty. (As for the Klein and Western voter-registration study of Berkeley and Stanford, again all claims are duly confined.) ZF, after citing our papers, point to liberal/conservative research and triumphantly conclude: “Although there are more liberal than conservative faculty, there certainly are not seven to ten liberals for every conservative *on campus*” (p. 306, emphasis added), alluding to our 7 to 1 estimate. The paper’s title, introduction, abstract, and conclusion suggest that we extrapolated to *the entire faculty*.

3. ZF go all the way down through the two-year colleges. ZF’s numbers for all schools (e.g., Table 1, p. 309) use weights reflecting the student magnitudes of the various classification categories. Reasonable enough, but they really should note that the more prestigious schools have a vastly disproportional impact on the culture at large. In

their abstract, ZF say that conservatives (which is supposed to include us, even though we disclose our classical liberalism) have made claims based on data from “unrepresentative institutions.” After speaking of our 7 to 1 estimate, they write: “These data are surely not representative of American colleges and universities” (306).

In our estimates of the D:R ratio in the humanities and social sciences, the context was the results of our surveys of association members. Membership in the Am. Anthropological Assoc., etc., is *not* confined to elite schools. Still, in hindsight, we see that it probably would have been better to say that our estimates exclude the two-year colleges. Our remissness can perhaps be excused, as people do not seem to have community colleges in mind when they speak of “higher education.” But, as it happens, it appears that our 7 to 1 estimate was sufficiently conservative to be OK even when we include two-year colleges.

Incidentally, in re-centering the discussion on *all* institutions and *all* departments, besides misrepresenting us, ZF never acknowledge that two-year colleges and departments like chemistry and math are less important to the political culture. (For voter-registration in all departments at 11 universities, see Cardiff and Klein 2005.)

The ZF article gained notice as refutation of “right-wing” studies. In a published interview (Free Exchange on Campus 2006), ZF suggested that we “deliberately ‘cherry picked’ the data to get the results they wanted.” That suggestion is insulting and unsupportable.

Are the humanities and social sciences dominated by people who vote Democratic and support most status-quo government interventions and the welfare state? The answer is detailed in Klein and Stern 2005b.

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