

**PROSPERITY BOUND:
OKLAHOMA—100 YEARS AND COUNTING**

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Oklahoma's 100 year state history reflects an inconsistent economic prosperity. We seem caught in an endless cycle of Boom and Bust; never quite breaking free into substantial, sustainable growth. Given the state's diversity in material and human resources, the question explored in this essay is, "Why?" Building on Richard Hofstadter's pioneering chronicle of *Anti-intellectualism in American Life*, the hypothesis examined here suggests that religious fundamentalism and evangelicalism combine with political populism to foster an anti-intellectual environment in Oklahoma which is not conducive to solving long-term economic challenges. The dominant traditionalistic and individualistic political cultures these denominational imbalances carry with them sustain this cyclic status quo. Correlation analysis of county-level religious, political, economic, and demographic data shows support for the hypothesis.

In 2007, Oklahoma closed the chapter on its first century as a state; celebrating the tremendous achievements that have defined who and what we are. But, as we prepare to write the opening paragraphs of our second century, it is vital that we not overlook, nor diminish, the significance of our challenges, the most significant of which reflect the prosperity (or lack of it) that the state has experienced. Prosperity in Oklahoma is, at best, fleeting: always around the next bend or over the next hill... somewhere off in an ill-defined and less well envisioned day. To risk an unabashed Yogi Berra-ism, Oklahoma's future is in its future. In fact, Oklahoma's future has always been in its future, from the time of territorial expansion, through statehood just after the turn of the 20th century, to today. At least, that is where one might be led to look as a result of a careful reading of the state's inconsistent economic, political and social past. At almost any point in Oklahoma's history, those in the know and in positions of political and economic authority directed attention to the future, even when the economic climate was experiencing a boom time. Thus, only twenty years after statehood was achieved, and after describing the tremendous wealth from what turned out to be the peak year of oil and gas production in the state (1927), Charles Gould, then Director of Oklahoma's Geological Survey, questioned what Oklahoma would fall back on when the oil and gas were gone. Listing vast mineral holdings of everything from coal, asphalt, zinc, gypsum and glass sands to novaculite, Gould judged that these minerals "are the very minerals which in fact form the basis of modern civilization and industry. Having these things, *any state is bound to develop.*" [emphasis added] (Gould 1928). Things might have been good, Oklahoma had just produced \$500 million dollars worth of wealth from oil and gas, enough (had it been equally distributed) for \$250 dollars for every man, woman and child in the state, and enough to rank Oklahoma second in the United States in per capita wealth production in 1927. But, Oklahoma's future was yet to come, or so Gould seemed to imply. Sixty years later, in the heyday of political confusion and economic uncertainty following the oil bust of the early 1980s, the Oklahoma state legislature would create a special public-private partnership designed to redirect economic development strategies in order to enhance the climate for economic growth and point the way to stable, economic prosperity for the state. Its name? Oklahoma Futures (Rosenthal 1993). Apparently, Oklahoma's future was still in its future. Today, over twenty years later, with few

specific bases for economic stability and direction clearly in sight, and with the economic hopes of some Oklahomans riding on such fragile dreams as the Oklahoma Space Industry Development Authority and Lockheed's (now ill-fated) VentureStar, Oklahoma's future still appears to be in its future.¹

The question this essay addresses is, "Why?" Why does Oklahoma's prosperity always seem to be positioned at some vaguely (if at all) defined point in the future? Put another way, why has Oklahoma not been able to build an economy that is adequately diversified and modern, thus stable enough to withstand the devastating swings of boom and bust that characterize Oklahoma's economic and political history? Why have not the natural resource blessings so cogently identified by Charles Gould as essential to modern civilization been sufficient to found the basis of such an economy?² Why is Oklahoma's history, grounded firmly in the economics of frontier expansion, so seemingly at odds with its potential? Building on Richard Hofstadter's pioneering chronicle of *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (1963), the hypothesis examined here suggests that Oklahoma's religious heritage (which has been dominated by Protestant evangelical and fundamentalist sects and denominations), combined with a political tradition forged in the fires of prairie populism, has fostered an anti-intellectual environment in Oklahoma that historically has militated against building a substantial, sustainable, growth-oriented economy. The dominant traditionalistic and individualistic political cultures these denominational imbalances carry with them sustain this cyclic status quo (Elazar 1970, 1972; Johnson 1976). Even as the state's history and the technologies of modern society have traveled into the future, the milieu of Oklahoma's political economy has remained on the frontier of its past; it has not progressed beyond that stage, maturing into a thriving, modern stable economic system.

HISTORY: LIBERAL ECONOMICS AND INTELLECTUALISM

A starting point to understanding the complex interrelationship between religion, politics, and an immature economic environment is the observation that resources, by themselves, do not make an economy; people do. It is in the realm of people's beliefs, and in their actions that

reflect those beliefs, where the effects of populist political ideology and Protestant evangelical and fundamentalist sectarian viewpoints can be most powerfully observed. This is particularly seen in relationship to the emergence of western liberalism, key elements of which are political and economic freedom. Without either of these, proponents argue, economic prosperity will falter. In fact, it is one of the articles of faith underlying the western tradition of liberalism that a cultural environment characterized by political and economic liberty is an essential precondition for economic prosperity.³ But there is much more to reaching prosperity (at the level of the entire economy) than this. Simple economic exchange—trade, acquisitiveness, and personal greed—and attitudes and actions toward economic problem-solving (aimed at long-term growth rather than short-term, spur of the moment problem solving), must be transformed if primitive economies are to evolve into complex stable ones. Something must engender the drive and vision that will allow (or encourage) individuals to exploit whatever resources are available to build what will become, in its totality, a prosperous economy within a context of political and economic liberty. Liberalism presupposes that what Max Weber termed the Spirit of Capitalism must emerge. If Weber was correct, a core component of that capitalistic spirit was (and would remain) the Protestant ethic as encapsulated in Martin Luther's concept of "the calling" (Weber 1998). Weber argued that capitalism first emerged in Protestant countries of Northern Europe where it sustained its initial success. Mapping the world of contemporary economic success would tend to substantiate the core (if not necessarily the causal force) of Weber's argument.⁴ The Heritage Foundation's annual ranking of countries with respect to their level of economic liberty consistently finds the western European, largely Protestant countries at the top of the list. For example, of the top 29 countries in the 1999 Index of Economic Freedom, 19 have a Judeo-Christian heritage, 22 are listed by the Freedom House as "Free," and, 19 have *per capita* GDPs in excess of \$10,000 (Freedom House 2001; Johnson, Holmes, and Kirkpatrick 1999).

Refining, expanding, and in many ways deepening Weber's narrow conception, Michael Novak contends that the creative spirit which is central to Christianity in general (and Catholicism in particular) is the essential leaven in the bread of capitalism's success. "At the inmost heart of a capitalistic system," Novak writes, "is confidence in the creative

capacity of the human person. As Catholic theology teaches, and as experience verifies, such confidence is well-placed. Each person is made in the image of God, the Creator. Each is called to be a co-creator and given the vocation to act creatively. Every co-creator is free, that is, expected both to assume responsibility and show initiative” (Novak 1993). Without such spiritually endowed creativity, the very source of which directs its exercise into both initiative and responsibility, capitalism would not succeed.

In each of these qualities, Oklahoma would appear to be well-stocked. Citizens of the state enjoy the same political freedoms as do citizens of the remaining 49 states. Oklahoma’s constitution, with its populist and progressive roots, provides the basis of broad democratic egalitarianism.⁵ Oklahoma’s religious roots trace back well before statehood, at least to the 1722 French expedition led by Bourgmont (though this did not lead to wide spread Catholic influence throughout the Territory).⁶ Protestant missions would find greater success in early 19th century Oklahoma Territory (Dale and Aldrich 1978). This religious heritage follows through to current times, where many Oklahomans point out with pride that “Little Dixie” is in the heart of the Bible belt (some even laying claim to its being the buckle on that belt).

Nonetheless, Oklahoma and Oklahomans in general have not seemed to prosper to the extent of the promise hinted at in its vast human and natural resource potential. In fact, some statistical indicators associated with social well being would suggest that, far from leading the country into prosperity (as its potential might portend), Oklahoma all too frequently seems to lead in the opposite direction: rates of divorce and teenage pregnancy in the state rank among the country’s highest (Oklahoma State Department of Health 2000; Nigh 2000); measures of per capita income for 2004 show Oklahomans ranked 39th out of 51 (including the District of Columbia), receiving only 85 cents for every dollar the average American wage earner achieves (a slight improvement over the previous ten years) (U.S. Commerce 2006a; Oklahoma Commerce 2000); for 2003, Oklahoma ranked 10th highest among the 50 states in forcible rapes, aggravated assault, and burglaries per 100,000 (U.S. Commerce 2006b). In that same year, Oklahoma was the fourth highest state in the country in the percentage of its population not covered by some type of health insurance, and second highest in the percentage of children not covered by health insurance (U.S. Commerce 2006c).

In fact, Oklahoma ranked 44th lowest in overall health status and was one of only two states (Arkansas was the other) that saw mortality rates increase between 1992 and 1997 (Ada Evening News 11/1/99). Finally, in the year 2000 Oklahoma led the nation in the number of executions per 100,000 residents (standing in second only to Texas in the absolute number of people executed in that year) (DPIO 2000). Oklahoma's motto—*Labor Omnia Vincit* (Labor Conquers All Things)—represents an ironic punctuation mark to the human tragedy these statistics condense all too quickly.

If the answer to Oklahoma's prosperity and social well-being seems always to be in the future, the reasons for that answer may be sought most productively in the state's past. It is no exaggeration, nor is it in any fashion original, to observe that Oklahoma's heritage is unique among the 50 states which comprise our union. Oklahoma reflects a dizzying array of complexities and (seeming) contradictions. Though carved out of the western frontier, Oklahoma exudes an aura of Southern mystique and charm (Goble 1994). Stories of legislative battles led by the fervent defenders of cock-fighting compete for the public's attention with reports of history-making medical and technological research at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center that include critical breakthroughs in Alzheimer's research (Kilborn 2000; Greiner 2000; Greiner 2001; Tatum 2000; Tatum 2001). It is the state of aviation and aerospace pioneers Wiley Post and Thomas Stafford. It is the fantasy staging of Rogers and Hammerstein exploited by the reality of the official state song. Oklahoma is a transportation nexus for the country, carrying people and productive wealth from throughout the nation across its borders and through its territory; and, it is a state that strives, and often fails, to keep its young people—the best and the brightest for that future—in the state because of a dearth of competitive jobs (Oklahoma Department of Labor 1998; Plumberg 1999). Oklahoma is a state where the individuality of the western frontier and the community hospitality of the south come together. It is a state where native and conqueror meet, 19th and 21st centuries blend (missing, somehow, the 20th), football and family are made for each other, and myth merges with reality.

The myth of Oklahoma's economy is that it is not diverse, but based largely (if not predominately) on oil and agriculture (built against a cyclorama painted with a panorama of cowboys and oil wells, teepees and Stomp Dancers). Oklahoma is, after all, Native America: its license

plates and state Department of Tourism advertisements proudly proclaim it so. The reality is that since peak oil and gas production in the state was reached in 1927 well-head production and the numbers of producing wells have both declined significantly. So, too, have the number of workers employed in the energy industry. By the 1970s, all energy production (and related economic support activity) in the state accounted for just 5% of Gross State Product and just 5% of employment statewide (Baird and Goble 1994). Today, that number is under 5 percent. Oklahoma agriculture has fared similarly, following the national trend toward increasing mechanization and agri-business that heralded the demise of the family farm decades ago. The devastation of the dust bowl and the Depression of the 1930s had long-since been restored: the parched earth by rain; the destroyed economy by a rain of checks flooding out of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. But the decline in agriculture was irreversible. By 1970, only one Oklahoma worker in 20 was a farmer (Baird and Goble 1994).

If current popular perceptions of Oklahoma's economic structure are based on myth, so too is the belief that the environmental devastation of the dust bowl years worked out its wrath uniquely on Oklahoma. Texas, Kansas, and, to a lesser extent, significant portion of the mid-west experienced the severe drought and rolling walls of airborne dust that epitomize our images of the dust bowl. So, too, the devastation of the depression was felt throughout the country, not simply in Oklahoma. The country recovered, as did Oklahoma (though perhaps to a lesser degree).

What went wrong? Or, perhaps more accurately, what did not go right? The gleam of an answer may be unearthed in exploring what the dean of Oklahoma historians, Edward Everett Dale, has termed the Sooner Spirit. Writing for the *Chronicles of Oklahoma* in 1923, Dale paints an eloquently romantic picture of, "a spirit of youth, of daring, of optimism, of belief in one's self, and in the future. It manifests itself in an eagerness for action, a desire for adventure, a willingness to take a chance. It is a pioneering spirit" (Dale 1923). The pre-eminent historian of America's frontier, Fredrick Jackson Turner (at who's figurative and literal knee Dale studied) could not have put it better. This was the frontier at its best (or worst). But Dale (at least implicitly) recognized the limitations and dangers of such a devil-may-care approach to life. "Admirable in many respects as is a society with such an inheritance

and thoroughly permeated with such a spirit, it is not without its weaknesses and dangers. In the midst of our activity, we have come to over-emphasize the importance of the man of action as compared with the man of thought.... There is too little regard for the wisdom that comes with age and experience and training.” Echoing the Apostle Paul’s warning to the Galatians concerning the fruits of the flesh warring against the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-22), Dale continues, “...[I]n his eager seeking after things of the flesh it was perhaps inevitable that the Oklahoma pioneer should neglect the things of the spirit....Physically speaking, materially considered, frontier conditions in Oklahoma have gone forever. But culturally we are yet in pioneers living upon our intellectual frontier. The material wilderness has been conquered, it yet remains to complete the conquest of the cultural and intellectual wilderness.” And, with a roseate optimism that dismisses his earlier fears, Dale concludes, with respect to victory over the intellectual frontier, “That we shall succeed no one can seriously doubt” (Dale 1923).

Here we have the rub. Dale expected Oklahoma’s intellectual frontier to be conquered by the same pioneers that subdued the physical frontier. But before the intellectual frontier may be conquered, the physical frontier must not only be physically subdued, the concept of the frontier must be replaced in the minds of those accomplishing the conquering in order that they may move on to more subtle, less immediately practical problem solving. This transition has never happened in Oklahoma. Oklahomans may have conquered the physical frontier, but they were conquered by that same frontier emotionally and conceptually. The frontier remained (and remains) an active image of Oklahomans about themselves and the state. The frontier remains to be conquered, only this time it is the frontier of the mind, not the prairie. And in this battle, Oklahoma’s political heritage of populism and progressivism, the Southern aspects of its cultural heritage, and components of the dominant fundamentalist evangelical religious heritage have blended synergistically to create a powerful barrier to emotional, intellectual, and cultural change.⁷

Reinforcing (perhaps) this barrier is the predominant political culture of Oklahoma which Daniel Elazar (1970, 1972) and Charles Johnson (1976) argue was carried with the religious heritage of those who populated Oklahoma through several waves of migration. According to Elazar, the traditionalistic political culture (which is particularly prominent

in the southern and eastern regions of Oklahoma) carries with it a strong desire for order, political elites who are more interested in holding on to power than in sharing it, and an intense desire to maintaining the status quo. It is in this particular blend of religious and political cultures that we may begin to see why Oklahoma has not yet been able to take full advantage of the abundant natural resource heritage identified by Charles Gould over eighty years ago to establish a critically diverse, stable economy whose vision sees something other than a frontier to be conquered, an immediate problem to be solved. And, the solutions that we see most frequently proffered today (lotteries, casinos, the single large employer, the flight of fancy into outer space) are of a kind with those that were effective in subduing the physical land: solutions of the moment, grand solutions based on the (figurative—and now literal) roll of the dice. It is a blended approach to problem solving and economic development which distrusts proposed solutions from sources other than proven, practical problem solvers (in other words, frontier conquerors). If true, this unique Oklahoma cultural blend distrusts attempted intrusions from what Richard Hofstadter refers to as the “life of the mind:” it is anti-intellectual in nature (Hofstadter 1963).

Anti-intellectualism is not unique to Oklahoma, nor is it of recent origins in this country in general. Hofstadter and others such as noted historian and past president of the American Historical Association Merle Curti (1955) note that anti-intellectualism has a long tradition in the United States. What is unique to Oklahoma is that it has emerged from several significant, powerful social sources, each of which (it is argued, often by intellectuals) brings its own flavor of anti-intellectualism to the feast. These sources are a political history of populism, a cultural history of Southern heritage, and a religious history largely comprised of fundamental evangelical denominations and sects.

That the inevitable imagery and stereotypes associated with this blended heritage exist is evident. What is not as evident is whether there is substantial evidence (beyond the anecdotal) that this (alleged) anti-intellectual *mélange* has had a substantial, negative influence on Oklahoma’s pattern of economic development. In order to assess the latter, we must explore (at least in a preliminary way, the former).

CULTURE: RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL...AND SOUTHERN

Several years ago, when I mentioned to some colleagues that I was about to embark on a teaching career at a university in Oklahoma, I was regaled with the clearly apocryphal story about the state's legislature changing the value of Pi to 3 because the irrational numbers following the decimal were just too hard for students to remember.⁸ Since that time, I have heard the story told about the state legislatures of Arkansas, Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Louisiana. In all cases, the story tellers were academics and the stories were related in academic settings. In no cases were the stories told about the states in which they lived, neither did the stories relate to any state above the Mason-Dixon Line. And, just as inevitably, smirks, chortles, and winks accompanied knee slaps and applause at the story's end.

While such stories reveal as much (or more) about the teller as the they do of the subject of the telling, they do reflect a common, non-southern stereotypic assumption concerning the intellectual prowess of those who live in the South that is often incorporated into a larger, predominately negative, image of the South: a bucolic land of warm, often humid climate, tall cotton and the smell of magnolia blossoms in the air, inhabited by slow (if not lazy), often quaint people who, generally, are not overly bright, but are bible-thumping, pew-running, holy-rolling, anti-intellectual fanatics (not infrequently portrayed as a cause and effect relationship-which is cause and which is effect is left unstated), a land liberally spiced with race car-driving, cock-fighting, Moon Pie™-eating, RC Cola™-drinking guys named Bubba who get all misty-eyed over the Confederate battle flag⁹. One might think that such negative stereotypes were held only by those who reside somewhere other than the South. But David Hutto (2000) argues that there is a tendency among southerners to accept, sometimes even embrace, such definitions by outsiders. To the extent that Hutto's observations are true, this tendency would reinforce resistance to change among those who would require it the most if the image of the frontier were to be replaced by an image more conducive to modern economic development. Moreover, if a spirit of anti-intellectualism has come to pervade and bound the conceptual image that Oklahomans have of themselves, constraining the range of strategies deemed acceptable to pursue prosperity and limiting the range of matters valued in the state, the creative (or

intellectual) spirit posited by Novak as necessary to the emergence of capitalism in its most prosperous form, may also be suppressed. In this, the role of Oklahoma's system of common and higher education might be expected to play a significant role.

If this is true, what should we expect to see in Oklahoma? Hofstadter suggests that religious fundamentalism and democratic populism are strongly associated with anti-intellectualism. Novak would seem to imply that anti-intellectual attitudes and values would be associated with lower levels of economic success and the absence of the elements of creative, entrepreneurial capitalism. The question is whether these forces would have their greatest impact on the individual level or would they be most significant in the aggregate? While it would be interesting to measure and assess the impact of anti-intellectualism on the individual level, the data is difficult to obtain.¹⁰ Moreover, the issue of state prosperity is one that spans the state; it is not an issue of whether or not specific individuals are (or are not) prosperous, but of the state as a whole. Consequently, as we are most interested in the aggregate effect, we should look at the aggregate level of data: county and state. Together, these forces should work most strongly in aggregate. Combined, these recommend the following hypothesis:

Oklahoma counties which exhibit higher levels of anti-intellectual measure should correlate more strongly with higher concentrations (rates of adherence) of evangelical and fundamentalist Protestant denominations and with higher rates of Democratic Party adherents, which in turn should correlate with lower degrees of economic success and poorer indicators of social and community health. Conversely, counties which reflect higher levels of intellectual measure should associate with stronger rates of mainline Protestant denominational adherence and Republican and Independent Party adherents, which should associate with stronger levels of economic and educational attainment, and stronger indicators of social and community health.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The Glenmary Research center conducted broad surveys of religious denominations, numbers of congregations and congregants, and rates of denominational adherence at the country and state levels in

1990, and again in 2000. The U.S. Department of Commerce Census Bureau's, State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, compiles data from the census. Department of Justice, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics to develop state and county level reports of per capita and household income, levels of educational attainment, morbidity and mortality rates, and crime rates (rape, assault, theft, murder, etc.). Data from these sources were merged into a single, county-level data set for analysis.

The first major methodological issue was to develop an appropriate, reasonable measure of anti-intellectualism. Intellectualism is a complex matter, broadly encompassing what Hofstadter refers to as "the life of the mind." Daniel Rigney (1991), working from Hofstadter's analysis, develops three separate forms of anti-intellectualism: religious anti-rationalism, populist anti-elitism, and what he calls unreflective instrumentalism. Given the limitations of available aggregate data, the following variables were used to create a preliminary, composite of anti-intellectualism that draws largely on educational measures. Support for education as measured by per capita expenditures on public education, and level of educational attainment are two variables that might reasonably be expected to reflect a measure of intellectual or anti-intellectual attitude on an individual level. Measured cumulatively, the scale of educational attainment on a county level could represent one measure reflecting a social attitude toward intellectual matters. A third measure, also at the county and state level, might be the over level of support for public libraries, as measured by Thomas Hennen's HAPLR score (Hennen's American Public Library Rating). Hennen's annual rating of each public library in the United States measures public library quality by 6 input and 9 output measures. The measure, which is weighted, includes measures of collection turnover, periodicals per 1000 residents, volumes per capita, and number of visits to the library per capita. This suggests the HAPLR score as a reasonable measure of broad public support for libraries and intellectual activity. Library scores within each Oklahoma county were averaged to obtain a county score; individual library scores within each state were summed to obtain a state average HAPLR score. In sum, an Anti-Intellectual Score was created for each county in Oklahoma, as well as for Oklahoma and the seven surrounding states on a state-wide level; it is a composite scale consisting of the z-scores of educational attainment, per pupil EIH educational expenditures, and

educational expenditures as a percentage of state spending (compiled from the State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006), plus Hennan's American Public Library Ratings 2000 county average library rating (HAPLR Score).¹¹

County-level economic and social health is measured through a variety of social and economic indicators. Economic health variables include disposable personal income, median family income, county-level retail sales per capita, and the county-level small business ownership rate. Social health is reflected in divorce rates, and robbery, assault, rape, burglary, and motor vehicle theft rates for each county.

RESULTS

Preliminary analysis bears support for the hypothesis with respect to the relationship between anti-intellectualism, denomination, party, education and economics, but suggests the relationship between denomination and social health does not follow a clear denominational pattern. Tables 1 and 2 relate anti-intellectualism score correlations with religious, economic, social, and political variables within Oklahoma on a county by county basis. Table 3 compares Oklahoma's anti-intellectualism scores and religious, social, economic, and health indicators to those of the seven surrounding states.

The first part of the hypothesis, suggesting that evangelical and main line protestant denominations should have opposite correlations with respect to support for intellectual activity and economic development and success, finds support. Overall, counties with higher rates of evangelical denomination correlate strongly with anti-intellectual attitudes ($r = .307$), less than high school graduation ($r = .461$), and low median household income ($r = -.536$). Particular evangelical denominations, specifically the Southern Baptist Convention, correlate even more strongly in the same direction. All these correlations are statistically significant at the .01 level.

Main line protestant denominations show a more mixed result. While all main line denominations (together) demonstrate little correlation with anti-intellectual measures ($r = -.060$), specific denominations show a powerful, negative correlation. Counties with stronger Episcopal Church adherent rates ($r = -.437$) and Presbyterian Church, USA adherent rates ($r = -.446$) are strongly, and negatively, associated with

TABLE 1

Oklahoma Denominations and Anti-Intellectualism: Association with Education, Income & Social Indicators

Oklahoma, by County	Anti-Intellectual Score	HS or Less	BA or More	Median Household Income	Business Ownership Rate	Retail Sales per capita	Divorce Rate	Robbery	Assault
Correlation (n = 77)									
Anti-Intellectual Score	1.0	.468**	-.452**	-.415**	.473**	-.551**	-.044	-.295*	-.347*
Mainline Protestant***	-.060	-.475**	.313**	.144	.574**	.084	-.300**	-.004	-.029
Evangelical Protestant	.307*	.461**	-.359**	-.536**	.437**	-.152	-.150	-.192	-.238*
Catholic	-.353*	-.260*	.350**	.354**	-.036	.343**	-.290*	.140	.128
ELCA	-.232	-.310**	.279*	.174	-.175	.113	-.005	.146	.135
Episcopal Church	-.437**	-.354**	.489**	.278*	-.562**	.504**	.315**	.477**	.520**
Presbyterian, USA	-.446**	-.311**	.454**	.238*	-.449**	.402**	.064	.281*	.323**
UCC	-.054	-.237*	.116	.140	.174	.111	-.061	.017	-.007
UMC	.076	-.390**	.283*	.099	.638**	.034	-.338**	-.043	-.066
American Baptist Assn	.059	.314**	-.250*	-.343**	.033	-.101	.156	-.087	-.080
Assemblies of God	.010	.103	-.143	-.156	.097	.078	.106	-.020	-.016
Pentecostal COG	-.239	.187	-.126	-.199	-.282*	.020	.311**	-.075	-.037
Southern Baptist	.308**	.477**	-.377**	-.471**	.263*	-.164	-.042	-.184	-.219

** correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed) * correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

*** Denominations reflect rates of adherence per 1000 population.

Data Sources:

Social, Income, and Demographic Data: The State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006. Data for 2000.

Anti-Intellectual Score: composite scale (z-scores) of educational attainment, per pupil EIHI educational expenditures, and educational expenditures as a percentage of state spending (compiled from the State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006), plus Hennen's American Public Library Ratings 2000 county average library rating (HAPLR Score).

Denominational Data: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2000, Principal Investigators: Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies ; downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archive (<http://www.thearda.com>).

Crime Data: US Department of Justice, Uniform Crime Statistics Data for 2000..

anti-intellectual measures. The United Church of Christ (UCC) and the United Methodist Church (UMC) rates of adherence in Oklahoma counties, on the other hand, show little correlation with anti-intellectual measures and education variables; the UCC is slightly negative and the UMC is slightly positive, but neither is statistically significant. Overall, counties with stronger rates of adherence among main line denominations tend to be more positively associated with higher degrees of education and higher household income rates than do counties with strong rates of adherence among evangelical denominations. At the same time, county-level aggregate small business ownership rates are strongly—and positively—correlated with anti-intellectual measures ($r=.473$), mainline denominations as a group ($r=.574$), and evangelicals as a group ($r=.437$). Individual denominational rates of adherence demonstrate more mixed results: higher rates of Episcopal and Presbyterian USA adherence (both mainline denominations) correlate strongly—and negatively—with county-level small business ownership rates ($r= -.562$ and $r= -.449$ respectively), but both denominations correlate just as strongly—though positively—with rates of retail sales per capita. Evangelical rates in general, and Southern Baptist adherence rates in particular, associate negatively with the rate of retail sales per capita in Oklahoma Counties, though neither is at a statistically significant level (see Table 1).

Analysis of county-wide denominational rates of adherence with other indicators of social health shows a more mixed result. Counties with higher overall evangelical rates of adherence are generally negatively correlated with such social indicators as divorce rates and crime rates. But, running counter to the original hypothesis, counties with higher Episcopal and Presbyterian USA adherence rates have statistically significant, and positive, correlation with crime rates. And, county-level anti-intellectual measures are negatively associated with crime rates (see Table 1).

As with the distribution of religious denominational adherents, the distribution and rate of political party registration varies widely across Oklahoma counties. January 2007 party registration data from the Oklahoma State Election Board shows that the percentage of Democratic voters (of all registered voters) ranges from a high of 87.9% in Harmon County in far southwest Oklahoma to a low of 29.2% in McClain County in central Oklahoma. Republican Party registration rates run from a high of 65.6% in McClain County to a low of 7.6% in Pushmataha

TABLE 2

Oklahoma Party Registration and Region Association: Religion, Education, & Social Indicators

Oklahoma, by County Pearson's Correlation (n = 77)	Democratic %	Republican %	Independent %	Party Dominance (+ R/ -D)	Region (N,W,S,E)	Region 2 (N&W, S&E)
Anti-Intellectual Score	.301*	-.253	-.427**	-.197	.137	-.171
Mainline Protestant***	-.483**	.572**	-.026	.587**	.563**	.544**
Evangelical Protestant	.523**	-.529**	-.538**	-.404**	.225*	-.314**
Catholic	-.486**	.394**	.242*	.533**	.377*	.350**
ELCA	-.166	.160	.140	.025	-.078	.274*
Episcopal Church	-.226*	.183		.229*	-.416**	.155
Presbyterian, USA	-.277*	.195	.430**	.245*	-.292*	.207
UCC	-.313**	.320**	-.019	.312**	.365*	.285*
UMC	-.403**	.506**	-.082	.556**	.623**	.485**
American Baptist	.234*	-.399**	-.346**	-.304**	.004	-.279*
Assemblies of God	.125	-.138	-.198	-.124	.012	-.034
Pentecostal COG	.231*	-.325**	.050	-.313**	-.226*	-.418**
Southern Baptist	.582**	-.600**	-.439**	-.457**	.114	-.432**
HS or Less	.704**	-.783**	-.574**	-.580**	-.170	.630**
BA or Higher	-.526**	.588**	.601**	.628**	.133	.440**
Median Household Income	-.652**	.732**	.590**	.479**	.055	.500**
Small Business Owners %	.117	.054	-.557**	.121	.634**	.160
Retail Sales per capita	-.279*	.269*	.407**	.305**	.003	.150
Divorce Rate	.297**	-.361**	.115	-.143	-.411**	-.258*

** correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed) * correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed) *** Denominations reflect rates of adherence per 1000 population.

Data Sources: Social, Income, and Demographic Data: The State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006. Data for 2000. Anti-Intellectual Score: composite scale (z-scores) of educational attainment, per pupil EHI educational expenditures, and educational expenditures as a percentage of state spending (compiled from the State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006), plus Hennen's American Public Library Ratings 2000 county average library rating (HAPLR Score). Denominational Data: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2000, Principal Investigators: Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies; downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archive (<http://www.thearda.com>). Political Data: Oklahoma State Election Board. Data for January, 2007.

County in far southeastern Oklahoma. There is a regional pattern to party registration in Oklahoma as well. Interstate 44 roughly bisects the state, running from Miami and Tulsa in the northeast part of the state, through Oklahoma City in the central part of the state, and Lawton and Altus in the southwest portion of the state. Counties north and west of this line tend to be dominated by Republican voters; counties to the south and east of this line tend to be dominated by Democratic voters.

Correlation analysis demonstrates support for the hypothesis. Counties with strong Democratic Party adherence correlate strongly, and positively, with measures of anti-intellectualism ($r = .301$), lower levels of educational attainment (high school education or less $r = .704$; bachelor's degree or higher $r = -.526$), lower levels of family income ($r = -.652$), lower levels of retail sales per capita ($r = -.279$), higher divorce rates ($r = .297$) and evangelical denominations ($r = .523$). The more Democratic an Oklahoma county is, the less likely it is to be mainline religious denomination dominant ($r = -.483$).

In the opposite direction, the higher the Republican and Independent registration rates in Oklahoma counties, the less anti-intellectual they tend to be ($r = -.253$ and $-.427$ respectively), the higher the levels of educational attainment and family income tend to be, and divorce rates among stronger Republican counties tend to be lower and they tend to have stronger rates of mainline religious denominational adherence. Individual mainline denominations generally follow this pattern as well (see Table 2).

These general patterns follow through on the state level when Oklahoma is compared to the seven states which surround it. Anti-intellectualism is associated with Evangelical Protestant denominations, lower median household and disposable personal income rates, higher infant mortality and overall mortality rates, and higher divorce rates (see Table 3).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

All this suggests more research into the cause and effects relationships between religious denomination, political values and actions, political culture, and economic and social outcomes are both necessary and warranted. That such relationships exist there is no doubt. What needs further investigation is the detail of these relationships. For

TABLE 3
Impact of Anti-Intellectualism and Denomination on Selected Social Factors, Oklahoma and Surrounding States, 2000:

Pearson's Correlation (n = 8)	Anti- Intellectualism Score	MHI 2000	DPI Per capita	Infant Mortality Rate	Violent Crime Rate	Property Crime Rate	Mortality Rate	Divorce Rate
Anti-Intellectualism Score	1.0	-.823(*)	-.743(*)	0.705	0.433	0.072	.724(*)	0.438
Mainline Protestant***	-.064	0.073	0.157	-0.060	-0.549	-0.133	0.445	-0.517
Evangelical Protestant	.851**	-0.561	-0.493	0.439	0.003	-0.131	.766(*)	0.291
Catholic	-.297	-0.084	-0.116	-0.083	0.684	0.403	-0.571	-0.058
American Baptist	.607	-0.386	-0.476	0.229	-0.134	-0.607	0.507	.836(*)
Assemblies of God	.707*	-0.507	-0.508	0.334	-0.076	-0.331	.759(*)	0.346
Episcopal Church	-.362	0.411	0.475	-0.371	0.153	0.559	-.830(*)	-0.324
ELCA	-.889**	.820(*)	.773(*)	-0.682	-0.665	-0.156	-0.563	-0.478
Presbyterian, USA	-.472	0.411	0.408	-0.330	-.729(*)	-0.347	0.143	-0.376
Pentecostal Holiness	.358	-0.267	-0.143	0.161	-0.030	0.273	0.405	-0.540
Pentecostal CoG	.659	-0.490	-0.554	0.200	-0.074	-0.517	0.649	0.722
Southern Baptist	.930**	-0.665	-0.555	0.544	0.271	0.136	0.684	0.185
UCC	-.603	0.581	0.535	-0.093	-0.506	-0.267	-0.026	-0.232
UM	.492	-0.381	-0.258	0.217	-0.224	-0.015	0.705	-0.312

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed) * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) *** Denominations reflect rates of adherence per 1000 population. | States are: Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.
 Data Sources: Social, Income, and Demographic Data: The State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006. Data for 2000 Anti-Intellectual Score: composite scale (z-scores) of educational attainment, per pupil ELHI educational expenditures, and educational expenditures as a percentage of state spending (compiled from the State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 2006), plus Hennen's American Public Library Ratings 2000 State Ratings (HAPLR Score). Denominational Data: Religious Congregations and Membership Study, 2000, Principal Investigators: Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies ; downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archive (<http://www.thearda.com>).

example, we know that both religious denomination and political culture are inter-related with educational and economic success, social statistics, and political outcomes. Which is more causally important? In a 1991 study of Oklahoma's 77 counties, Morgan and Anderson found inter-party competition lowered in counties dominated by traditional political culture, with more competition in counties whose political culture was predominantly individualistic. Do religious faith traditions (Mainline, Evangelical, Catholic, etc.) have the same effect? Is the effect as strong, less strong, or stronger? Are there differential effects, within faith traditions, by different denominations? Relevant research by David Campbell suggests community, political, and religious heterogeneity can act as both a suppressor as well as a facilitator of political and civic engagement (Campbell 2004). How does religious heterogeneity across faith traditions compare with the heterogeneity of political cultures in their impact on the intellectual environment necessary to build sustainable economic growth? Research is currently underway that will, we hope, shed additional light on answers to these questions.

In April 2001 former Oklahoma Governor George Nigh delivered the keynote address at the John Templeton Foundation funded *Conference on Religion, Freedom, and Prosperity in Oklahoma* held at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma. Governor Nigh opened his remarks by observing, "Oklahoma, we have an image problem." To the extent that Oklahoma's image is a product of Oklahomans' mindsets about themselves and their state, he was certainly correct; but these data suggest that the state's economic prosperity challenges are more deeply seated than image alone. Oklahoma has a rich cultural history that reflects its birth out of the western prairie. Political populism and Evangelical Protestantism are two pivotal components of that heritage. A traditionalistic and individualistic political culture both carry and reinforce social attitudes that are resistant to change and suspicious of intellectual life—two quintessential elements on which a mature, prosperous economy must be built. Robert Swierenga has observed that "people act politically, economically, and socially in keeping with their ultimate beliefs. Their values, mores, and actions, whether in the polling booth, on the job, or at home, are an outgrowth of the god or gods they hold at the center of their being" (Swierenga 1990). In Oklahoma's case, that evangelical heritage has fostered a political populism whose impact on economic development has been to establish a subtle anti-

intellectualism rooted as deeply in the state's red earth as was the buffalo grass that once covered the prairie's vast expanse; and, it has been just as tenacious. As the buffalo grass has given way to vast interstate highways and modern skyscrapers, so, too, can the anti-intellectual spirit give way to a new, modernized Sooner Spirit necessary to lead Oklahoma into prosperity in the state's second century.

Overcoming the old spirit and nurturing the new represents one of the great challenges for Oklahoma's system of common and higher education. There are a number of promising markers that may reflect the state's emergence from the frontier-problem-solving anti-intellectual mindset that has seemed to stymie sustainable economic growth in the state. One of the more promising is the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science & Technology. OCAST is a public-private partnership designed to bring together the most promising elements from higher education research, business, and the state in order to advance and market technology. According to their web site:

OCAST is a small, high-impact agency funded by state appropriations and governed by a board of directors with members from both the private and public sector. OCAST works in partnership with the private sector, higher education, CareerTech and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce. OCAST-funded research projects are first reviewed by out-of-state science and business experts and ranked according to scientific merit and commercial potential. In this way, OCAST ensures state funds are wisely invested where they will have the most impact. OCAST is the state's only agency whose sole focus is technology – its development, transfer and commercialization.

Additionally, the technology-based economic development agency works closely with its strategic partners – the Oklahoma Manufacturing Alliance, the Oklahoma Technology Commercialization Center and the Inventors Assistance Service – to improve conditions for Oklahoma's technology businesses.

As it labels itself, OCAST is "Oklahoma's technology-based economic development agency." Since its inception in 1987, OCAST has invested \$151 million with a return to the state of over \$2 Billion (OCAST 2008). It is precisely this style of forward-thinking, long-term

problem solving solution that fuses intellectual endeavor and research into economic development that will be necessary to forge a new, economically prosperous, Sooner Spirit. At the same time, Oklahoma's overall investment in common and higher education continues to rank among the lowest in the United States. Oklahoma's first 100 years have come and gone; the challenges to reach certain, sustainable prosperity in our second 100 years remain dauntingly in front of us.

NOTES

¹ VentureStar, or the X-33, was a proof of concept vehicle, where the overall program was designed to develop a replacement craft for the aging space shuttle fleet. It was to be a single stage, self-contained launch-to-orbit, reusable vehicle - in other words, a true "space plane." In part to compete with fourteen other states for the proposed Lockheed launch facility for VentureStar, Senate Bill 720 created the Oklahoma Space Industry Development Authority in May of 1999. Residents and legislators from Burns Flats, in southwestern Oklahoma, hoped to promote the former Clinton-Sherman Air force Base, with its 15,000 ft. runway, as a viable launch facility for the X-33. But, following years of delays in vehicle development and test flights, combined with significant cost overruns, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) killed the X-33 project in March, 2001; VentureStar is no more, yet, Oklahomans dedicated to the project remain optimistic about aerospace technology as the vehicle for Oklahoma's future prosperity. Oklahoma's future is still in its future. See, *inter alia*, Jackson (1995); *Daily Oklahoman* (2/28/99); Greiner (1999); Minty (2001).

² For an intriguing argument that abundant natural resources may be more of a curse than a blessing to stable economic development, see the discussion of Karl (1997); Sachs & Warner (1995); Shafer (1994); and Ross (1999).

³ Classics in this vein include Smith (1937) and Hayek (1960). For a more contemporary view, see Fukuyama (1992).

⁴ For classic criticism of Weber's thesis, see *inter alia* Tawney (1926); Viner (1978); and, Dickson and McLachlan (1989).

⁵ On Oklahoma's progressive and populist roots; see, Miller (1987); Goble (1980); Scales and Goble (1982); and, Brown (1994).

⁶ In exploring why Protestant missions to the Osages were not (at least initially) as successful as they were among other plains tribes, Morris Wardell (1924) notes that it, “was the policy of the French to intermarry with the Indians....This influence of the French Catholics may account for the partial failure of the Protestant missions among the Osages.”

⁷ The battle between the man of action and the man of thought that Dale alludes to has a long, often eloquent and emotional history in the United States, see for example, Hofstadter (1963); Curti, (1955); and, Kazin (1998). On the South and Southern Heritage, see Cash, (1941); and, Ferris, (1994). On Southern religion and religious issues and their relationship to the South and Southern culture, see Harvey (1997).

⁸ The story went as follows: Numerous Oklahoma state legislators had received complaints from their constituents about how challenging the New Math was and how hard a time their children were having in mastering it. Of particular difficulty were problems in geometry. “My kid gits in all kinds of trouble tryin’ to find the areas of circles and such ‘cause he cain’t ‘member what ‘Pi’ is. Cain’t you do somethin’ to help? [pronounced, by the story teller, as ‘hep’],” pleaded one trouble parent. Always wanting to serve their constituents, the state legislators agreed. They thought and thought, debating throughout the night how they might resolve this thorny problem. By morning they had arrived at the solution. Wanting to ease the burden on all their constituents, they introduced a bill designed to help students and mathematicians alike. Believing that the irrational digits of Pi were just too difficult to remember (3.141592653...) the bill would, forever more, change the value of Pi to “3.”

⁹ There is even a “southern” chat group on the Internet called Bubba-L. David Hutto (2000) relates that a “test of southern identity from Bubba-L...declar[es] that you can’t be a good southerner unless you (1) know the value and meaning of a ‘yankee dime’, (2) have barbequed a goat, (3) have had your head checked for ticks, (4) have at least three different pecan pie recipes.”

¹⁰ National surveys such of the General Social Survey and the variety of surveys of religious attitudes and congregations generally do not have sufficient variables to build an effective measure of anti-intellectualism.

¹¹ The states, in addition to Oklahoma, are: Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, and, Texas.

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