

Harry Holloway with Frank S. Meyers. *Bad Times for Good Ol' Boys: The Oklahoma County Commissioner Scandal*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993) \$24.95 ISBN 0806125489

With Bad Times for Good Ol' Boys, Holloway and Meyers have hit an outstanding triple play. First, they have advanced corruption studies by applying method and theory to an actual situation of widespread corruption. The strengths of various corruption theories are discussed and tested against the backdrop of the Oklahoma case. Of special note is the way the authors attempt to bring the study of corruption away from the world of speculation to the testing of generalizations with empirical evidence. They use survey research analysis, for example, to examine the thesis that government corruption in Oklahoma is caused by a corrupt political culture. Secondly, the authors have greatly advanced the study of Oklahoma government and politics. As we all know, there is not a lot of political science scholarship on Oklahoma government and politics. This book does much to fill that void. A reading of the book gives one a feel for the way the art of government is practiced in Oklahoma. In addition to learning about reform and scandal in state politics we are introduced to the central role of the governor, the legislature-local government nexus, the role of lobbies (including the county lobby), and the often central role of the media, especially the metropolitan press. One central thing we learn about state politics is that some things are very hard to reform, and county government heads the list. Thirdly, this study solidly advances our knowledge about county government, an area of government that has been generally neglected in the political science literature. What comes through in the study is the importance of county government, both in terms of function and dollars spent. The reader gets a good feel for both the formal and informal aspects of governmental operations at this level. This book is an important contribution to political science generally and several subfields specifically.

The book is organized into seven well-arranged chapters, each building on what precedes. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 deal with the eruption of the scandal, corruption theory, and a review of Oklahoma's "dark past." Chapters 4, 5, and 6 treat Oklahoma demographics and opinion, the operation of county government institutions, and compares attitudes of commissioners and the public. The last chapter sums up Okscam (the Oklahoma county commissioner scandal), articulates the theories of political ecology and agrarian populism, and applies these theories to the recent referendum on education bonds. These chapters very much "hang together" and they provide the reader with a smooth transition from one idea to another.

As with all studies, there are some possible points of disagreement. The authors essentially conclude that the "corrupt culture thesis does not stand up" as a cause of Okscam, and it is clear that elite and mass surveys in the study fail to reveal extensive corruption as an attitude structure. This reviewer would not so easily dismiss the cultural thesis for several reasons, however. For one, sur-

vey analysis of contemporary elites and masses may not capture the full impact of political culture in Oklahoma. Respondents may, for example, "inflate" their morality when reacting to "good-bad" scales of attitudes. Also, one can assume that political culture in Oklahoma has changed since statehood. (Is it possible that if one could go back in time, one would find both an elite and mass political culture more supportive of corruption?) When did Okscam begin? No one seems to know exactly, but it probably goes far back into the state's past. Oklahoma has undergone considerable modernization and urbanization since World War II, and these changes have caused vast changes in political attitudes and political culture. Recent surveys may pick up these new attitudes but they may tell us very little about the state's "dark past." Political culture is also more than public opinion. Part of political culture is the set of subtle arrangements and agreements between the public and its leadership class. In a moralistic culture, a public office is seen as a public trust not to be broken, whereas in an individualistic culture a public office is seen as another business opportunity. In one culture, the public is capable of enforcing ethical norms, in the other there are lapses. The authors go to some lengths to chronicle official misdeeds in Oklahoma which have touched all branches and levels of government. In most cases the public has been unable (or unwilling) to demand and get better government. One might suggest that the relationship between leaders led in Oklahoma is somewhat weak when it comes to enforcing a concept of the public good. Is this not "political culture" as a variable, and is it not separate from institutional and structural variables? At the very least, the study should perhaps be more tentative about the role of political culture in the state.

In conclusion, the authors need to be given credit, not only for an excellent study, but also for their courage in doing the study at all. When academics take on government in their home state – and especially when the topic is widespread corruption – they are taking many possible risks. There have been instances in the past in which state and local government has been hostile to the scrutiny of scholarship. Hopefully times are changing in Oklahoma, and with that change we can see more scholarship of this quality.

Phillip M. Simpson
Cameron University