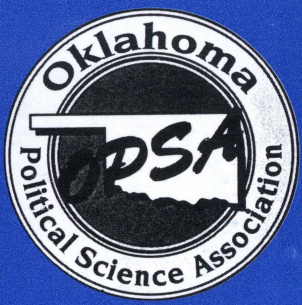
# Oklahoma Politics




Oklahoma Political Science Association

# OKLAHOMA POLITICS




ISSN: 1065-0695

*Oklahoma Politics*, an annual publication of the Oklahoma Political Science Association, publishes political science articles that have a significant Oklahoma component as well as reviews, notes, and data on subjects relating to Oklahoma politics. Submissions should be sent to Jan Hardt, Department of Political Science, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, OK 73034.

Subscriptions are $15 per year from the University of Central Oklahoma, Department of Political Science, Edmond, OK 73034. Oklahoma Political Science Association members receive copies of the annual journal as part of their membership.

OKLAHOMA POLITICS
Vol. 9
November 2000

# OKLAHOMA POLITICS

# POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES IN CENTRAL OKLAHOMA: TESTING SOWELL AND LAKOFF

JAMES DAVENPORT
University of Central Oklahoma

**This paper examines two models** of political ideology and assesses their ability to predict the self-described ideological perspectives of central Oklahoma community leaders. The purpose is to quantifiably affirm or deny the usefulness of the models as tools for understanding how and why individuals support or oppose various public policies.

There is an abundance of literature on the various types of ideologies and the underlying philosophies that produce them, but few attempts to measure the compatibility of these philosophies with what might be called a "commonplace" understanding of ideological labels. Whether one is reading Baradat's *Political Ideologies*, Hoover's *Ideology and Political Life*, or Susser's *Political Ideology in the Modern World*, what is found is a predetermined categorization of ideologies and public policy questions, with an analysis of the philosophies which are believed to influence how individuals and societies come to adopt or reject certain ideologies and their subsequent policies. What is not found in any of these analyses, however, is a quantifiable measurement that verifies the congruence of those philosophies with how individuals view ideological terms such as "liberal," "conservative," "moderate." In other words, there is no attempt to answer the question, does one's agreement with a

philosophical position necessarily translate into a traditional understanding of ideological labels, and result in support for a compatible public policy? It is the argument of this paper that on the whole, individuals do adhere to a consistent set of principles from which they make decisions regarding public policies. Whether one wishes to call such sets of principles "visions" as does Thomas Sowell, or worldviews, or any other term, they provide a framework of logic that allows individuals to makes sense out of their surroundings.

This will attempt to test two philosophical models. One model is based upon the book *A Conflict of Visions*, by Thomas Sowell. According to Sowell, people generally fall into one of two categories depending on how they understand human nature. These two categories, the "constrained vision" and the "unconstrained vision," have their own set of consistent and logical policy consequences.

The second model is based upon George Lakoff's book, *Moral Politics*. According to Lakoff, the policy preferences of individuals can be traced to their understanding of family life. Specifically, Lakoff argues that how one views parenting will, in large measure, determine how they decide to support or oppose various public policy proposals. Lakoff's two basic family models are the "strict father" and the "nurturant parent." Like Sowell's contrasting visions, each of Lakoff's models possesses its own internal logic and consistent policy preferences.

A survey was given to a group of business and community leaders and elected officials within the Oklahoma City Metro Area. It contained thirty-one questions, which were divided between identifier questions (5), model questions (18), and policy questions (8). The survey was designed to determine if respondents' policy answers were consistent with their positions within the two models and their self-described political ideology. If valid, the models should be able to reasonably coincide with the ideological labels the respondents gave themselves. This information will be useful not only to political scientists and philosophers, as they constantly search for explanations as to how individuals perceive and interpret political solutions, but also, for the practitioners of politics, who must constantly communicate to voters in the most effective manner possible.

## THE MODELS

According to conservative political analyst Thomas Sowell, a vision is "a sense of causation," that precedes any theory or verifiable hypotheses. It is the starting point from which theories, hypotheses, and all other attempts of verification and explanation result (Sowell, 14-16). Sowell states,

> Social visions are important in a number of ways. The most obvious is that policies based on a certain vision of the world have consequences that spread through society and reverberate across the years, or even across generations or centuries. Visions set the agenda for both thought and action (Sowell, 16).

According to Sowell, all social visions have at their foundation differing conceptions about human nature. Whether one reads the writings of William Godwin, James Madison, Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine, or, more recently, Friedrich Hayek or John Kenneth Galbraith, Sowell argues that within each is a specific perspective on the nature of humanity.

> The capacities and limitations of man are implicitly seen in radically different terms by those whose explicit philosophical, political, or social theories are built on different visions (Sowell, 18-19).

Although he recognizes the existence of numerous visions, Sowell groups them into two categories – the constrained vision, and the unconstrained vision. According to Sowell, central to the constrained vision is an acceptance of humanity's moral limitations. These limitations form the basic constraint of this particular vision. Within the constrained vision, writes Sowell,

> The fundamental moral and social challenge was to make the best of the possibilities which existed within that constraint, rather than dissipate energies in an attempt to change human nature... (Sowell, 21).

Subscribers to the constrained vision, according to Sowell, tend to identify how the moral and social benefits desired of individuals could be produced in the most efficient manner, while accepting human nature

as fundamentally flawed (Sowell, 21). Drawing from Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Sowell argues that proponents of the constrained vision seek to develop "a system of moral incentives" in order to inspire people to act in the interests of others, rather than trying to solve the problem of human nature's inherent selfishness (Sowell, 22-23).

By contrast, those of the unconstrained vision focus on the motivation behind behaviors. According to Sowell, those of the unconstrained vision perceive human nature as capable of being molded and designed to do what is right, regardless of self-interest. In fact, Sowell argues that those of the unconstrained vision have a genuine disdain for social incentives, as they could retard the development of a "higher sense of social duty" within human nature (Sowell, 24). States Sowell,

> Implicit in the unconstrained vision is the notion that the potential is very different from the actual, and that means exist to improve human nature toward its potential, or that such means can be evolved or discovered, so that man will do the right thing for the right reason, rather than for ulterior psychic or economic rewards (Sowell, 26).

For Sowell, it is the fundamental difference between the two visions' conceptualizations of human nature that result in further disagreements on a host of other issues. If one believes that human nature is fundamentally and unalterably flawed, then a variety of other beliefs about society, government, law, etc., will logically follow. However, if one believes that human nature has the potential for "perfection," then a very different set of beliefs will result.

In comparing the two visions, Sowell states,

> Running through the tradition of the unconstrained vision is the conviction that foolish or immoral choices explain the evils of the world – and that wiser or more moral and humane social policies are the solution...By contrast, the constrained vision sees the evils of the world as deriving from the limited and unhappy choices available, given the inherent moral and intellectual limitations of human beings (Sowell, 38).

Flowing from their differing perspectives of human nature, Sowell points out that the constrained and unconstrained visions will necessarily disagree on topics as diverse as social planning, equality, justice, freedom, and power. According to Sowell, those who fall within the unconstrained vision will be disposed to favor social planning efforts, have a results oriented perspective of equality and freedom, view justice on a case-by-case basis, and are generally uninhibited in using government power to achieve their desired social goals.

On the other hand, those with the constrained vision tend to have a process oriented view of equality and freedom, are skeptical of social planning efforts, view justice in terms of its benefits to society, and are wary of employing the powers of the state in pursuit of social goals or ideals. According to Sowell, those in the constrained vision believe that the accumulated wisdom and insights of the ages, which they perceive as the foundation for current social, political, and legal institutions, should not be traded for contemporary rationalizations. Whereas, those of the unconstrained vision view modern, explicit, rationalization as the key to reversing the inequities and injustices of preceding generations.

It is important to note that Sowell makes provision for those views that fall in between the constrained or unconstrained visions, or even somewhat outside of them (what he calls "hybrids"). Two such "hybrids," according to Sowell would be Marxism and Utilitarianism. Both philosophies, states Sowell, combine enough of the constrained and unconstrained visions as to avoid strict classification. And according to Sowell, the existence of hybrid visions "make[s] it impossible to equate constrained and unconstrained visions simply with the political left and right (Sowell, 115)." Sowell points out that while the unconstrained vision

> is clearly at home on the political left . . . but the constrained vision . . . is also incompatible with the atomism of thoroughgoing libertarians. In the constrained vision, the individual is allowed great freedom precisely in order to serve social ends – which may be no part of the individual's purposes (Sowell, 116).

But Sowell does provide two important criteria for identifying where a particular "vision" may fall within his framework. First, one must look at the locus of discretion, and second, one must identify the mode of discretion. As Sowell explains,

> Social decisions are deliberately made by surrogates on explicitly rationalistic grounds, for the common good, in the unconstrained vision. Social decisions evolve systemically from the interactions of individual discretion, exercised for individual benefit, in the constrained vision – serving the common good only as an unintended consequence . . . (Sowell, 98).

He further states,

> it is only when both the locus of discretion and the mode of discretion consistently reflect the underlying assumptions of either the constrained vision or the unconstrained vision that a given social philosophy can be unambiguously placed under either rubric (Sowell, 103).

In other words, to identify where a particular vision falls within his model, Sowell seeks to ascertain where the decision-making authority resides for that vision, and how such decisions are carried out. For the constrained vision, the decision-making authority primarily resides with autonomous individuals who make agreements with one another, and cooperate to achieve mutually beneficial ends. For the unconstrained perspective, decisions are made by those who have the most "knowledge" or "wisdom" within the society, and their decisions are enforced for the good of the whole community. The constrained view begins with the individual and ends with society. In contrast, the unconstrained view begins with society and ends with the individual.

Sowell's approach of identifying basic philosophical positions, and then examining the ideological and policy implications that they produce is in stark contrast to liberal linguistics professor George Lakoff's methodology. Lakoff begins with the ideological positions of "conservatives" and "liberals", and then searches for a model to adequately explain those positions. Lakoff believes family models can adequately explain the differences between these two perspectives. He argues that conservative and liberal worldviews "center on two opposing models of the family (Lakoff, 33)."

According to Lakoff, conservatives center their world-view on a "strict father" family model. Such a model, writes Lakoff,

> posits a traditional nuclear family, with the father having primary responsibility for supporting and protecting the family as well as the authority to set overall policy . . . and to enforce the rules. The mother has the day-to-day responsibility for the care of the house, raising the children, and upholding the father's authority. Children must respect and obey their parents; by doing so they build character, that is, self-discipline and self-reliance . . . Self-discipline, self-reliance, and respect for legitimate authority are the crucial things children must learn (Lakoff, 33).

The liberal worldview, in contrast, centers on a "nurturant parent" model of the family. In this model,

> Love, empathy, and nurturance are primary, and children become responsible, self-disciplined, and self-reliant through being cared for, respected, and caring for others . . . The obedience of children comes out of their love and respect for their parents and their community, not out of the fear of punishment . . . Good communication is crucial. If their authority is to be legitimate, parents must explain why their decisions serve the cause of protection and nurturance . . . The principal goal of nurturance is for children to be fulfilled and happy in their lives . . . What children need to learn most is empathy for others, the capacity for nurturance, and the maintenance of social ties . . . Raising a child to be fulfilled also requires helping that child develop his or her potential for achievement and enjoyment. That requires respecting the child's own values and allowing the child to explore the range of ideas and options that the world offers (Lakoff, 33-34).

According to Lakoff, conservatives and liberals derive their worldviews from family-based morality, which views "the nation as a family, with the government as a parent."(Lakoff, 35) He believes that this recognition explains the various policy differences between liberals and conservatives.

Strict father morality, according to Lakoff, assumes that individuals are predisposed to act according to their own self-interest. However, they will change their behavior in order to obtain rewards or avoid punishment (Lakoff, 67). States Lakoff,

> The entire Strict Father model is based on the further assumption that the exercise of authority is itself moral; that is, it is moral to reward obedience and punish disobedience . . . the Morality of Reward and Punishment (Lakoff, 67).

In addition, Lakoff argues that an integral part of the strict father model entails a vision of the world as a dangerous and hostile place in which those skills that enable one to survive are highly valued. Hence, in the strict father model, competition is viewed not only as a valuable way to teach certain skills and attitudes, but also as a fundamentally moral concept because it develops necessary survival skills. States Lakoff,

> Competition is therefore moral; it is a condition for the development and sustenance of the right kind of person. Correspondingly, constraints on competition are immoral; they inhibit the development and sustenance of the right kind of person (Lakoff, 69).

Lakoff asserts that those who fall within the strict father model will tend to eschew social welfare programs, support tough punishments for criminals, oppose needle exchange programs, oppose providing benefits to illegal aliens, support tax cuts, and support high spending on national defense. These positions, argues Lakoff, arise out of the moral principles of the strict father model (as outlined above). And they are intricately linked to the model's morality of reward and punishment, as well as the model's emphasis of self-discipline and self-reliance.

The nurturant parent model also has its corresponding moral emphasis. Empathy as morality, according to Lakoff, is the key to understanding the nurturant parent model, and the liberal worldview. It is empathy that leads people to cooperate with one another, to help one another, and to care for one another. According to Lakoff, it is empathy that leads to the nurturing life (Lakoff, 116). Furthermore, according to Lakoff, the nurturing parent model leads people to a "social responsibility" to create a nurturing world. This is view is a complete contrast of the strict father model which views the world "as it is" and imposes no obligation to change it.

The nurturant parent model, argues Lakoff, naturally predisposes its adherents to support social welfare programs, needle exchange programs for drug addicts, and providing benefits to legal and illegal

immigrants. Conversely, they would oppose tax reductions, especially if they were to "benefit the rich," increases in defense spending, and high spending on prisons.

Lakoff argues that that these two models represent two fundamentally different moral views of life. Hence they naturally lead to differing perspectives on various policy matters (Lakoff, 179). If one understands the family-based morality of an individual, asserts Lakoff, then one should be able to understand the policy preferences of that individual as well.

In comparing the two models, it is quite easy to see how Lakoff's family-based approach can fit within Sowell's, contrasting visions. The similarities of Lakoff's nurturant parent model, and Sowell's unconstrained vision are especially striking. And although Sowell tries to avoid simply equating one vision with a particular political ideology, it is not hard to assimilate much of Lakoff's text within the outlines of Sowell's two visions.

However, it is important to note that Sowell's approach makes more allowance for variations than does Lakoff's. This is, in large part, due to Lakoff's starting point being the ideological perspectives of conservatives and liberals. Sowell is careful to avoid such ideological linkages to his "visions," and acknowledges that both the constrained and unconstrained visions have many variations and degrees of consistency. Lakoff's family models are far more tied to the political ideologies of conservatives and liberals.

## THE SURVEY

The survey used to test these two models contains three parts. First were the standard identifier questions. Five questions were used to identify various characteristics of the respondents. The questions covered the age, gender, and political leaning of the respondents, as well as asking how frequently they attended religious services and in how many civic organizations each respondent was a participant.

The second section asked a specific series of questions designed to determine where each respondent would fall within the two models. Because of the dichotomous nature of the models, a simple majority of questions was used to determine to which category the respondents

belonged. This approach will provide more understanding of the overall predictive nature of the models.

The questions asked in this section focused on key aspects of each author's model. For Sowell's model, the questions covered such topics as human nature, how to motivate people to act in the interests of others, the best method of achieving the good society, the nature of freedom, equality, and justice, and the primary cause of crime. From Lakoff's model, questions covered the type of values a family should instill in children, the respondents' attitude regarding competition and cooperation, and the respondents' definition of a "model citizen."

The third section of the survey asked a series of policy questions designed to divide respondents along the conservative-liberal axis. Again, in order to adequately assess the validity of the two models, it was important to maintain the dichotomous nature of the questions. It must be emphasized that the test was of the two basic models, and did not try to assess the amount of variation within the models that might exist.

As was mentioned previously, the test group was comprised of business and community leaders, as well as elected officials within the Oklahoma City Metro Area. These individuals were targeted because of their active involvement within their communities. Such involvement tends to indicate more familiarity and prior thought regarding the topics covered in the survey. Also, their activity within the community was assumed to result in a higher response rate to the survey than many other subgroups. Three hundred twenty surveys were mailed to these various individuals. They were identified through membership lists of local civic organizations, including chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, regional organizations, etc.

It is anticipated that the ideal results would find that those who identified with Sowell's constrained vision would also fall within Lakoff's strict father model, and would have a tendency to answer the policy questions in politically conservative manner. Conversely, those who identified within the unconstrained vision of Sowell should also fall within Lakoff's nurturant parent model, and show a tendency to answer the policy questions from a politically liberal perspective. To the extent that this ideal holds, the models should be compatible with a common understanding of ideological labels.

## RESULTS

One of the most striking aspects of the survey has been a general dislike for the dichotomous nature of the questions on the survey. Many respondents felt the choices offered were too limiting to accurately reflect their views. A sizeable portion of some questions was left unanswered. While this attitude is understandable, the ability to test the two models depended on offering clear, distinct, and opposite choices, as each author presented them. In addition, providing multiple responses would have increased the length of the survey and most likely reduced the response rate.

Of the three hundred twenty surveys mailed to elected officials, and business and community leaders, 39% (125) have been returned. This is a very high response rate that validates targeting the survey to this subgroup, as well as minimizing the length of the survey.

Of those who responded, 1% were between the ages of 18-25, 19% were between 26-40, 52% were between 41-56, 21% were between 56-65, and 7% were over the age of 65. Fifty-two percent of the respondents were male; forty-eight percent were female. Forty-three percent of the respondents were members of 2 or 3 civic organizations, while twenty-seven percent were members of 5 or more civic groups. Seventeen percent of respondents identified themselves as "liberal," 34% stated they were "conservative," and 47% identified themselves as "moderate." Two percent selected the "Other" designation.

However, when examining the model questions, 54% responded in a conservative manner, 34% in a liberal manner, and only 11% were identified as "moderates" according to their responses to the policy questions. While this difference between the self-identifier and the responses to the policy questions is interesting, it must be viewed with a very cautious eye. The survey was designed to force individuals to choose between opposing viewpoints. Therefore, it was likely that there would be a difference between those who identified as "moderates" and how they would answer the policy questions, which were based on a conservative/liberal dichotomy. Also, the determination for whether one was counted as a "liberal," "conservative," or "moderate" from the policy questions was based solely on the number of responses that fell into a particular category. For example, there were eight policy questions,

for one to be counted as a moderate, they would have to answer four questions from a liberal perspective, and four from a conservative perspective to be designated a "moderate," since there were no "moderate" answers provided. Obviously, the likelihood of such a result is lower than if one was to choose one more "liberal" response than the number of "conservative" responses they provided, or vice versa.

Another interesting note about self-identified moderates is the exact division of them between conservative and liberal designations based on their policy responses. In their policy responses, 41% of moderates identified as "liberals" and 41% identified as "conservatives." Nineteen percent of moderates actually responded evenly between the conservative and liberal responses. For the purposes of this examination, they could be said to be the "true moderates."

In evaluating the responses to the model questions, 65% of the respondents fell within Sowell's "constrained vision" (based on answering a simple majority of questions from this perspective), while 26% identified with the "unconstrained vision." Ten percent of the respondents answered the model questions in an evenly mixed manner (6 constrained, 6 unconstrained). However, Lakoff's model was reversed, with 32% of the respondents identifying with the strict father model, while 50% fell within the nurturant parent model. Eighteen percent responded to Lakoff's questions in an exactly even manner.

Of those who fell within Sowell's constrained model, 44% also identified with Lakoff's strict father model. Thirty-six percent fell within Lakoff's nurturant parent model, and 20% of those who identified with the constrained model were evenly divided between Lakoff's two models. However, 84% of those who identified with Sowell's unconstrained model also identified with Lakoff's Nurturant parent model. A mere 6% of those who fell within Sowell's unconstrained model also identified with Lakoff's strict father model. An only slightly higher 9% of those in the unconstrained model fell evenly between Lakoff's two models.

Of those who were evenly divided between Sowell's two models, 27% identified with Lakoff's strict father model, 58% with the nurturant parent model, and 25% were also evenly divided between Lakoff's two models. These figures would indicate a consistency between the two models with a higher correlation existing between the unconstrained and nurturant parent models.

Since this paper is focusing on the compatibility of the models with the ideological self-identification of the respondents, the rest of the analysis will be dedicated to examining the respondents' answers to question number five as compared to their answers to the model and policy questions. We will begin with those who identified themselves as "liberals."

Of those who identified themselves as liberals, 24% fell into Sowell's constrained vision, while 76% fell within the unconstrained model. Similarly, 5% of self-described liberals fell into Lakoff's strict father model, while 86% of liberals identified with his nurturant parent model (9% were evenly split between Lakoff's two models). It would appear that Lakoff's model is slightly more compatible with the respondents' understanding of political liberalism. However, the difference could not be described as significant.

Of those who identified themselves as conservatives, 88% fell within Sowell's constrained model, while only 7% could be assigned the unconstrained view (5% were evenly split between the two models). Lakoff's model also appeared to be compatible with the self-identification of the respondents, with 63% of conservatives identifying with the strict father model and 23% identifying with the nurturant parent model, and 14% being evenly split between the two. When it comes to compatibility with the conservative perspective, Sowell's model seems to have the slight advantage. However, the difference is small enough not to be considered significant.

Unfortunately, the models tend to fail to hold for those who identified themselves as "moderate." This is seen in the fact that while 63% of those who identified as moderates fell within Sowell's constrained model, 56% of moderates fell within Lakoff's nurturant parent model. While Lakoff's model could be viewed as at least nominally reflective of what the moderate response rate should be, Sowell's cannot. And the disparity between the two certainly begs for further investigation. How can a large portion of the same respondents identify with two such divergent perspectives?

When comparing the responses to the policy questions to the model questions and the self-identifier, the models remain compatible with those who identified themselves as conservative or liberal. However, they remain less compatible with those who identified themselves as moderates, especially Sowell's model. Of those who identified

themselves as liberals, 14% answered a majority of the policy questions in a conservative manner, 76% answered a majority in a liberal manner, and 10% were evenly mixed. Of conservatives, 93% answered a majority of the policy questions "conservatively," 5% answered them from a liberal perspective, and 2% were evenly mixed. As mentioned previously, of those who identified themselves as moderates, 41% answered a majority of the policy questions in a conservative manner, 41% answered them as liberals, and 19% were evenly mixed. Again, neither model accurately reflected the actual responses from this group.

What is also interesting from the policy questions is the difference in accuracy in the model questions when compared by the self-identification of the respondents, and their responses to the policy questions. While 76% of those who identified themselves as liberals fell within Sowell's unconstrained model, 86% fell within Lakoff's nurturant parent mode. This would indicate that Lakoff's model was more compatible with those who identified themselves as liberals. However, when examining the policy questions, Sowell's model seems more accurate than Lakoff's, with 76% of those who identified themselves as liberals also answering a majority of the policy questions in this manner – an exact match for those who identified themselves as liberals and fell in Sowell's unconstrained model. It would appear that more respondents fell into Lakoff's nurturant parent model than actually answered the policy questions in a "liberal" manner.

The same shift holds true for conservative respondents. Of those who identified themselves as conservatives, 88% also fell within Sowell's constrained model. This would indicate a very high compatibility between Sowell's model and a common understanding of conservative ideology, since 93% of those who identified as conservatives actually answered the policy questions accordingly. However, the 63% of conservative respondents who fell within Lakoff's strict father model is considerably below the 93% who answered the policy questions in a conservative manner. From a macro perspective, Sowell's model would appear to be slightly more compatible to a common understanding of "conservatism" and "liberalism" than Lakoff's when comparing responses to the model questions with responses to the policy questions.

When one examines the responses to specific questions, some very interesting results are revealed. This is especially true when discovering how those who identified themselves as "moderates" chose

between answers designed on the liberal/conservative axis. For example, question eight asks,

> I believe that when people fail it is because:
> a) people are inherently limited
> b) social conditions keep them from succeeding

Of those who identified themselves as liberals, 38% answered that people fail because of inherent limits (Sowell's "constrained" perspective), while 62% said that individual failure was a result of existing social conditions (Sowell's "unconstrained" perspective). In contrast, 72.5% of "conservative" respondents believed that personal failures are due to the inherent limitations of people, while 27.5% believed that such failures were the result of existing social conditions. Clearly, for those who identified themselves as conservatives or liberals, Sowell's model accurately reflected how they perceived the answer to this question. However, moderates, who had no "moderate response" offered to them, greatly sided with what would be considered the liberal response. In fact, a larger portion of moderates, 65%, selected social conditions as the catalyst to success or failure than did liberals. Only 35% of moderates believed that inherent limitations primarily determined personal success or failure. In this instance, moderates clearly were aligned with liberals, and fell firmly into Sowell's unconstrained model.

However, if question 15 is examined, the opposite results are found. This question asks,

> Crime results from:
> a) social inequalities
> b) flaws in human nature

Of those who identified themselves as liberals, 76.5% answered that crime is primarily a result of social inequalities (unconstrained perspective), while 23.5% stated that crime resulted from human nature (constrained perspective). Not surprisingly, conservatives answered in just the opposite manner. Ninety-eight percent of conservatives responded that crime was a result of the flaws of human nature, while only 2% stated that crime could be attributed to social inequalities. Those who identified themselves as moderates tended to also believe that crime was a result of human flaws, though not to the extent conservatives did.

Sixty-seven percent of moderates identified human flaws as the primary cause of crime, versus 33% who stated that social inequalities were to blame.

Another interesting response from Sowell's model came with question 11. This question asks,

> Law should be:
> a) flexible and easily changed over time to adapt to new situations and information
> b) consistent over time and slow to change in order to provide stability

Seventy-six percent of liberals stated that they believed the law should be flexible, while 23% answered that it should be consistent. Again the "conservative response" was opposite that of liberals. Eighty-eight percent of conservatives responded that the law should be consistent over time, while only 12% stated that the law should be flexible. Moderates, however, were evenly split, with 50% stating that the law should be flexible and 50% stating that it should be consistent.

While the questions from Lakoff's model did not produce any responses in which moderates, or either of the other groups, were evenly divided, these questions revealed a tendency of moderates to answer questions from the nurturant parent (liberal) perspective. For example, question 18 asks,

> The best family is one in which parents emphasize:
> a) respect for authority, obedience, self-discipline and self-reliance
> b) love, empathy, and nurturance

Thirty-two percent of liberals answered that the best family emphasizes respect for authority, obedience, etc. (Lakoff's strict father perspective), while 68% said that the best families emphasize love, empathy, and nurturance (Lakoff's nurturant parent perspective). Again, self-described conservatives had the opposite response, with 65% favoring emphasizing respect for authority, obedience, etc., while 35% preferred an emphasis on love, empathy, and nurturance. Moderates preferred the love, empathy, and nurturance response in the same proportion as liberals – 68% to 32%.

Also, on question 22, which asks,

> The model citizen is someone who is:
> a) self-disciplined, self-reliant, and believes in a system of rewards and punishments
> b) empathetic, helps the disadvantaged, protects the weak, and exhibits self-fulfillment

liberals and moderates tended to answer in the same manner, although to a lesser extent that to question 18. Of liberals, 89.5% (nurturant parent perspective) responded that the best citizen is empathetic, protects the weak, etc., while only 10.5% selected a self-disciplined, self-reliant, etc. (strict father perspective) individual as the best citizen. Similarly, 58% of moderates selected the empathetic and self-fulfilled individual as the ideal citizen as opposed to 43% who selected the self-disciplined, self-reliant, etc. response. Conservatives, not surprisingly, differed completely, with 83% selecting the self-disciplined, self-reliant individual as the best citizen, compared to just 17% choosing the empathetic, self-fulfilled answer.

Again, Lakoff's model would also appear reflective of the conservative/liberal perspectives. However, moderates, across the range of Lakoff's model questions, consistently coincided with the nurturant parent (liberal perspective) model. This is a subject that will be discussed in more detail in the conclusion.

Interestingly enough, however, the policy question results reveal a slight tendency for moderates to prefer the conservative responses. In five of the eight policy questions, self-described moderates chose the conservative answer. A majority of moderates (56%) and conservatives (79%) believe that school vouchers (question 25) "allow freedom of choice and promote the competition that increases quality." Similarly, a majority of moderates and conservatives support capital punishment (question 28) as being "necessary to control crime" (moderates, 57%; conservatives, 76%), teaching moral values in public schools (question 29: moderates, 97%; conservatives, 100%), and believe that the environment is adequately protected by current law (question 30: moderates, 56%; conservatives, 83%). Also, a majority of both moderates (54%) and conservatives (80.5%) believe that the rich should "pay the same tax rate as the middle class"(question 31).

However, on the three questions that the majority of moderates and liberals find agreement, it appears stronger than the agreement found between conservatives and moderates. For instance, both moderates (68%) and liberals (95%) believe that "access to basic health care is a right"(question 24). Likewise, a majority of moderates (61%) and liberals (86%) believe that "more gun control laws are necessary" (question 27). And when answering as to what they believe about the issue of abortion (question 26), a majority of liberals (86%) and moderates (77%) answered that they believe abortion is a woman's right and should not be restricted.

Finally, in examining the specific questions, it must be noted that several of the model questions, and one policy question received the same responses regardless of the respondents' ideological identification. A majority of liberals (100%), conservatives (95%), and moderates (93%) believe that the "best method for motivating individuals to act in the interests of others is providing incentives for such behavior" (question 7). Similarly, the majority of respondents believe that "addressing social problems like poverty and illiteracy requires finding solutions and carrying them out"(question 9: liberals, 76%; conservatives, 62%; moderates, 70.5%), that freedom is experienced "when the means of achieving my goals are available" (question 12: liberals, 84%; conservatives, 90.5%; moderates, 97%), and that equality occurs "when everyone has the same opportunity" (question 14: liberals, 90.5%; conservatives, 98%; moderates, 95%).

Likewise, regardless of ideological perspective, a majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that it is important to "develop a nurturing attitude in children" (question 20: liberals, 95%; conservatives, 95%; moderates, 100%), that the most important value to teach a child is "responsibility" (question 23: liberals, 52%; conservatives, 74%; moderates, 74%), and that the "public schools should teach certain fundamental moral values" (question 29: liberals, 86%; conservatives, 100%; moderates, 97%).

For the model questions, the consistency of responses regardless of ideological perspective is an indication that these specific questions are not reflective of a particular ideology. Thus they do not have a predictive value. On these specific topics, either the model is somewhat faulty, or the question should be rephrased to provide a better divide between ideological perspectives.

For question 29, it is interesting to note that the vast majority of respondents, regardless of ideological label, believe it is important to teach fundamental moral values in public schools. One would have to assume that a division would occur between the ideologies when specific values are discussed. Certainly, this question is unreliable as an indicator of ideological perspective.

## CONCLUSION

Although certain specific questions within the models have been identified as lacking any correspondence to a particular ideological perspective, on the whole, the models are reflective of the three ideologies to which they were compared. In the aggregate, each model has a certain predictive value with the respondents' ideological perspectives. For those who identified with Sowell's constrained perspective, and Lakoff's strict father perspective, they also tended to answer the policy questions in a conservative manner, as Sowell and Lakoff predict they would. The results are similar for liberal respondents who identified with the unconstrained perspective and the nurturant parent perspective. Both liberals and conservatives displayed a strong amount consistency in their responses. This consistency tends to validate a portion of the original hypothesis.

Moderate respondents tend to cause a disparity between the models, as a majority of moderates identified with both Sowell's constrained perspective and Lakoff's nurturant parent perspective. And, as was previously noted, moderates tended to answer the policy questions in a slightly more conservative than liberal manner. This would, at first glance, indicate that Sowell's model might have a more accurate reflection of the moderate perspective. However, since self-described moderates evenly split their policy preferences between liberal and conservative answers (41% each), it appears that neither model is wholly accurate at predicting moderate responses. This was not unexpected considering the dichotomous nature of the survey. And both authors emphasized that there exist many variations between the two extremes that are used as the base models.

It must be remembered that this survey was not intended to be a reflection of the opinions of the general population in Oklahoma, or even in the Metro Oklahoma City area. Instead, it was designed to provide a measure of understanding into the political perspectives of community leaders within the central Oklahoma area. This group was targeted for three reasons. First, these individuals are active in the community in which they live, as well as in broader communities. Because of this they exert a larger influence on policy makers, since they shape and represent the opinions of others. They are the "movers and shakers" who "make things happen." Therefore, it is important to understand how and what they think about social and political matters.

Second, because they are active in their communities, it is assumed they have spent a greater amount of time thinking about, and involving themselves in, the issues covered in this survey. As community leaders, they are looked to for guidance regarding various public policy issues. The reasoning that produces their political perspectives should be of interest to both academics and political strategists.

Third, it was assumed that these individuals would be more likely to take the time to fill out the survey and return it. The high response rate to the survey would seem to substantiate such an assumption. Such individuals constantly seek out ways to influence their communities, even to the extent of filling out the various surveys that come throughout any given year.

Also, it is important to understand that the survey was not designed solely to identify the opinions of the respondents, but to test two philosophical models as well. To the extent that the majority of respondents answered the model questions and policy questions consistently with one another and with their self-applied ideological label, both models appear to be quite compatible with a "common" understanding of such labels. Both Sowell and Lakoff appear to have developed models that can, in some measure, predict the ideological preferences of the respondents of this survey.

However, it is clear that there exists a need for further research. One suggestion would be to examine each model independently. Because of the sophisticated constructs each author has developed, and because of the constraints inherent in designing a survey that will receive an adequate response rate, each model could be more fully examined through separate studies.

Also, many of the model questions could be followed up with a series of their own specific policy questions. Such an approach should lead to a more precise understanding of the reasoning used by respondents to decide their positions on various issues.

A final suggestion would be to take the political self-identifier and simply compare it to a broader range of public policy issues. Such an examination would certainly help to determine the consistency in thinking of the respondents, as well as verifying the relevant current ideological labels continue to possess. Although some have argued that ideological labels such as "conservative" and "liberal" are losing their relevance, this survey would indicate that they remain useful in describing the overall perspective a given individual has towards public policy issues. Nevertheless, it is important to continue to verify the relevance of such labels

Although the results of this examination may have limited applications, they are a beginning to a process that has been neglected. Many writers offer their thoughts on how and why people think certain ways about public policy issues. However, rarely is an attempt made to actually measure and test these hypotheses. If we are to weed out those ideas that have little relevance or compatibility to current political thought, and more fully develop those that do, such attempts should be conducted.

Without adequately testing the various constructs offered to explain ideological preferences, we are left with little more than a variety of often-conflicting hypotheses. While such ideas are often interesting, their value lies in their ability to reflect, predict, and explain political thought and behavior. These are determined only through adequate testing and measurement. Therefore, it is hoped that more attempts will be made to verify such constructs as offered by Sowell and Lakoff.

## REFERENCES

Lakoff, George. 1996. *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know that Liberals Don't*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sowell, Thomas. 1987. *A Conflict of Visions: Ideological Origins of Political Struggles*. New York: William Morrow & Co.

## APPENDIX A
## THE SURVEY

### Survey: Political Views

Directions: Select the answer that seems to you to be most accurate. Record your answer on the Scantron form provided. Thank you.

1. My age group is
   a) 18-25
   b) 26-40
   c) 41-55
   d) 56-65
   e) over 65

2. I am
   a) male
   b) female

3. I attend religious services
   a) regularly (2 or more times per week)
   b) frequently (once per week, on average)
   c) occasionally (once a month)
   d) seldom (less than once per month)
   e) never

4. I am a member of ____ civic organizations
   a) 1
   b) 2-3
   c) 4-5
   d) more than 5

5. I consider myself to be a
   a) liberal
   b) conservative
   c) moderate
   d) other

6. On the whole, I find that
   a) people are limited in their willingness to act in the interests of the whole community
   b) people are generally willing to act in the interests of the whole community

7. The best method for motivating individuals to act in the interests of others is
   a) requiring this behavior
   b) providing incentives for such behavior

8. I believe that when people fail it is because
   a) people are inherently limited
   b) social conditions keep them form succeeding

9. Addressing social problems like poverty and illiteracy requires
   a) finding solutions and carrying them out
   b) considering trade-offs in which the costs and benefits to society must be carefully weighed

10. Achieving a good society requires
    a) allowing social processes to evolve over generations into political, economic, and legal institutions that address society's needs
    b) careful planning and government intervention

11. Law should be
    a) flexible and easily changed over time to adapt to new situations and information
    b) consistent over time and slow to change in order to provide stability

12. I experience freedom when
    a) I have no constraints on my behavior
    b) the means of achieving my goals are available

13. Justice results in a particular case when
    a) a fair outcome is achieved
    b) fair rules and procedures have been observed

14. Equality occurs when
    a) everyone has the same opportunity
    b) everyone has the same benefits

15. Crime results from
    a) social inequalities
    b) flaws in human nature

16. The free market, without government interference,
    a) fairly and effectively distributes goods
    b) unfairly and ineffectively distributes goods

17. Social justice demands that
    a) individuals enjoy at least a minimal share of the benefits of society
    b) society's rules be applied fairly without guarantee of a particular outcome

18. The best family is one in which parents emphasize
    a) respect for authority, obedience, self-discipline and self-reliance
    b) love, empathy, and nurturance

19. With the statement "Competition is moral," I
    a) strongly agree
    b) somewhat agree
    c) am undecided
    d) somewhat disagree
    e) strongly disagree

20. With the statement "It is important to develop a nurturing attitude in children," I
    a) strongly agree
    b) somewhat agree
    c) am undecided
    d) somewhat disagree
    e) strongly disagree

21. With the statement, "Cooperation is more moral than competition," I
    a) strongly agree
    b) somewhat agree
    c) am undecided
    d) somewhat disagree
    e) strongly disagree

22. The model citizen is someone who is
    a) self-disciplined, self-reliant, and believes in a system of rewards and punishments
    b) empathetic, helps the disadvantaged, protects the weak, and exhibits self-fulfillment

23. Which of the following is the most important to teach a child:
    a) empathy
    b) self-discipline
    c) self-appreciation
    d) responsibility

24. Access to basic health care
    a) is a right
    b) is a privilege, not a right

25. Vouchers to allow parents to select their children's schools
    a) allow freedom of choice and promote the competition that increases quality
    b) undermine the public school system that guarantees education for all

26. The ability to have an abortion
    a) is a woman's right and should not be restricted
    b) is a woman's right but should be discouraged, not restricted
    c) is not a woman's right but should be discouraged, not restricted
    d) is not a woman's right and should be restricted

27. More gun control laws are
    a) necessary
    b) not necessary

28. Capitol punishment is
    a) necessary to control crime
    b) not necessary to control crime

29. Public schools
    a) should teach children certain fundamental moral values
    b) should not teach children certain fundamental moral values

30. Currently, the environment is
    a) adequately protected by law
    b) not adequately protected by law

31. The tax system should be designed so that
    a) the rich pay the same tax rate as the middle class
    b) the rich pay a higher tax rate than the middle class

## APPENDIX B

**Ideological Preferences Compared to Model Responses**

| | Liberal | Conservative | Moderate | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Constrained | 24% | 88% | 63% | 50% |
| Unconstrained | 76% | 7% | 22% | 0% |
| Mixed | 0% | 5% | 15% | 50% |
| | | | | |
| Strict Father | 5% | 63% | 20% | 0% |
| Nurturing Parent | 86% | 23% | 56% | 100% |
| Mixed | 9% | 14% | 24% | 0% |

## APPENDIX C

### Ideological Preferences Compared to Policy Rreferences

| | Liberal | Conservative | Moderate | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Liberal | 76% | 5% | 41% | 50% |
| Conservative | 17% | 93% | 41% | 50% |
| Mixed | 10% | 2% | 19% | 0% |

# MEDICAID REFORM IN OKLAHOMA: LEGISLATIVE INFORMATION SOURCES ON A COMPLICATED ISSUE

SHAD SATTERTHWAITE
University of Oklahoma

**How do legislators** make up their minds when voting on complex issues such as health care reform? This paper seeks to answer that question and provide insight as to which sources legislators rely on for information. This paper uses a research strategy similar to that used by John Kingdon (1989) in his study of congressional voting decisions and David Ray's 1982 study of voting cues in state legislatures. The research is based on the Oklahoma Legislature's adoption of a managed care system for its Medicaid program in 1993. The data for this study are drawn from a survey sent to members of the Oklahoma Legislature and interviews with 25 legislators and others involved in the policy process.

In the early 1990s, states began launching efforts to reform their Medicaid programs. Federal mandates in the 1980s and 1990s required states to expand Medicaid eligibility. In Oklahoma, the number of Medicaid recipients increased by over 18 percent between 1992 and 1993 (Oklahoma Health Care Authority). Many states, under tremendous economic and political pressure, sought to change the way Medicaid was administered. Oklahoma's legislature voted to adopt a managed care system for those receiving Medicaid benefits in 1993. It was one of the first states to do so, and thus it did not have a great deal of experience from which to draw.

In the Oklahoma case, key legislators played an important role in the passage of SB 76, the bill that would move Medicaid patients into a managed care system. In 1993, the Oklahoma Legislature considered more than 1400 bills. Many of these bills were rather complex, including SB 76. While health care reform was a major issue, there were other matters that the Legislature took up. Like members of Congress, legislators are busy and do not have time to consider every bill individually. Kingdon (1989) noted that it would be nearly impossible to devote careful study to bills that come up for a vote and still have time for committee work, constituent services, travel, and various sorts of meetings. To account for this, legislators seek shortcuts in gaining information and deciding how to vote.

Several studies (Matthews and Stimson, 1975; Uslaner and Weber, 1977; Ray, 1982 and Kingdon, 1989) have sought to identify sources which legislators rely on for information: fellow law makers, party leadership, the congressman's staff, constituents, the executive branch, organized interest groups, and personal reading. Ray (1982) included formal committee reports with those noted above. Both Kingdon and Ray found that fellow legislators served as important cue sources. Ray's research suggests that fellow legislators are consistently considered important, but that the relative importance of cue sources varies from legislature to legislature.

The studies noted above have sought to examine sources of information in general. Ray's (1982) study illustrates that sources differ among legislatures. While the sources used by Kingdon and Ray are applicable to most situations, the degree to which legislators rely on those sources may not vary from state to state, but it may also vary depending on the type of legislation being considered.

In order to determine the degree to which legislators in Oklahoma rely on various sources of information, a survey was developed and sent to all of the legislators who were in the 43rd Legislature (the Legislature that considered Medicaid reform in 1993), and currently in office. Oklahoma's Legislature is composed of 48 members in the State Senate and 101 members in the House of Representatives. Of the 149 legislators, 131 were in office in 1993. The response rate was 32 out of 131, or 24 percent.

The survey was sent out with a cover letter explaining the research and briefly detailing the bill concerning managed care. The survey asked

legislators to rate the importance of a series of information sources concerning managed care. The scores ranged from "1," or "not at all" to "7," or "a great deal." The survey found that among all of the sources listed, legislative analysts tended to be relied on more as a source of information more than any other source. The results were summarized in Table 1. Other legislators ranked second as an important source of information, closely ahead of medical experts and independent analysts.

## LEGISLATIVE ANALYSTS

Sabatier and Whitman (1985) developed two and three staged models of legislative decision-making. They argue that in a two-stage model, information flows from agencies and interest groups to specialist legislators and their non-specialist colleagues. Larger states, or states with "well-developed staff systems" are better suited to the three-stage model. The three-stage model adds a third step, with information flowing from the environment to committee staff, next to specialist legislators,

**TABLE 1**

**Rank Order of Managed Health Care Information Sources**

| Information Source | Score |
|---|---|
| Legislative Analysts | 5.15 |
| Fellow Legislators | 4.78 |
| Medical Experts | 4.71 |
| Independent Analysts | 4.65 |
| Other Interest Groups | 3.34 |
| Personal Staff | 3.21 |
| Federal or State Agencies | 3.18 |
| Other | 0.75 |

A higher score represents a greater degree of reliance.

Data compiled by author.

and then on to their non-specialist colleagues. The committee staff is generally composed of policy experts that can provide a great deal of information for the legislators on the committee.

Based on analysis by Morgan et al. (1991), we would contend that the two-stage model is more appropriate for Oklahoma. In their analysis, the authors claim that the Oklahoma Legislature's 27th place ranking among states in its ability to acquire, assimilate and handle information is primarily due to the size and resources of the legislative staff. Members of the Oklahoma Legislature have no personal staff except for someone to handle clerical duties in each legislator's office. Each house has nearly 100 staff members, many of whom are policy or fiscal analysts. These analysts generally focus on a primary field of policy, such as education, transportation, health, etc. Many of those interviewed indicated that legislators often develop a great working relationship with these analysts. Legislators, who work with analysts in a specific policy field, often rely on them as a source of information.

The complexity of a particular policy may dictate to what extent consulting firms will be used. Most bills do not require outside analysts to make recommendations. In their study, Sabatier and Whitman (1985) found few instances where consulting firms were considered as a primary source of information. Many involved in Oklahoma's reform effort, including Oklahoma's governor, David Walters, did not want to involve outside consultants, believing that Medicaid reform could be handled internally, relying on legislative analysts. Legislative leaders, however, felt that outside experts would be required, and they allocated funds for that purpose. Referring to the need of consultants in this case, Representative Tommy Thomas commented:

> We don't often hire consultants, but this was a big change. We were swimming in new waters, and mistakes could have been costly. We were dealing with a big Medicaid budget. It was important to have additional expertise. Other times we do our homework and just try to work it out.

Despite the contracting of an outside consultant group, Oklahoma legislators work with legislative analysts on a daily basis and have developed a relationship with them that they could not have had with independent analysts. This contact and the trust held by legislators for

their policy analysts, could account for one of the reasons why legislative analysts were relied on so much.

## SPECIALIST LEGISLATORS

Specialist legislators have been defined as "trusted colleagues who are knowledgeable on this particular issue under consideration" (Matthews and Stimson, 1975; Sabatier and Whitman, 1985; Kingdon, 1989). These specialists are primarily defined by their position, either as a committee chair or as a senior ranking committee member on the committee considering the particular piece of legislation.

There is no doubt that legislators take cues from specialist legislators. They may also turn to them for advice or ask for their opinion on certain issues within their realm of expertise. While the literature generally defines specialist legislators by virtue of their position, this study finds that the definition of a specialist legislator can be refined even further. Former Senator Edmund S. Muskie once commented:

> People have all sorts of conspiratorial theories on what constitutes power in the Senate. It has little to do with the size of the state you come from. Or the source of your money. Or committee chairmanships, although that certainly gives you a kind of power. But the real power up there comes from doing your work and knowing what you're talking about. Power is the ability to change someone's mind....The most important thing in the Senate is credibility. *Credibility! That* is power (Davidson and Oleszek 1998, p. 265).

Specialist legislators can be seen as either:

1) true specialists, or
2) specialists by default. In the Oklahoma Legislature, there were only a handful of "true specialists" on health care policy when a managed care delivery system was approved for Medicare patients.

To distinguish between "true specialists" and "specialists by default," we asked legislators, legislative staff, and those in the medical profession

whom they considered to be experts in health care policy. Nine names came up the most frequently. We were particularly struck by the response of two legislators, Senator Monson and former House member, Calvin Anthony, when we asked this question. Senator Monson replied "nobody." Representative Anthony said,

> There really wasn't anyone with the background when I left. Angela Monson went over to the Senate, and this made it hard for me to leave.

Both Senator Monson and Representative Anthony had extensive backgrounds in health care. Senator Monson was the Executive Director for the Oklahoma Health Care Project prior to her election to the legislature. As a representative in the House and later as a senator, she was a member of the National Academy for State Health Policy and served as vice-chair on the Health Committee for the National Conference of State Legislators. Representative Anthony was a pharmacist and owned his own pharmacy. He was the director of the Stillwater Medical Center and president of the Oklahoma Pharmaceutical Association. He also served as chairman for the National Association of Retail Druggists. He met with President Clinton and provided input for the National Health Security Act.

True specialists can be distinguished by their background in health care policy or, for that matter, any other complicated policy area such as tax law or banking. They can perhaps also be distinguished somewhat by the ratio of bills in their given policy area to be the total number of bills that they sponsor. Senator Monson said, "If you look at the bills I sponsor, 85 percent of them are health care related." To identify the true specialists in health care policy, this study looked at the nine most frequently mentioned members of the legislature as experts on the subject, and the bills they sponsored over a four-year period. The bills cover two legislative sessions between 1993 and 1996. The number of health care related bills is compared to the total number of bills sponsored or co-sponsored by each legislator. The results are summarized in Table 2.

Arbitrarily, one can say that a true specialist will sponsor health care policy related bills more than 50 percent of the time. Using that rule of thumb, only three legislators would qualify as "true specialists." They are: Calvin Anthony, Angela Monson and Tommy Thomas. One

**TABLE 2**

**Specialist Legislators on Health Care Policy 1993-1996**

| Legislator | 1993 health/total | % | 1994 health/total | % | 1995 health/total | % | 1996 health/total | % | cumulative health/total | % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anthony (H, D) | 1/1 | 100 | 2/3 | 66 | 7/10 | 70 | 12/17 | 71 | 22/31 | 71 |
| Boyd (H, D) | 1/3 | 33 | 6/15 | 40 | 1/7 | 14 | 2/5 | 33 | 10/30 | 33 |
| Cain (S, D) | 4/12 | 33 | 10/19 | 52 | 8/21 | 38 | 7/22 | 32 | 29/74 | 39 |
| Deutschendorf (H, D) | NA | | NA | | 0/1 | 0 | 1/2 | 50 | 1/3 | 33 |
| Hendrick (S, R) | 7/35 | 20 | 5/37 | 13 | 6/38 | 16 | 5/30 | 17 | 23/140 | 16 |
| Monson (S, D) | 3/7 | 42 | 11/15 | 73 | 20/35 | 57 | 23/46 | 50 | 57/103 | 55 |
| Robinson (S, D) | 3/12 | 25 | 6/13 | 46 | 10/22 | 45 | 10/22 | 45 | 26/69 | 42 |
| Seikel (H, D) | 3/14 | 21 | 3/15 | 20 | 4/22 | 18 | 5/24 | 21 | 15/65 | 23 |
| Thomas (H, D) | 3/5 | 60 | 2/7 | 28 | 6/7 | 85 | 3/4 | 75 | 14/23 | 60 |

H=House, S=Senate, D=Democrat, R=Republican

Date compiled by author

can also look at the volume of bills sponsored. Representative Thomas sponsored a total of 23 bills compared to Anthony's 31 and Monson's 103. That measure alone, however, isn't sufficient. Out of the three, only Monson and Anthony fit the description of true specialists, both with backgrounds in health care.

Thomas and the other six make up a second category of specialist legislators that I refer to as "specialists by default." This type of specialist is categorized as such because of the legislative positions they occupy. Most of the time these are leadership seats on specific committees. This is not to say that a true specialist cannot be a committee chair or ranking committee member, but a true specialist is defined by more than a position.

Take Representative Tommy Thomas for example. Representative Thomas was elected to the legislature in 1988. He felt most qualified and wanted to focus on three primary areas: corrections, agriculture, and transportation. He had a degree from Oklahoma State University in Agriculture Education, and he has been in real estate and the insurance business. Near the end of his first term, Dan Mentzer, chair of the House Human Services Committee passed away, and Representative Thomas was chosen in his second term to succeed him on the committee. The following year, Larry Gish, chair of the Human Services Appropriations and Budget Subcommittee died. Again, the majority party selected Thomas to fill the vacancy. Within a year, Thomas found himself chairing two of the most influential committees dealing with Medicaid. Along with his counterpart in the Senate, he served on the Interim Task Force on State Welfare and Medicaid Reform as an *ex officio* member in 1992.

Representative Thomas was considered by many to be an "expert" in health care policy. However, as he noted in an interview, he did not feel qualified when he was appointed to serve a chair over the two committees that handled Medicaid. "That's not the path I would have chosen, but it put me in a position where I was quickly looked at by the leadership," he said. Thomas wanted to focus on other areas, but happened to get into health care policy "by default."

Thomas's counterpart in the Senate was Bernest Cain. Like Thomas did not have a background in health care. He was elected to the legislature in 1979 and became involved with Medicaid more for ideological reasons. His primary concern was the needs of low-income

people. While his peers frequently mention him as an expert on health policy, he hinted at his inexperience; "I'm not as knowledgeable as people think I am." Because he chaired the Human Resources Committee in the Senate, he was appointed to serve as an *ex officio* member of the Interim Task Force on State Welfare and Medicaid Reform.

Legislators take cues from specialists on health care. However, party also is an important factor in making decisions. Members of the Republican party, for example, are more likely to look to a Republican expert on health care when voting. One representative said that in some instances, she would "rather turn to interest groups for information rather than consult someone in the other party." Of the nine most frequently mentioned experts on health care, only one is a Republican. Other specialists are aware of this and, as a matter of strategy, will try to get that member on board, knowing that his single vote will translate into votes from other Republicans. On the issue of managed care, specialists in the Oklahoma Legislature may support it for different reasons. There have been no studies to indicate whether managed care is more of a Democratic than a Republican issue. Referring to managed care, Senate analyst Tom Walls noted that it seemed like a bipartisan issue in a Democratically controlled legislature; "Republicans like it for its fiscal restraint and I know some Democrats who don't like it because they worry that the services will be bad." At an early task force meeting on Medicaid reform, Democrat Senator Cain made it clear from his standpoint that the objective of the task force was to find a way to control costs so as not to cut back on services or eligibility. The idea that conservatives like managed care due to its cost savings and liberals like it because they see it as a way to improve access for the services, may explain why party control did not turn out to be a significant factor in Oklahoma's case. If managed care were a bipartisan issue, then it should not matter whether or not Democrats controlled the legislature and/or the executive branch.

Senate Bill 76 passed easily through the legislature. The vote was 44-1 in the Senate and 92-5 in the House. As Representative Mark Seikel remarked, "It was a slam dunk deal." Part of the reason for the bill's success could have been its appeal to both sides of the aisle. Another reason it was perhaps adopted with little change was its complex nature. The complexity meant that the opinions of specialists in health care policy would carry a great deal of weight. Referring to the Medicaid

reform bill, Seikel commented,

> There were not even five people out there who understood what was going on, and those of who did still were not sure. We didn't know if it would work or not.

## MEDICAL EXPERTS

Medicaid providers have a political advantage over recipients. They are generally wealthier, better educated, and are more likely to vote and contribute to their professional organizations. Health care providers belong to several associations and are very influential in the policy making process. In addition, they provide a service that is very much sought after. Policy makers need the cooperation of health care providers for the implementation of any Medicaid program (Kronebusch 1997).

In terms of political participation in the decision making process, the Oklahoma experience is consistent with the literature. However, while stakeholders were represented, the process was not adversarial. Issues were discussed and compromises were reached. As one task force member said, "Everyone wins in a plan like this" (Oklahoma Legislative Reporter, 1992).

The makeup of the task force reflected those affected by Medicaid, with the exception of consumers who were poor or those with disabilities. On the 15-member panel, three members represented nursing home interests; hospitals, physicians and pharmacists each had a representative; and there were two aging advocates. Those who were the most politically active or politically visible were granted more access in the decision making process. Not surprisingly, the nursing home industry, a big stakeholder in Medicaid had the best representation. Although an official in the Department of Human Services pointed this out, there were no changes made. According to some, the nursing home lobby is one of the most powerful lobbies in Oklahoma. They contribute heavily to campaigns and they have several registered lobbyists. The interests of other health care providers, such as hospitals and physicians were also represented.

The health care community took a more active political role in general during this time. For example, between 1992 and 1993, the Commission on Oklahoma Health Care conducted a series of town

meetings to discuss possible health care reform options. Attendees were asked to fill out a survey so that the commission could better assess the health care needs of Oklahomans. In all, 409 adults filled out the questionnaire in 1992 and 405 the following year. The survey included personal information such as education level and profession. In 1992, 42 percent of the respondents were health care professionals and 6 percent noted that their spouse's occupation was health care related. In 1993, the percentage of health care professionals responding to the survey climbed to 49 percent and nearly 10 percent of those surveyed had a spouse in the same profession (Commission on Oklahoma Health Care 1992, 1993).

The law creating the task force specified that consumer interests should be represented, but it did not go as far as stating which interests these would be. The consumer delegates, as it turned out, were Boyd Talley and Vivian Smith, both aging advocates. No one represented poor families or the disabled.

Although research suggests that stakeholders become involved for political reasons, there is another possible explanation in the Oklahoma case. The explanation doesn't necessarily contradict group political theory, but in this case it can perhaps be a complement to it. Those interviewed on the task force felt that they were selected to serve on the panel, not because of whom they represented, but because of their expertise in the given area. In other words, they saw their job primarily as providers of information, rather than as defenders of their industry. Expertise in the health care delivery system is another political advantage health care providers enjoy. Medicaid recipients generally do not have the ability to contribute in the same way.

The Oklahoma case suggests that larger, organized groups with high levels of political recognition do indeed have more political leverage than smaller groups with little if any resources. Senator Ben Robinson frequently noted, "Medicaid money doesn't go to the recipients, it goes to the doctors." The primary mechanism for developing the new managed care program was the interim task force. While the task force consisted of analysts, specialist legislators, and medical experts, health care providers largely dominated it. Health care providers have an advantage over health care consumers; and among health care consumers, the elderly have an advantage over disabled or poor Medicaid recipients.

## INDEPENDENT ANALYSTS

This study already noted that Kingdon (1989) identified "fellow legislators" as a possible cue source. Ray (1982) went a step further and distinguished "committee reports" as a subcategory of "fellow legislators." Ray felt that this distinction was necessary based on cues he encountered in his study. He quoted one legislator as saying; "Well, I hate to admit it, but I find myself relying on committee reports more and more, and on legislators less and less."

The plan to move Oklahoma's Medicaid population into managed care was drawn up by the Interim Task Force on State Welfare and Medicaid Reform. The Task Force's report served as a basis for SB 76. The report was developed with a lot of input from consultants at Peat Marwick. Many legislators when deciding how to vote for the bill also considered this report. It may be one reason why "independent analysts" ranked nearly as high on the survey concerning information sources as "fellow legislators" and "medical experts." While the report of the task force may not have been a committee report in the technical sense, it was the only report on managed care and Medicaid. The report can be considered an information source stemming from fellow legislators who served on the task force.

It is probable that whatever recommendations the task force proposed, as long as they were within reason, would have been adopted. The independent consultant team of Peat Marwick then, had a great deal of input into a policy decision. The task force based its recommendations largely on Arizona's managed care system. It is difficult to speculate what the outcome may have been if another consultant group received the contract. For example, many members of the task force wanted to award the contract to Lewin-ICF. The Lewin group had a great deal of experience working with Oregon's legislature in establishing a managed care program. Lewin's proposal was largely based on the Oregon model.

It appears that one reason why Peat Marwick ended up the successful bidder was the consultants' ability to draw parallels between Arizona and Oklahoma. This appealed to many members of the task force as well as legislators. They noted that both states were relatively large, each having two major cosmopolitan centers with scattered rural areas. Demographically, the populations were also similar. Each state

had a university hospital that served as a safety net, treating large numbers of Medicaid patients. The hospital in Tucson was free standing, and Oklahoma considered following a similar path.

Many legislators felt that the Arizona experience provided a useful model. They were impressed by the relatively low inflation of health care costs within the Medicaid program. They also considered the level of Medicaid consumer satisfaction, which was high in relationship to other states. And they thought that since the system had been around for more than ten years, that most of the bugs had been worked out.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are consistent with the literature. The research suggests that legislators look to fellow legislators, analysts, and medical experts as a cue source when voting on health care reform. This was more of less the case in Kingdon's (1989) work on the U.S. House of Representatives and Ray's 1982 study of legislatures in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania.

In Oklahoma's case, specialist legislators played a key role. On a complicated policy issue such as managed care, these so called specialists were very influential. Many legislators looked to them for guidance and valued their opinions. The bill was passed by an overwhelming majority, and there was little, if any opposition. As the discussion concerning specialist legislators illustrated, legislators are more likely to trust in a specialist that is a member of their own political party. In the case of managed care, all specialists were on board. The concept of managed care is also embraced by both Democrats and Republicans alike. A bill that receives bipartisan support is less likely to draw fire from party leaders on either side. Stakeholders in health care, or medical experts, were also able to furnish input. It is not surprising that health care providers were more involved than health care consumers in the Medicaid system. Like specialist legislators, consultants can wield a great deal of influence when it comes to complicated policy issues. In the end, Oklahoma's legislature largely adopted the recommendations of the Peat Marwick consulting group. The health care experts in the legislature, of course, endorsed these recommendations.

## REFERENCES

Commission on Oklahoma Health Care. 1992. *Report to the Governor.* November. Oklahoma City, OK.

Commission on Oklahoma Health Care. 1993. *Report to the Legislature and Governor.* December. Oklahoma City, OK.

Davidson, Roger H. and Walter J. Oleszek. 1998. *Congress and Its Members.* 5th ed Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Kingdon, John W. 1989. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions.* 3rd ed. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Kronebusch, Karl. 1997. Medicaid and the Politics of Groups: Recipients, Providers, and Policy Making. *Journal of Health Politics, Policy and Law* 22:839-878.

Matthews, Donald, and James A Stimson. 1975. *Nonnal Decision-Making in the US. House of Representatives.* New York: Wiley.

Morgan, David R., Robert E. England, and George C. Humphreys. 1991. *Oklahoma Politics and Policies.* Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.

Ray, David. 1982. The Sources of Voting Cues in Three State Legislatures. *Journal of Politics* 44:1074-1087.

Sabatier, Paul A. and David Whiteman. 1985. Legislative Decision Making and Substantive Policy Information: Models of Information Flow. *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 10:395-421.

Uslaner, Eric, and Ronald Weber. 1977. *Patterns of Decision-Making in State Legislatures.* New York: Praeger.

## POLITICAL SCIENCE AND TEACHING

In addition to its usual offering of scholarly research relating to Oklahoma politics and policy, the editors of *Oklahoma Politics* have again sought, in this volume, to provide a wider forum for topics relating to education. Many of us, particularly in the regional and community colleges, have felt that there ought to be a regular space made available for topical discussions of current issues in educational politics and pedagogy. Accordingly, this issue represents the second year that *Oklahoma Politics* includes a section on education issues of interest to an Oklahoma readership.

This year, two contributions address important topics relating to any system of higher education: faculty salary and grade inflation. Terry Garrett and Geoffrey Peterson look at the variability in faculty salaries across Oklahoma colleges and universities, as well as across departments. Grant Aguirre, in a research note, reviews arguments about the causes of grade inflation and offers a brief glance at the possible relationship between the size of state education systems and their vulnerability to grade inflation.

The editors of *Oklahoma Politics* hope that these submissions will prompt a greater number of efforts for this section next year. In particular the editors encourage prospective writers to make joint proposals on common topics that would give their contributions more thematic coherence. The editors of *Oklahoma Politics* remain receptive to all reasonable suggestions.

# YOU GET YOURS, I'LL GET MINE: A POLICY ANALYSIS OF FACULTY SALARIES FOR THE PROFESSORATE IN OKLAHOMA

TERENCE M. GARRETT
University of Texas Pan-American

GEOFFREY D. PETERSON
University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire

**The authors demonstrate the importance** of faculty salary remuneration as it reflects Oklahoma's commitment to higher education. The state has a history of poor compensation for faculty in general and institutions have wide variation in salaries within their own walls. The problem is exacerbated further by the discrepancies between salaries of faculty members at comparable institutions *doing similar work* despite the departments where they may be located. There are differences between the state's public flagship universities (i.e., the University of Oklahoma and Oklahoma State University) and the smaller "regional" universities that are ostensibly designed to serve students primarily in more rural and accessible settings. The authors have limited their analysis to 'regional' universities in the state in order to provide a concise and parsimonious presentation and to compare institutions with similar missions. Finally, the authors will analyze higher education as it is presented locally and nationally by university administrators. The authors ask the rhetorical question: Are data sets presented to public policy makers truly reflective of the reality faced by the affected professorate? The authors conclude that the answer is "no." This paper is important

for administrators, faculty and potential faculty who may want to give further consideration to the higher education employment situation in Oklahoma.

There is a discrepancy in the salaries paid to the professorate in Oklahoma. This employment aspect may not be news to those who have been working in one of the state's institutions for any length of time. However, the degree to which there is a discrepancy between ranks, within universities, and across disciplines, may be surprising to faculty and university administrators alike and is worthy of scrutiny. Faculty remuneration and how it is distributed in public institutions has a direct bearing on how equitable the higher education system is. As part of its political culture, Oklahoma is a *low tax, low service* state. In order to begin to understand some of the complexity of how the professorate is valued in the state by its citizens, elected officials, and education administrators, we will be examining the pay structure of the regional universities in Oklahoma.

The primary question regarding faculty remuneration is "how equitable is the compensation based on comparable worth for teaching, scholarship and university service?" The question is difficult to answer in the sense that different numerical values, in terms of disparity of salaries, are placed on the type of services being rendered. Stone (1997, 176) notes that counting is political as it:

1) creates political communities;
2) creates the illusion that complex phenomena are simple, countable, and precisely defined; and,
3) bolsters the authority of those who count. Stone points to various rationales offered as to why there should or should not be differences in salary disparity. Included in her work are two basic social models: the market and the *polis*, based on the concept of the Greek word for city-state (Stone 1997, 17).

Administrators at universities may argue that "market forces" necessitate the change in salaries between a chemistry professor and a language arts professor, thus conveying implicitly a preference for Stone's market model. Using the *polis* model, faculty may argue for an inherently more equitable system of remuneration based on years of service and rank, regardless of the academic discipline of the professor. We believe that

the process of faculty salary budgeting is inherently a political process. As the demands of the market and the demands of the *polis* come into conflict, decisions are made to try to resolve these conflicts. These compromises are influenced by a variety of factors, but we believe it is the perceptions and world-views of individual administrators that drive the eventual compromise.

## DATA AND ANALYSIS

The data for this survey were gathered from the Oklahoma Higher Board of Regents budgets for the regional universities for 1998-1999. These budgets were coded into computer form by Dr. Russell Jones at the University of Central Oklahoma, and he generously agreed to share the data with us. Additional data were gathered from the US Department of Education. For this project, we limited the dataset to full-time instructional faculty. Any university employee who had an administrative appointment in addition to an instructional appointment was dropped from the dataset.

In general, Oklahoma does not compare well nationally to other higher education systems. Data from the US Department of Education shows that Oklahoma ranks in the bottom 20% of all states in the nation in terms of faculty salaries. Compared to our neighbors, our average salaries are lower than all but Arkansas. Table 1 shows the breakdown of average salary for Oklahoma and all of the states that border Oklahoma.

This information is not news to anyone who studies Oklahoma education policy. Oklahoma has a long tradition of low tuition, low taxes, and thus low allocations for education. Although one can argue that the cost of living in Oklahoma is lower than in other regions of the nation, it is clear that we rank towards the bottom even within a region where the cost of living does not vary dramatically.

Overall budgetary data are not normally accurate measures of faculty salaries. Faculty salaries make up a relatively small portion of the overall university budget picture. Although some university administrators claim that 60% or more of their budgets go to "instructional" costs, the actual percentage spent on full-time faculty salaries is much lower. Table 2 shows the overall budgets for the1998-

**TABLE 1**

**Regional Salary Rankings**
**Statewide Averages**

| | All Ranks | Average Salary |
|---|---|---|
| Oklahoma | 42nd | $46,754 |
| Texas | 29th | $50,381 |
| Kansas | 34th | $48,862 |
| New Mexico | 39th | $47,260 |
| Colorado | 22nd | $53,655 |
| Missouri | 28th | $50,960 |
| Arkansas | 48th | $44,311 |

1999 academic year for the ten universities within our study. It also shows the percentage of each budget spent for full-time faculty salaries in that same year.

**TABLE 2**

**Percentage of 1998-1999 Overall University Budgets Spent On Full-Time Faculty Salaries**

| University | Total Budget | Total of All Full Time Faculty Salaries | Percentage For Full Time Salaries |
|---|---|---|---|
| Langston | $17,561,553.00 | $3,067,576.00 | 17.47% |
| Northwestern | $13,295,814.00 | $2,769,350.00 | 20.83% |
| Panhandle | $7,457,636.00 | $1,576,285.00 | 21.14% |
| Southeastern | $22,615,851.00 | $5,762,561.00 | 25.48% |
| Southwestern | $28,636,273.00 | $7,401,157.00 | 25.85% |
| Northeastern | $41,473,309.00 | $10,771,814.00 | 25.97% |
| USAO | $7,907,080.00 | $2,123,700.00 | 26.86% |
| Cameron | $26,110,539.00 | $7,095,431.00 | 27.17% |
| East Central | $21,752,978.00 | $5,920,335.00 | 27.22% |
| UCO | $63,768,300.00 | $17,411,637.42 | 27.30% |

Clearly most universities spend the vast bulk of their budgets elsewhere. Faculty salaries make up, on average, under 25% of a university's total expenditures.

While average salaries and expenditures are useful information at a superficial level, the focus of our research is on the disparities between the universities in the Oklahoma system and between the various disciplines. In order to examine this issue in more detail, we chose to examine the ten regional comprehensive universities in the state. These universities are all relatively comparable in terms of their missions and budgets. The schools in question compete for many of the same students, and most of them face similar problems in terms of budget allocations.

Across all of the universities in question, it is clear that there are some substantial discrepancies in faculty salaries. The difference between the highest-paying and lowest-paying universities is as much as 25% across disciplines. Table 3 summarizes the average salaries for all full-time faculty by rank and institution.

While these data show the distribution of salaries, it is also instructive to consider the salaries in terms of an ordinal rank ordering.

**TABLE 3**

**Average Salaries of All Regional Universities By Rank**

| | Instructor | Asst Prof | Assoc Prof | Prof |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Southwestern | $30,654 | $40,718 | $48,349 | $54,759 |
| Southeastern | $32,711 | $39,070 | $47,150 | $53,178 |
| East Central | $33,854 | $38,599 | $44,651 | $50,800 |
| UCO | $37,045 | $43,433 | $47,852 | $55,701 |
| Northeastern | $35,721 | $42,629 | $44,816 | $55,016 |
| Northwestern | $30,913 | $38,238 | $44,080 | $52,092 |
| Langston | $38,143 | $37,546 | $44,113 | $45,478 |
| Cameron | $30,694 | $38,636 | $44,300 | $51,147 |
| Panhandle | $31,082 | $36,949 | $38,576 | $46,169 |

**TABLE 4**

**Rank Ordering of All Regional Universities**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UCO | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.25 |
| Northeastern | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3.00 |
| Southwestern | 7 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3.75 |
| Southeastern | 5 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4.00 |
| East Central | 4 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5.00 |
| Langston | 1 | 7 | 7 | 10 | 6.25 |
| Cameron | 10 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6.50 |
| Northwestern | 9 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 8.00 |
| Univ. of S & A | 6 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8.25 |
| Panhandle | 8 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 9.00 |

Table 4 shows the ordinal ranks for each university at each level of employment. In addition, the table provides an overall average salary ranking for each institution.

Tables 3 and 4 show a fairly consistent pattern — universities that pay their assistant professors well also tend to pay their full professors well. While there are some exceptions to this, particularly when looking at instructor salaries, the overall pattern clearly shows that there are clear-cut discrepancies between ranks within any given university.

Although the patterns of overall averages are consistent across universities, all faculty realize that there are salary differences between departments. Some of the universities in the Oklahoma system use a pay-card system to create some level of salary equity across disciplines, while others leave the salary structure to the discretion of the higher administration. This inconsistency in policy has, over time, created some significant disparities in salary for faculty of equal rank in similar fields. Table 5 shows the differences between universities for faculty of similar rank in similar departments. The percentages in Table 5 reflect the difference between the lowest-paid faculty member and the highest-paid faculty member for each category across all ten regional institutions.

Not surprisingly, the differences are often dramatic. In some disciplines (such as education), some faculty with similar rank are paid more than twice as much as the lowest-paid person of similar rank. Even in the most equitable field, technology, the difference is over 25% at the assistant professor level, which equates to a dollar differential of more than $10,000 for the 98-99 academic year. It is clear that the Oklahoma regional universities have wide variations in salaries across all of the categories. These variations appear to be independent of the institution or the discipline. Langston has some of the highest paid faculty and some of the lowest. The social sciences have some of the lowest paid faculty in the state and some of the best paid.

It appears clear that these differences are not a result of systematic discrimination or institutionally generated budget issues. It seems these differences are a result of the individual preferences of the university administrations towards particular disciplines. For example, Cameron University compares favorably in business faculty salaries (overall ranking of third among the ten schools), yet it ranks near the bottom in comparable salary for the humanities (eighth out of ten).

**TABLE 5**

**Lowest-Paid Faculty Member as a Percentage of the Highest-Paid Faculty Member By Rank and Discipline**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business | 72% | 57% | 56% | 66% |
| Education | 55% | 47% | 51% | 64% |
| Health Professionals | 64% | 66% | 47% | 74% |
| Humanities | 50% | 56% | 43% | 53% |
| Physical Sciences | 77% | 52% | 79% | 58% |
| Computer Sciences | 70% | 69% | 82% | 100% |
| Social Sciences | 73% | 69% | 70% | 70% |
| Technology/Applied | 76% | 73% | 88% | 89% |
| Physical Education | 35% | 64% | 85% | 63% |
| Mathematics | 63% | 63% | 68% | 70% |
| Music | 78% | 73% | 77% | 76% |

Appendix 1 presents a series of tables with a breakdown of average salary by rank and university for each category. Although there is too much data in the tables to discuss each in detail, an examination of the tables shows the stark inconsistencies in faculty salaries across disciplines and universities. Table 6 presents some of the highlights from this data.

Further evidence of this can be seen by examining the average salaries for the various disciplines by rank. Table 7 shows the average salary for each discipline by rank across the ten institutions. What is most notable about this table is the lack of any clear "favored" programs state-wide. Even programs that one would expect to be exceptionally well-funded, such as business, are not substantially different from most other disciplines.

**TABLE 6**

**Largest and Smallest Salary Ranges By Rank**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instructor-Largest** | **Instructor-Smallest** |
| Physical Education | Music |
| $28,800 (Langston) | $29,964 (Cameron) |
| $52,800 (Northeastern) | $38,643 (Southeastern) |
| **Assistant-Largest** | **Assistant-Smallest** |
| Business | Music |
| $32,241 (Panhandle) | $33,044 (Cameron) |
| $56,500 (Northeastern) | $45,100 (Northeastern) |
| **Associate-Largest** | **Associate-Smallest** |
| Education | Physical Education |
| $32,000 (Panhandle) | $41,900 (Northeastern) |
| $62,600 (Langston) | $49,200 (UCO) |
| **Full-Largest** | **Full-Smallest** |
| Physical Sciences | Computer Sciences |
| $33,605 (East Central) | $54,639 (SWOSU) |
| $58,131 (Cameron) | $54,678 (UCO) |

**TABLE 7**

**Average Salaries By Discipline and Rank**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Business | $34,009.30 | $44,699.17 | $48,187.05 | $53,700.42 |
| Education | $33,454.15 | $38,719.05 | $45,995.30 | $52,515.03 |
| Health Professionals | $34,006.21 | $43,288.57 | $43,223.17 | $64,241.00 |
| Humanities | $32,215.55 | $37,947.75 | $44,016.79 | $50,307.91 |
| Physical Sciences | $32,405.00 | $40,228.11 | $45,352.14 | $52,335.18 |
| Computer Sciences | $32,038.40 | $40,357.33 | $46,811.00 | $54,658.50 |
| Social Sciences | $34,625.50 | $38,022.91 | $43,823.36 | $52,482.05 |
| Technology/Applied | $34,486.69 | $40,362.69 | $46,052.50 | $53,547.67 |
| Physical Education | $36,734.50 | $41,382.79 | $44,873.33 | $51,937.00 |
| Mathematics | $31,857.54 | $39,100.07 | $45,090.21 | $50,803.88 |
| Music | $32,914.45 | $38,575.84 | $44,287.77 | $52,479.82 |

Overall, the evidence shows that no single program is clearly favored across all institutions, and the differences between institutions (see Table 3) are generally small. If the average salaries by institution are similar and the salaries by discipline are similar, what accounts for the dramatic differences in salaries for individual faculty members throughout the regional schools?

If these differences cannot be explained through systematic differences in institutions or disciplines, the logical conclusion to draw is that the differences are created by variations within institutions. For example, if university X pays its assistant professors in the social sciences only $32,000 a year but pays assistants in the physical sciences $46,000 a year, the average salary between the two departments is $39,000 for assistant professors. In the same vein, if university X pays assistant professors in the social sciences $32,000 a year and university Y pays them $42,000 a year, the average salary for social science assistant professors appears to be $37,000. The end result is that although social science faculty at university X are substantially underpaid relative to their discipline AND their institution, that underpayment may not be easily spotted by examining overall discipline or university-wide data.

## DISCUSSION

Given the data available, it is clear there are substantial salary inequities across the regional universities in Oklahoma. It is possible, for example, for an assistant professor to increase his/her salary by over 30% simply by moving from one part of the state to the other. While it is safe to expect that certain differences will occur as universities are forced to specialize in certain areas, the long-term consequences are unclear.

If universities continue to create these inequities, it seems possible that the educational quality of the unequal fields will continue to grow. In the end, we may well see each of the regional schools specializing in a few disciplines and turning the others into service programs for the General Education requirements. There are indications this is occurring at some of the regional universities already, and it is safe to assume the trend will continue.

There are clearly a large number of questions we have been unable to answer. Given how time-bound are data pool is, an examination of the long-term trends in salaries is clearly warranted. Understanding the longitudinal trends is critical to finding the overall patterns in salary decisions by university administrations. In addition to longitudinal data, regional comparisons are also needed. It may be that all of the regional university systems are experiencing similar patterns, or it may be that Oklahoma is an anomaly — without solid regional comparisons, there is no way to know.

Faculty salaries are always a matter of contention between administrators and faculty. Faculty generally feel they are underpaid, while most administrators feel the pressure of budget cycles and multiple priorities. It is only through examining the overall trends and the political nature of the salary process that we can hope to find some middle ground in which both parties can come to an understanding. Faculty and administrators need to be aware of the rationalizations they use in justifying their claims whether market-based on political. Without an appreciation and understanding of these competing views regarding faculty remuneration, discrepancies and contentions will continue well into the future.

## REFERENCES

Markwood, Christopher L. 1998. The Constitutional and Cultural Context of Oklahoma Government, pp. 19-35 in *Oklahoma Government and Politics: An Introduction*, edited by C. L. Markwood. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.

Morgan, David R., Robert E. England, and George G. Humphreys 1991. *Oklahoma Politics & Policies: Governing the Sooner State*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Stone, Deborah. 1997. *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

## APPENDIX A

## DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF SALARY, RANK, AND INSTITUTION

**Business Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | — | $43,388 | $48,058 | $53,823 | $48,423 |
| UCO | — | $44,052 | $48,129 | $55,271 | $46,052 |
| East Central | $39,277 | $42,549 | $51,765 | $51,894 | $46,371 |
| Southeastern | $33,580 | $39,061 | $49,168 | $50,960 | $43,192 |
| Northwestern | — | $36,500 | $42,550 | $46,950 | $42,000 |
| Northeastern | $34,675 | $50,625 | $53,150 | $55,243 | $48,423 |
| Langston | — | $38,625 | $41,964 | $40,000 | $40,196 |
| Cameron | $35,004 | $47,737 | $52,101 | $52,653 | $46,874 |
| Panhandle | $28,560 | $32,241 | $36,832 | — | $32,544 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | — | — | — |

**Business Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northeastern | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1.75 |
| UCO | — | 2 | 5 | 1 | 2.67 |
| Cameron | 2 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 2.75 |
| East Central | 1 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 3.50 |
| SWOSU | — | 4 | 6 | 3 | 4.33 |
| Southeastern | 4 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 5.00 |
| Northwestern | — | 8 | 7 | 7 | 7.33 |
| Langston | — | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7.67 |
| Panhandle | 5 | 9 | 9 | — | 7.67 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | — | — | — |

**Education Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $31,326 | $39,645 | $47,894 | $52,400 | $42,816 |
| UCO | $42,899 | $47,726 | $55,618 | — | $48,748 |
| East Central | — | $36,740 | $45,222 | $50,396 | $44,119 |
| Southeastern | $40,951 | $46,545 | $52,098 | — | $46,531 |
| Northwestern | — | $38,460 | $44,750 | $46,033 | $43,081 |
| Northeastern | $36,600 | $36,679 | $44,489 | $52,467 | $42,559 |
| Langston | $28,800 | $38,043 | $49,774 | $43,500 | $40,029 |
| Cameron | $32,869 | $36,872 | $44,697 | $49,668 | $41,027 |
| Panhandle | — | — | $36,251 | — | $36,251 |
| Univ. of S & A | $30,775 | $34,980 | $46,500 | $51,950 | $41,051 |

**Education Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UCO | 1 | 1 | 1 | — | 1.00 |
| Southeastern | 2 | 2 | 2 | — | 2.00 |
| SWOSU | 5 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 3.50 |
| Northeastern | 3 | 8 | 9 | 1 | 5.25 |
| Langston | 7 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 5.50 |
| East Central | — | 7 | 6 | 4 | 5.67 |
| Northwestern | — | 4 | 7 | 6 | 5.67 |
| Cameron | 4 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 5.75 |
| Univ. of S & A | 6 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 5.75 |
| Panhandle | — | — | 10 | — | 10.00 |

**Health Professionals Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $33,658 | $40,634 | $42,126 | $57,832 | $43,562 |
| UCO | $38,360 | $43,689 | $46,095 | — | $42,714 |
| East Central | $37,359 | $46,528 | $47,193 | $54,280 | $46,340 |
| Southeastern | — | — | — | — | — |
| Northwestern | $29,714 | — | — | — | $29,714 |
| Northeastern | $35,000 | $50,020 | $50,700 | $70,364 | $51,521 |
| Langston | $35,169 | $40,200 | $24,000 | $37,955 | $34,331 |
| Cameron | — | — | — | — | — |
| Panhandle | $31,473 | — | — | — | $31,473 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | — | — | — |

**Health Professionals Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northeastern | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.75 |
| East Central | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2.25 |
| UCO | 1 | 3 | 3 | — | 2.33 |
| SWOSU | 5 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 3.75 |
| Langston | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4.25 |
| Panhandle | 6 | — | — | — | 6.00 |
| Northwestern | 7 | — | — | — | 7.00 |
| Southeastern | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cameron | — | — | — | — | — |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | — | — | — |

**Humanities Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $29,260 | $37,198 | $47,545 | $52,918 | $41,730 |
| UCO | $34,518 | $43,017 | $46,460 | $55,713 | $44,927 |
| East Central | $28,660 | $37,165 | $44,687 | $46,852 | $39,341 |
| Southeastern | $31,140 | $36,985 | $43,225 | $51,188 | $40,634 |
| Northwestern | $32,060 | $37,588 | $41,550 | $47,900 | $39,774 |
| Northeastern | $35,617 | $39,107 | $41,990 | $53,588 | $42,575 |
| Langston | $34,534 | $42,587 | $55,600 | — | $44,240 |
| Cameron | $29,496 | $35,326 | $42,446 | $47,120 | $38,597 |
| Panhandle | $32,015 | $34,627 | $38,921 | $42,432 | $36,999 |
| Univ. of S & A | $30,000 | $34,700 | $40,660 | $42,533 | $36,973 |

**Humanities Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Langston | 2 | 2 | 1 | — | 1.67 |
| UCO | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Northeastern | 1 | 3 | 7 | 2 | 3.25 |
| SWOSU | 9 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4.75 |
| Northwestern | 4 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 5.25 |
| Southeastern | 6 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 5.50 |
| East Central | 10 | 6 | 4 | 7 | 6.75 |
| Cameron | 8 | 8 | 6 | 6 | 7.00 |
| Univ. of S & A | 7 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8.25 |
| Panhandle | 5 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 8.50 |

**Hard Sciences Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $30,508 | $38,946 | $47,261 | $54,083 | $42,699 |
| UCO | $30,990 | $42,786 | $47,724 | $54,813 | $44,078 |
| East Central | — | $39,763 | $42,972 | $44,057 | $42,264 |
| Southeastern | — | $38,978 | $44,590 | $53,690 | $45,753 |
| Northwestern | — | $36,267 | $41,000 | $48,500 | $41,922 |
| Northeastern | $37,000 | $42,183 | $45,025 | $50,243 | $43,613 |
| Langston | — | — | $42,495 | $42,055 | $42,275 |
| Cameron | — | $43,044 | $40,989 | $54,347 | $46,127 |
| Panhandle | $32,130 | $38,387 | — | $49,585 | $40,034 |
| Univ. of S & A | $31,500 | $33,600 | $43,500 | — | $36,200 |

**Hard Sciences Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UCO | 4 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2.00 |
| Northeastern | 1 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3.00 |
| SWOSU | 5 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 4.00 |
| Cameron | — | 1 | 9 | 2 | 4.00 |
| Southeastern | — | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4.33 |
| Panhandle | 2 | 7 | — | 6 | 5.00 |
| Univ. of S & A | 3 | 9 | 5 | — | 5.67 |
| East Central | — | 4 | 6 | 8 | 6.00 |
| Northwestern | — | 8 | 8 | 7 | 7.67 |
| Langston | — | — | 7 | 9 | 8.00 |

**Computer Sciences Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $30,899 | $45,000 | $48,121 | $54,639 | $44,665 |
| UCO | — | $41,656 | $47,133 | $54,678 | $47,822 |
| East Central | $28,000 | $37,085 | — | — | $32,543 |
| Southeastern | $33,515 | $37,917 | — | — | $35,716 |
| Northwestern | $33,100 | $39,500 | — | — | $36,300 |
| Northeastern | $39,500 | $49,500 | — | — | $44,500 |
| Langston | — | — | $46,200 | — | $46,200 |
| Cameron | — | — | — | — | — |
| Panhandle | $27,540 | — | $45,819 | — | $36,679 |
| Univ. of S & A | $29,900 | $37,400 | — | — | $33,650 |

**Computer Sciences Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Northeastern | 1 | 1 | — | — | 1.00 |
| UCO | — | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2.00 |
| SWOSU | 4 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.25 |
| Langston | — | — | 3 | — | 3.00 |
| Southeastern | 2 | 5 | — | — | 3.50 |
| Northwestern | 3 | 4 | — | — | 3.50 |
| Panhandle | 7 | — | 4 | — | 5.50 |
| Univ. of S & A | 5 | 6 | — | — | 5.50 |
| East Central | 6 | 7 | — | — | 6.50 |
| Cameron | — | — | — | — | — |

**Social Sciences Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $31,238 | $37,226 | $44,798 | $52,961 | $41,556 |
| UCO | $37,334 | $43,536 | $47,458 | $55,116 | $45,861 |
| East Central | — | $37,499 | $43,999 | $49,949 | $43,816 |
| Southeastern | $34,624 | $39,808 | $44,021 | $53,690 | $43,036 |
| Northwestern | — | $36,867 | $41,375 | $47,300 | $41,847 |
| Northeastern | $35,000 | $37,242 | $42,309 | $51,243 | $41,449 |
| Langston | — | $33,838 | $39,344 | — | $36,591 |
| Cameron | $32,346 | $36,023 | $42,830 | $50,526 | $40,431 |
| Panhandle | $31,306 | $37,461 | $38,965 | — | $35,911 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | $33,400 | $38,450 | $50,250 | $40,700 |

**Social Sciences Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UCO | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1.00 |
| Southeastern | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2.50 |
| SWOSU | 6 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 4.25 |
| Northeastern | 2 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4.25 |
| East Central | — | 3 | 4 | 7 | 4.67 |
| Cameron | 4 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 5.75 |
| Panhandle | 5 | 4 | 9 | — | 6.00 |
| Northwestern | — | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7.33 |
| Langston | — | 8 | 8 | — | 8.00 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | 10 | 10 | 6 | 8.67 |

**Technology/Applied Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $40,170 | $43,460 | — | $50,415 | $44,682 |
| UCO | $32,000 | — | — | $53,991 | $42,995 |
| East Central | — | — | — | — | — |
| Southeastern | $34,766 | $35,445 | $47,775 | $53,690 | $42,919 |
| Northwestern | — | — | — | — | — |
| Northeastern | $35,100 | $41,650 | $42,100 | $54,600 | $43,363 |
| Langston | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cameron | $31,464 | $38,304 | $46,560 | — | $38,776 |
| Panhandle | — | $41,932 | — | — | $41,932 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | — | — | — |

**Technology/Applied Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | 1 | 1 | — | 4 | 2.00 |
| Panhandle | — | 2 | — | — | 2.00 |
| Northeastern | 2 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2.25 |
| UCO | 4 | — | — | 2 | 3.00 |
| Southeastern | 3 | 5 | 1 | 3 | 3.00 |
| Cameron | 5 | 4 | 2 | — | 3.67 |
| East Central | — | — | — | — | — |
| Northwestern | — | — | — | — | — |
| Langston | — | — | — | — | — |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | — | — | — |

**Physical Education Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $33,040 | $42,319 | — | $51,495 | $42,285 |
| UCO | $39,123 | $46,609 | $47,100 | $55,788 | $47,155 |
| East Central | $34,791 | $40,947 | — | $36,477 | $37,405 |
| Southeastern | $32,164 | $42,088 | — | $51,545 | $41,932 |
| Northwestern | — | $35,000 | $43,000 | $51,150 | $43,050 |
| Northeastern | $41,900 | $35,100 | $41,900 | $58,300 | $44,300 |
| Langston | $48,797 | $32,837 | $46,332 | — | $42,655 |
| Cameron | $31,050 | $40,677 | $43,808 | — | $38,512 |
| Panhandle | — | — | — | — | — |
| Univ. of S & A | $36,333 | $50,900 | — | — | $43,617 |

**Physical Education Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UCO | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.00 |
| Univ. of S & A | 4 | 1 | — | — | 2.50 |
| Northeastern | 2 | 7 | 5 | 1 | 3.75 |
| Langston | 1 | 9 | 2 | — | 4.00 |
| SWOSU | 6 | 3 | — | 4 | 4.33 |
| Southeastern | 7 | 4 | — | 3 | 4.67 |
| East Central | 5 | 5 | — | 6 | 5.33 |
| Northwestern | — | 8 | 4 | 5 | 5.67 |
| Cameron | 8 | 6 | 3 | — | 5.67 |
| Panhandle | — | — | — | — | — |

**Mathematics Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $31,582 | $36,989 | $47,436 | $53,892 | $42,475 |
| UCO | $37,770 | $42,885 | $47,632 | $52,192 | $45,120 |
| East Central | — | $36,139 | — | $51,066 | $43,603 |
| Southeastern | $29,580 | $38,867 | $44,135 | — | $37,527 |
| Northwestern | $31,150 | $36,233 | — | — | $33,692 |
| Northeastern | $34,900 | $40,050 | $44,667 | $52,640 | $43,064 |
| Langston | — | $50,000 | $47,877 | — | $48,938 |
| Cameron | $26,628 | $32,028 | $41,612 | $52,956 | $38,306 |
| Panhandle | $31,689 | — | $39,523 | — | $35,606 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | $38,000 | $46,600 | $42,300 |

**Mathematics Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Langston | — | 1 | 1 | — | 1.00 |
| UCO | 1 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 2.25 |
| Northeastern | 2 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3.00 |
| SWOSU | 4 | 5 | 3 | 1 | 3.25 |
| Southeastern | 6 | 4 | 5 | — | 5.00 |
| Panhandle | 3 | — | 7 | — | 5.00 |
| Northwestern | 5 | 6 | — | — | 5.50 |
| Cameron | 7 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 5.75 |
| East Central | — | 7 | — | 5 | 6.00 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | — | 8 | 6 | 7.00 |

**Music Faculty Salaries**
**Rank and Institution**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SWOSU | $30,799 | $38,676 | $48,277 | $53,037 | $42,697 |
| UCO | $32,370 | $40,796 | $45,990 | $55,344 | $43,625 |
| East Central | $30,750 | $34,848 | $45,726 | $51,004 | $40,582 |
| Southeastern | $38,643 | $37,465 | $45,273 | $53,008 | $43,597 |
| Northwestern | — | $38,700 | $43,250 | — | $40,975 |
| Northeastern | $36,150 | $39,950 | $41,900 | $48,800 | $41,700 |
| Langston | — | — | — | — | — |
| Cameron | $30,456 | $35,462 | $44,195 | $42,624 | $38,184 |
| Panhandle | — | — | — | — | — |
| Univ. of S & A | — | $33,800 | $37,600 | — | $35,700 |

**Music Faculty Salaries**
**Ordinal Rankings**

| | Instructor | Assistant | Associate | Full | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| UCO | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1.75 |
| SWOSU | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2.75 |
| Southeastern | 1 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 3.25 |
| Northeastern | 2 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 4.00 |
| Northwestern | — | 3 | 6 | — | 4.50 |
| East Central | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4 | 4.75 |
| Cameron | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 5.75 |
| Univ. of S & A | — | 8 | 8 | — | 8.00 |
| Langston | — | — | — | — | — |
| Panhandle | — | — | — | — | — |

## APPENDIX B

### Department Combinations for Disciplinary Comparisons

1 Business
2 Education
3 Health Professionals
    Pharmacy/Optometry/ Allied Health/ Health Information Management/Nursing
4 Humanities
    English/Foreign Languages/Theater/Philosophy/ Mass Communications/Humanities/Speech/Journalism
5 Physical Sciences
    Biology/Chemistry/Physics
6 Computer Science
7 Social Sciences
    Political Science/History/Criminal Justice/Sociology/Geography/ Psychology
8 Technology and Other Applied Programs
    Funeral Services/Technology/Aeronautics
9 Physical Education
10 Mathematics
11 Music

# THE DETERMINANTS OF GRADE INFLATION: A RESEARCH NOTE

GRANT AGUIRRE
The University of Central Oklahoma

Using Census data and grade information provided by four year public universities in the southwestern United States, this research note offers a conjecture about the relationship between the size of state university systems and the severity of grade inflation.

## HYPOTHESES ABOUT GRADE INFLATION

**Grade inflation** has been a concern in higher education in America since the 1970s. At that time, researchers in colleges and universities began to notice an increase in grade point averages without a commensurate increase in achievement levels (Summerville and Ridley 1990). The literature has identified a number of possible causes for the increase in average grades over the last thirty years. One early argument focussed on the political and social disruptions of the Vietnam war. At that time, researchers suggested that the problem reflected professors' leniency in response to the draft, and that the problem would correct itself after the war ended and college deferments to avoid conscription

were no longer an issue. However, the problem persisted even after the war, and the draft, ended (Lanning 1995).

When the problem failed to disappear after the war ended, other possible explanations surfaced. A second line of argument suggested that students today are not required to master as much material as were students a generation ago. According to this argument, it has become easier for today's students to achieve a high score in most classes not because professors have relaxed their grading standards, but because they have begun to water down the content of their courses. This hypothesis, if true, is particularly disturbing because it means that even if students are mastering what they have been asked to master they are still not as well prepared to serve society as were students in the past (Basinger 1997).

A third cluster of explanations for the rise in average grades highlights how schools across the nation have provided students with greater options for enhancing their GPAs. For example, many colleges and universities now have a liberal drop policy. At some institutions, students are allowed to drop a course any time before the final exam, thus reducing the impact of poor or failing grades on students' overall numerical rating. Some schools (including Oklahoma's) allow students to repeat courses or even entire semesters, thereby allowing them to wipe out their initial poor grades and replace them with subsequent course work. From this perspective, grade inflation is aggravated not by lower standards or thinner content, but by the strategic choices made by grade-maximizing students (Weller 1986).

A fourth possible factor contributing to grade inflation involves the use of student evaluations in the personnel policies common in higher education (Lanning and Perkins 1995). Many schools have attempted to develop quantitative methods for use in faculty retention, tenure, and promotion decisions. In attempting to develop such a methodology, student evaluations of faculty are one convenient tool to use in the evaluation of professors. Professors, particularly adjuncts, are acutely aware that their popularity with students may well have a significant impact on their retention and promotion. This hypothesis is particularly suggestive given that many institutions, because of fiscal concerns, are relying more heavily on adjunct faculty. Adjuncts are particularly vulnerable to low student evaluations since they do not enjoy many of the guarantees and protections that come with being a full time tenured professor.

While conjectures abound about grade inflation, few studies have taken quantitative approaches to the problem. Most of the literature acknowledges that the problem exists, and proposes hypotheses as to why it began and why it continues to occur, but few studies have proposed causes that are easily quantifiable. Most of the studies that have attempted to quantify the problem have been limited to studying particular institutions, or departments within and across a particular school. One exception is Weller's (1986) comparison of attitudes towards grade inflation among Deans of Colleges of Education and Deans of Arts and Sciences. Yet even Weller's study merely solicited and compared opinions about why educators believed the problem was occuring; his study did not directly test one hypothesis or another.

In view of the state of inquiry into grade inflation, this research note ventures a line of explanation by making an analogy between grade inflation and economic inflation. In a market economy, inflation is defined as a general increase in the general level of prices. Typically, inflation is calculated and expressed in terms of an index (superficially similar to a GPA) calculated against a basket of representative goods. Inflation can occur in two general ways. Supply-side or cost push inflation occurs when an increase in costs pushes prices up (for example, an oil shock). Demand-pull inflation occurs when an increase in aggregate demand causes prices to rise. Such inflation is essentially the result of excess purchasing power: too many dollars chasing too few goods and services.

In the spirit of this analogy, the following analysis takes a brief look at the possibility that the size of a given state's higher education system, in relation to its population, has an impact on the mean grade point average of undergraduate students in the state. The conjecture is that the larger the state's higher education system, relative to its population, the more schools within the system have to compete to attract and retain students. This competition for limited "resources" (i.e. students and their tuition dollars) leads to pressure on faculty to give higher grades in order to recruit and retain student populations.

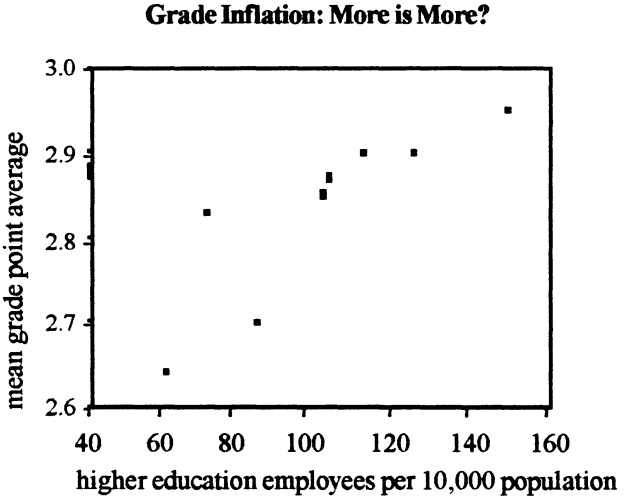
Data on mean GPAs were collected in a survey of public colleges and universities within the Southwestern region. The states included are: Arkansas, Colorado, Kansas, Louisiana, Missouri, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Texas. The director of institutional research or the registrar's office at each institution was contacted and asked to provide the institution's average grade awarded (on a standard four point scale) for

for all undergraduate students for the Fall 1998, the most recent semester for which averages were available from all schools in the survey.

United States Census Bureau data from 1995 were used to determine the size of each state's higher education system. The number of employees in each state's higher education system was used as a measure of the size of those systems. The Census Bureau data on state government employees are reported in the following categories: full-time equivalent employees, full-time employees, and part-time employees. Further, in each of these categories the data are broken down into twenty-eight employment classifications. The Census Bureau lists state employees in higher education in the following two classifications: Higher Education-Instruction and Higher Education-Other. Both classifications were used to determine the size of each state's higher education system. The employees per 10,000 figure is useful because it allows for an easy comparison across states that otherwise vary widely in terms of population.

All of the institutions polled used the standard four point grade point scale (A=4, B=3, etc.) In order to test the hypothesis that the size of a given state's system has an impact on the average grade awarded to students in that system, a simple correlation was employed. A Pearson Correlation of the two variables suggests a substantial, if crude,

| | Mean GPA | Employees per 10,000 population |
|---|---|---|
| Arkansas | 2.70 | 89.43 |
| Colorado | 2.90 | 124.03 |
| Kansas | 2.87 | 102.05 |
| Louisiana | 2.85 | 100.46 |
| Missouri | 2.83 | 69.80 |
| Oklahoma | 2.90 | 111.08 |
| New Mexico | 2.95 | 148.71 |
| Texas | 2.64 | 58.91 |




relationship: the larger a state's education system, the higher a state's mean GPA relative to the average of the eight-state group ($r^2 = .674$, significant at the .012 level). While suggestive, a major limitation even at this preliminary stage is the small number of cases. Yet, as the scatter plot shows, no one observation skews the results in a noticeable way.

## TOWARDS AN ECONOMIC MODEL OF ACADEMIC INFLATION

As suggestive as the above relationship is, a complete study of the determinants of grade inflation must exploit more fully the analogy between the economic and academic varieties of inflation. Both varieties presume a unit of account — a numerical grade, a denomination of currency — whose value declines because of the unit's changing relationship with the real economies of academic achievement or industrial production. In the case of money, whether the impetus comes from a shock on the supply or the demand side, inflation ultimately occurs only when the central bank accommodates this shock through cheaper

credit. By analogy, then, it is the professorate that plays the role of academia's central banker, accommodating or not accommodating inflationary pressures depending upon the opportunities and constraints under which professors operate.

The premises of neoclassical economics preclude the possibility of generalized over- or under-production; similarly, by analogy to the academic world we exclude the prospect of grade point averages rising or falling because of general shifts in the intelligence or capacity of student bodies (the "Lake Wobegon" effect). Neoclassical economics also assumes the rationality of individual actors who seek to maximize their utility subject to budget or production constraints. By we extension, we might in the academic world assume that rational students seek to maximize their grade point averages, grades being viewed here not as evidence for subjective intellectual satisfaction or objective academic achievement but as expressions of the credentialist functions of higher education. That is to say, the analogy instructs us to assume that students attend college and university in order to improve their future employment prospects. All things being equal, from this perspective higher grades provide better credentials, quite apart from what students do, or what they learn, to earn those grades. Faculty in higher education will not find this assumption to be unreasonable, to say the least. Further, the model assumes that faculty, for their part, maximize their own choice sets by calibrating the severity of their grading standards to achieve an optimal mix of their own goals (good student reviews, enrollment retention, personal popularity, and so on). Finally, administrators may be assumed to pursue their own, cognate, set of goals according to a similar calculus of interest.

While this note has considered just one factor from the demand side, the economic analogy points to any number of suggestive exploratory hypotheses. For example, are private institutions more, or less, resistant to the ravages of grade inflation than are public institutions? Does grade inflation vary according to the perceived prestige of the institution or university system? The structure of incentives within each institution may also yield useful variables. To what extent is a public institution's funding sensitive to changes in aggregate enrollment? How do the criteria and procedures for granting tenure influence the willingness of faculty to accommodate pressures for grade inflation? It is frequently noted (and deplored) that the consumerist mindset of today's college students

encourages them to view decent grades as a "product" that they have purchased with their tuition (Sacks 1996). Apart from actually surveying students, one might conjecture that the ratio of faculty to administrators (what the military calls the "tooth-to-tail" ratio) is a proxy for consumerism, since expanding administrations reflect, in good part, universities' efforts to accommodate these non-academic functions.

At a policy level, grade inflation matters because states have reason to be concerned about the quality of their higher education system, and about how well prepared their graduates are to handle the challenges of a highly competitive global environment. Grade inflation is a problem ultimately because it perpetuates a fraud (like the economists' "money illusion") that can be dispelled only when matriculating students reveal the full gap between their formal credentials and their real skills and potential. It hardly needs to be remarked that Oklahoma has one of the higher mean GPAs (2.90) among the states studied. Alas, it may not be entirely coincidental that it also has one of the larger systems of higher education.

## REFERENCES

Basinger, David. 1997. Fighting Grade Inflation. *College Teaching* 45 (Summer): 88.

Lanning, Wayne and Peggy Perkins. 1995. Grade Inflation: A Consideration of Additional Causes. *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 22 (July): 163

Sacks, Peter. 1996. *Generation X Goes to College: An Eye-Opening Account of Teaching in Postmodern America.* Chicago: Open Court Publishing Co.

Summerville, Richard M. and Dennis R. Ridley. Grade Inflation: The Case of Urban Colleges and Universities. *College Teaching* 38 (Winter): 33.

Weller, L. D. 1986. Attitude Toward Inflation: A Random Survey of American Colleges of Arts and Sciences and Colleges of Education. *College and University* 61:126

# BOOK REVIEW SECTION

William R. Burkett and James Edwin Alexander. *The Fall of David Hall.* (Oklahoma City: Macedon Publishing Company, 2000), pp 212. $16.50 ISBN 0-939965-17-8

**Oklahoma's political history** is replete with colorful characters and memorable scandals. Former Governor David Hall is arguably the most interesting scoundrel of them all. Through sheer political chutzpah, Hall unseated the incumbent Dewey Bartlett in an election so close that a mere one vote per district would have changed the outcome. Not only had Hall reached the top post in Oklahoma state government, but he was also one of the national Democratic Party's darlings, often discussed seriously as a Vice-Presidential nominee. Through a murky haze of alleged corruption, Hall proved his resilience and political endurance by lasting through the entire four years of his one and only gubernatorial term. He survived a forceful impeachment attempt led by a young governor-to-be, Frank Keating. He was indicted a mere three days after leaving office and was ultimately convicted and sentenced to serve time at a federal prison in Arizona.

This political scandal not only added a little local flavor to the Watergate era, it remains a significant moment in Oklahoma's political history. William R. Burkett, the United States Attorney who lead the prosecution against the infamous governor, and Dr. James Edwin Alexander, Oklahoma City University, offer a comprehensive, well-documented account of the prosecution and trial of David Hall.

They also devote a chapter to the related prosecution of W. W. Taylor, Hall's main co-conspirator. Taylor was a Texas businessman with a scheme that ironically would probably have turned out to be a good deal for the State of Oklahoma.

Hall's underhanded shenanigans to promote Taylor's plan for a price is what makes this a great tragic story. The popular governor's crimes stand in great contrast to his reputed personability and formidable political skills. Unfortunately, the book is not titled *The Rise and Fall of David Hall*. The subject of this book would have been much better served by devoting at least a full chapter or two to the fascinating story of Governor Hall's ascension to the state capitol. But the primary author sticks to what he knows best, the actual court drama that unfolded mostly after Governor Hall left office.

The authors' approach is tightly chronological. Although the book is written in third-person, it very much has the feel of being Burkett's memoirs. The story unfolds through sections identified by dates. The prose seems very dependent upon court records and newspaper accounts with interesting touches often added from Burkett's personal memory. This book is not a scholarly effort, nor does it pretend to be. But the authors have done a great service to students interested in Oklahoma's political history by recording this detailed account of the last days of Hall's public life.

Not only does it document specific events leading to the conviction of Governor Hall, but it also provides real insight into the high-profile prosecution of a politically powerful leader. As a reader, it was difficult not to draw parallels to the Clinton-Starr battles that recently waged at the national level.

This book is fairly easy to read. It would serve as a wonderful complementary text in any seminar course covering political scandals in Oklahoma or in state governments generally, perhaps along with similar efforts such as *Bad Times for Good Ol' Boys: The Oklahoma County Commissioner Scandal* by Harry Holloway and Frank S. Meyers (1993, OU Press). Burkett and Alexander's book is only disappointing in the sense that it is not truly a political biography of Governor Hall.

A complete book about Hall's rise and demise and other books about the political careers of some of our more modern governors are

yet to be written. Hopefully, this endeavor will inspire political observers in Oklahoma to begin writing their own fuller and richer accounts of this state's more noteworthy political personalities.

Brett S. Sharp
University of Central Oklahoma

LaDonna Harris, edited by H. Henrietta Stockel. *LaDonna Harris: A Comanche Life.* (University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp 184 $25.00
ISBN 080322396X

**The story on American Indians** in the twentieth century remains sketchy and uneven. The scholarship on Indians during this century focus largely on federal policy and relies principally on official government documents.

Primarily concerned with the processes of government paternalism and changes in white society, most scholarly accounts tend to treat Indians as ancillary members of American society, as people acted upon by legislators and bureaucrats rather than as actors in their own rights. Thus, a misleading picture is painted of twentieth century Indians as non-resilient, passive recipients of change. More importantly, the absence of Indian voices limits our understanding of how native groups have reacted imaginatively and resourcefully to recent developments and changes in the larger society. Comanche activist LaDonna Harris, in this important new autobiographical account, helps fill this important void in Indian historiography. In the process, she demonstrates that contemporary Native Americans are members of vibrant societies not frozen in space or time and have been anything but inactive players in the larger political arena and in fact the opposite is true. Moreover, she greatly furthers our understanding of the role of Indian women in both tribal and national issues.

Born on a Comanche allotment in southwestern Oklahoma in the 1930s and descended from the noted Comanche orator Ten Bears, LaDonna Harris has been long active in political reform. Married to presidential candidate and Senator Fred R. Harris, she worked diligently

at campaigning and networking. President Lyndon B. Johnson also appointed her to serve on the National Indian Opportunities Council where she worked with such notable political figures as Hubert Humphrey, Robert Kennedy, and Sargent Shriver. In 1980 she ran as the vice-presidential nominee for the enviromentalist Citizen's Party. During the last two decades she founded and remains the current president and executive director of Americans for Indian Opportunity (AIO). AIO continues to promote the cultural, social, political, and economic self-sufficiency of tribes. Her national advocacy and consulting group has particularly focused on tribal resource development, environmental protection, and tribal governance. Harris and the AIO scored a major victory in 1971 when they helped secure the return of Taos Blue Lake to the Pueblos of Taos in New Mexico.

Scholar H. Henrietta Stockel, who served as editor for the project, deserves much credit for allowing Harris to tell her story in her own words. Her account is warm, witty, intelligent, and an invaluable insider's view of modern national political scenes. Throughout the book, she relates the guidance she received from her Comanche grandparents. In particular, she has been led by the importance of the role of family, immediate and extended, the sense of ongoing community, and love and respect for differences within peoples.

Aside from Wilma Mankiller and a handful others, most twentieth century Indian women have not documented their life stories. Fortunately, LaDonna Harris has recorded for us her experiences as an important activist. Hopefully, other Indian activists and leaders will follow her lead.

Thomas W. Cowger
East Central University

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Grant Aguirre** is a graduate student in political science at the University of Central Oklahoma.

**Thomas W. Cowger** is Associate Professor of History at East Central University.

**James Davenport** received his Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Central Oklahoma. He is currently assistant to United States Representative Earnest Istook.

**Terence M. Garrett** is Assistant Professor of Political Science at Texas Pan-American University.

**Geoffrey D. Peterson** is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Wisconsin, Eau Claire

**Shad Satterthwaite** is a graduate student in political science at the University of Oklahoma.

## REVIEWERS

The editors appreciate the careful reading and helpful comments of the following reviewers for this issue of *OKLAHOMA POLITICS.*

Mark Hall

Ken Hicks

Brett Sharp

Kaye Tatro

## OKLAHOMA POLITICS