

Political Science as a Broad Church: The Search for a Pluralist Discipline

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In 1996 Robert Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann published an edited collection of essays, *A New Handbook of Political Science*, that provides probably the best overview of the discipline of political science, at least as seen through the eyes of the mainstream of the profession. Goodin is an American working at the Australian National University, while Klingemann is a German working in Berlin. Nevertheless, their overview represents an American view of political science, which is hardly surprising as more than 75 per cent of living political scientists are American. Overall, they present a picture of the discipline as professional, pluralistic and improving rapidly. Here, we take issue with that view, not as an ambition, but as a reality. In contrast, we argue that political science, particularly US political science, is still dominated by a positivist epistemology and, particularly, by behaviouralist and rational choice approaches that are underpinned by that positivism. We begin by outlining Goodin and Klingemann's argument and critiquing it. Subsequently, we take issue with them empirically, using evidence drawn both from their own edited collection and an analysis of the contents of the two foremost US and UK journals; in the US the *American Political Science Review*, the American Political Science Association's main journal, and the *American Journal of Political Science*, and in the UK the *British Journal of Political Science* and *Political Studies*, the Political Studies Association's main journal. The methodology adopted is discussed below. In the last section, we consider the consequence of our findings for the future of political science in Britain.

1 The view of Goodin and Klingemann

Robert Goodin and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (1995) identify two revolutionary movements in post-war political science, revolving around the growth of, first, behaviouralism and, then, rational choice theory. They argue (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, pp. 10–11):

‘The “behavioural revolution” in its heyday, was from many perspectives a thoroughly Jacobin affair; and it would hardly be pressing the analogy too far to say that the reaction was decidedly Thermidorian to boot’.

They continue (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 11): ‘A generation later the scenario replayed itself with ‘rational choice’ (for an analysis of the decline of behaviouralism and the growth of rational choice theory in the US see Farr, Dryzek and Leonard, 1995).

In their view then, these ‘revolutions’ were initially both dismissive of alternative perspectives and strongly contested. These contestations, together with the

increased professionalisation of the discipline, and in particular a more thorough graduate training, led to a period of rapprochement (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 11): 'In contrast to both these revolutionary moments we now seem to be solidly in a period of rapprochement'. Interestingly enough, they claim that the basis of this rapprochement is 'new institutionalism', and this is a point we return to below. So, in their view, rational choice theory now accepts the idea of bounded rationality and 'political scientists no longer think in either/or terms of science or story telling' (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 12).

Overall, perhaps Goodin and Klingemann's main theme (1995, p. 6) is:

'the increasing "professionalism" within political science as a whole. By this we mean that there is increasing agreement to a "common core" which can be taken to define "minimal professional competence" within the profession. Secondly, there is an increasing tendency to judge work, one's own work even more than others', in terms of increasingly high standards of professional excellence'.

More specifically, they contend (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 13):

'Political scientists of the present generation come, individually and collectively, equipped with a richer tool-kit than their predecessors. Few of those trained in any of the major institutions from the 1970s forward will be unduly intimidated (or unduly impressed, either) by theories or techniques from behavioural psychology, empirical sociology or mathematical economics'.

Goodin and Klingemann (1995, p. 21) acknowledge the contribution of 'feminists, deconstructivists and postmodernists' and contend (1995, p. 22):

'Whether fully postmodern, contemporary political science is decidedly substantially post-positive, in that it has certainly taken lessons of the hermeneutic critique substantially on board. Subjective aspects of political life, the internal mental life of political actors, meanings and beliefs and intentions and values – all are now central to political analysis across the board'.

We are mainly concerned here to examine some empirical evidence relevant to Goodin and Klingemann's argument, but it is initially worth examining their claims in a little more detail. Our first point is to reiterate that this seems a US view of the history of political science. In particular, behaviouralism and rational choice theory made fewer inroads into the UK and were more strongly contested here; we present empirical evidence to support this argument below (see Tables 3 and 4). At the same time, Goodin and Klingemann's implication that all good political scientists come equipped with a full tool-kit and 'can make tolerably good sense of regression analysis (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 15) would raise a few eyebrows this side of the Atlantic. To some, including, we are sure, Goodin and Klingemann, this would reflect the lack of methods training in both undergraduate and graduate degrees in the UK. We would agree that British political scientists should have a much stronger training in research methods,¹ but our issue with Goodin and Klingemann is that their approach is essentially a positivist one, because positivism dominates US political science and, thus, the political science discipline. We need to develop this point and we can do it by examining two of

Goodin and Klingemann's other contentions: their view that 'new institutionalism' provides a putative basis of a new rapprochement in political science; and their contention that most political scientists now accept the hermeneutic critique of old-style positivism.

Much has been written on new institutionalism and we shall only add to it briefly here. Two points are important. First, there are a number of different ways of classifying institutionalism² which, among other things, reflect significant divisions among 'new institutionalists'. Certainly, it is highly debatable whether new institutionalism can provide the basis of a rapprochement in political science. Secondly, and this is more important here, as Colin Hay and Daniel Wincott point out (1998), it is clear that ontological, epistemological and methodological positions are closely related in all varieties of new institutionalism, whether or not this is acknowledged. This is the core of Hay and Wincott's argument against Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor (1996 and 1998). Different types of institutionalism are rooted in different epistemological positions (if we use Hall and Taylor's classification, rational choice institutionalism is underpinned by a positivist epistemology, sociological institutionalism by an interpretist epistemology and historical institutionalism by a realist epistemology). However, because an epistemological position is both more like a skin than a sweater (see Marsh and Furlong, 2002), and so cannot be put on and taken off at will, and because epistemological positions have clear theoretical and methodological implications, it is difficult, though not impossible, simply to integrate work from the different schools of new institutionalism.

We shall return to that issue in the conclusion to this article. The problem is that positivists tend, despite Goodin and Klingemann's assertions, not to acknowledge work from other traditions. We can make this point more fully by examining their contention that all political scientists now acknowledge the importance of the hermeneutic critique of positivism. To a limited extent this is true; most modern positivists acknowledge the critiques of their position and positivism has consequently changed significantly. David Sanders is one of the contributors to the Goodin and Klingemann volume and one of the top behavioural researchers in UK political science. His contribution to Marsh and Stoker's *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (2002), another volume that, in a different way, surveys the discipline, represents an excellent example of the modern positivist position which would be viewed positively by Goodin and Klingemann. Sanders (2002) accepts that he has been strongly influenced by the positivist position, but acknowledges the 'ferocious philosophical criticism' to which it was subjected. He argues that 'post-behaviouralists', who might also be called 'post-positivists', acknowledge the interdependence of theory and observation; recognise that normative questions are important and not always easy to separate from empirical questions; and accept that other traditions have a key role to play in political and social analysis. As such, as Goodin and Klingemann imply, this post-positivism has moved a significant way from more traditional positivism.

However, the ontological and epistemological issues which divided positivism from other positions have not gone away; rather they have been elided. Two quotes from Sanders illustrate this point. First, he argues (2002, p. 51):

'Modern behaviouralists – 'post-behaviouralists' – simply prefer to subject their own theoretical claims to empirical tests. They also suspect that scholars working in non-empirical traditions are never able to provide a satisfactory answer to the crucial question: "How would you know if you were wrong?"'

Later he continues (Sanders, 2002, p. 54):

'For modern behaviouralists, the ultimate test of a good theory is still whether or not it is consistent with observation – with the available empirical evidence. Modern behaviouralists are perfectly prepared to accept that different theoretical positions are likely to produce different observations. They insist however, that, whatever "observations" are implied by a particular theoretical perspective, those observations must be used in order to conduct a systematic empirical test of the theory that is being posited'.

This is a sophisticated statement of a positivist epistemological position, but it is still essentially positivist. The aim is to use observation (of whatever type) to test hypothesised relationships between the social phenomena studied. Research from within other traditions must still be judged against the positivists' criteria: 'observation must be used in order to conduct a systemic empirical test of the theory that is being posited. Yet, that is not a standard most researchers from within an interpretist tradition could accept (see Marsh and Furlong, 2002), because they do not believe that direct observation can be objective and used as a test of 'reality'. Most epistemological realists, for example, would see many of the key relationships as unobservable.

One other aspect of Sanders' position is important here and it reflects more directly on Goodin and Klingemann's claim. He accepts that interpretation and meaning are important, which might suggest, as Goodin and Klingemann assert, that the differences between positivist and interpretist traditions are beginning to dissolve. So, Sanders argues (2002, p. 53), in criticising prior studies of voting behaviour, 'There are other areas – relating to the way in which individuals reflect, to a greater or lesser degree, upon themselves – where behavioural research has simply not dared to tread'. He recognises that such factors might, or might not, be important, but emphasises that they would be difficult to study empirically. However, the crucial point is that Sanders wants to treat interpretation and meaning as intervening variables. In this view, how a voter understands the parties and their own position may affect their voting behaviour. At best, this acknowledges only one aspect of the double hermeneutic; in contrast, the interpretist tradition would argue that we also need to acknowledge the subjectivity of the observer.

So, positivism has changed in response to criticism. Post-positivism is somewhat less assertive than was earlier positivism that there is only one way of doing social science. However, it still emphasises explanation, rather than understanding, and the primacy of direct observation. In our view, it is still foundationalist in ontological terms and firmly located in the scientific tradition.

Despite all this our main point of issue with Goodin and Klingemann is that we dispute their view that political science is a broad, pluralist church. Rather, we shall argue in the next section that it is still dominated by positivism and, more specifically, by behaviouralism and rational choice theory.

2 Is there a dominant perspective in political science

In this section we argue that positivism is the dominant perspective in political science, particularly in the US, but also, to a lesser extent, in the UK, and this means that some perspectives are privileged over others. Strangely enough Goodin and Klingemann make our point very well when they argue (1995, pp. 4–5):

‘the community of scholars which collectively constitutes a discipline does exercise a strict supervisory function – both over those working in it and, most especially, over those aspiring to do so. The “order maintained” is not quite the same as that over soldiers or schoolboys, nor is the training strictly akin to military drill. Nonetheless, there is a strong sense (shifting over time) of what is and what is not “good” work within the discipline’.

We only have one reservation about this argument; we would put less emphasis on the idea that the dominant view about what is ‘good’ political science shifts over time. We would also take issue with their later contention that:

‘Anyway we look at them, then, disciplines are construed at least in large part as stern taskmasters. But the same received disciplinary traditions and practices which so powerfully mould and constrain us are at one and the same time powerfully enabling’ (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 7).

Our concern is that they constrain some researchers more than others and also enable some more than others. We shall return to these issues in the conclusion. First, we examine two sources of data: Goodin and Klingemann’s own data on the top authors and books in political science; and an analysis of the articles in two top US journals, *American Political Science Review* and the *American Journal of Political Science*, and two top UK journals, the *British Journal of Political Science* and *Political Studies*, for two periods, 1975–1979 and 1997–2001.³

It is important to acknowledge other work which bears on the issues discussed here, notably Pippa Norris’s 1997 article which presents a similar analysis of the content of articles published between 1971 and 1995 inclusive in the *European Journal of Political Science (EJPS)*, the journal of the European Consortium of Political Research, the *American Political Science Review* and *Political Studies*. We shall refer to her results in the text. However, her concerns, while similar, were different. She was concerned with the nationality of the authors of articles in the journals and with the methodologies they adopted. In contrast, she does not focus on epistemological issues and spends more time on the subject matter of the articles. In addition, she only considers one journal each from the US and the UK.

a) Goodin and Klingemann on the great and the good

Goodin and Klingemann offer a bibliographic analysis of the references contained in the chapters, other than the introduction, of their edited collection. This method is perhaps a trifle incestuous, but it does offer an interesting way of ‘gauging the reputation and standing of individuals and departments within the profession’ (Goodin and Klingemann, 1995, p. 23).

Table 1: Most frequently referenced authors discipline-wide (n = 35)

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | |
|-----------------------|----------|------------------------|----------------|-------|
| American | European | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Other |
| 83% | 17% | 37% | 40% | 23% |
| (29) | (6) | (13) | (14) | (8) |

Note: To be included in the list an author's work had to be cited at least 11 times.

Table 2: Most frequently referenced books (n = 14)

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | |
|-----------------------|----------|------------------------|----------------|-------|
| American | European | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Other |
| 86% | 14% | 33% | 33% | 33% |
| (12) | (2) | (4) | (4) | (4) |

Note: To be included in the list the book had to be cited at least five times.

Here, we focus on an analysis of two of their tables/appendices: Table A1.C, entitled most frequently referenced authors, discipline-wide; and Appendix 1D, entitled most frequently cited books. In both cases we were interested in establishing how many of the authors were American and how many of them were behaviouralists or rational choice theorists. Of course, there is an element of interpretation involved in allocating authors' work to the behaviouralist or rational choice category, but we think the problem is very limited as we both cross-checked our results. At the same time, a list of how we classified each author is available from us.

The picture from Tables 1 and 2 is clear. To the extent that Goodin and Klingemann's bibliographical exercise presents an accurate picture of the 'best' of the political science discipline, it is dominated by Americans and by behaviouralist and rational choice-based work. Indeed, if we dig a little deeper, then the point is even stronger, because all the six authors most frequently cited (see Table 1) who are not American either went to graduate school in America or currently work in America. Similarly, of the two books most frequently mentioned which are not either authored by an American or joint-authored with a majority of those authors being American, one is by a Briton, Brian Barry, who works in the United States, and one is joint-authored by an American and a European. At the same time, while

we have only classified five of the most frequently cited books as operating from a rational choice perspective, the top four books are all in this tradition. In addition, two others, Brian Barry's *Sociologists, Economists and Democracy* and March and Olsen's *Rediscovering Institutions*, deal extensively and sympathetically with that approach. It is also worth highlighting that two of the other books focus on normative political theory, which has always had a strong presence in political science and has largely remained outside of the epistemological fray.

b) Analysing the contribution to top journals

Here we focus on four journals chosen because they are widely regarded as the two key journals in the US, the *American Political Science Review* and the *American Journal of Political Science*, and in the UK, the *British Journal of Political Science (BJPS)* and *Political Studies*. We focused on two periods, 1975–1979 and 1997–2001, both because Goodin and Klingemann argue that the situation had changed significantly over the last few decades and because *BJPS* only commenced publication in 1971. We consider the nationality and the orientation to the discipline of the authors of the articles published in these two periods. For classification of the approach to the discipline taken by the authors we have added a fourth category to those reported above: normative political theory.

Obviously, there are potential reliability and reproducibility problems with any classification of this sort. We attempted to minimise these problems in two ways: first, all the articles were initially classified by a single coder, to ensure consistency of coding across years and journals; second, a different coder coded one year's articles from each journal for each period and only in the case of one article was there any divergence. As such, we think the results are robust. Once again, details of the categorisation of each article are available from the authors.

These tables reveal clear patterns. First, the US journals are dominated by Americans. These results confirm Norris's (1997) conclusion, specifically about *APSR*, that 'The *APSR* represents the main forum where American political scientists are speaking to each other, but not where the world speaks to American political science'. In addition, around half of the articles in the *British Journal of Political Science* are by Americans. Only *Political Studies* remains the preserve of European, and more specifically British, political scientists. As it is the journal of record of the PSA, this is perhaps not surprising. We are not developing a chauvinistic argument here, just pointing again to the American dominance of the profession. After all, while European authors find it almost impossible to publish in the top US journals, Americans publish regularly in these UK journals and indeed, as Norris shows (1997, Table 3), in *EJPS*. So, to extend Norris's point, we might suggest that the US profession is speaking to the world, but they are not listening to the world.

Tables 3 and 4 do suggest that the dominance of the positivist perspective in US political science has been reducing, and, in particular, that rational choice theory is very much displacing behaviouralism as the dominant approach. So, in *American Journal of Political Science*, 86 per cent of the articles in 1975–1979 were behaviouralist or utilised a rational choice perspective; the equivalent figure from 1997–2001 was reduced to 71 per cent. Between the two periods the percentage

Table 3: Articles in the four journals 1975–1979 (inclusive)a) *American Journal of Political Science*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 97% | 3% | 12.5% | 73% | 4% | 10% |

b) *American Political Science Review*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 97% | 3% | 15% | 61% | 11% | 13% |

c) *British Journal of Political Science*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 52.5% | 47.5% (40%) | 12% | 64% | 6% | 18% |

d) *Political Studies*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 19% | 81% (63%) | 12.5% | 73% | 4% | 10% |

Table 4: Articles in the four journals 1997–2002 (inclusive)a) *American Journal of Political Science*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 97% | 3% | 15% | 56% | 6% | 23% |

b) *American Political Science Review*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|-------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 92.5% | 7.5% | 21% | 46% | 20% | 13% |

c) *British Journal of Political Science*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 44% | 56% (31%) | 9% | 63% | 11% | 17% |

d) *Political Studies*

| Nationality of author | | Approach to discipline | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| American | Other | Rational choice theory | Behaviouralism | Normative theory | Other/non-positivist |
| 19.5% | 80.5% (69.5%) | 6% | 38% | 31% | 25% |

of rational choice articles grew slightly, from 12.5 per cent to 15 per cent, while the percentage of behaviouralist articles declined significantly, from 73 per cent to 56 per cent. In the *American Political Science Review*, the relevant figures for positivist contributions were 76 per cent in the first period and 67 per cent in the second. Here, there was a larger rise in rational choice articles, from 15 per cent to 21 per cent, and a more significant fall in behavioural papers, from 61 per cent to 46 per cent. This broadly confirms Norris's findings; although, with her different sample years, she found a bigger jump in rational choice contributions in *APSR*, from 16 per cent in the 1980s to 30 per cent between 1990 and 1995 (Norris, 1997, Table 1).

Goodin and Klingemann might claim that these changes are large enough to warrant a claim that the US profession is pluralist, but it still remains the case that articles adopting a positivistic approach make up over two-thirds of the output of these journals.

The position in the UK has always been, and remains, less extreme. Behaviouralism and, later, rational choice theory were both more contested in the UK and Tables 3 and 4 reflect that contestation. In particular, *Political Studies* has always had a very significant focus on normative political theory; so, 45 per cent of the articles in the earlier period were in this category. It is worth noting however that this proportion has decreased significantly between the two periods; it was 31 per cent in the second period.⁴

At the same time, the figures show that positivism has a very strong hold in these UK journals outside the area of normative political theory. So, if we exclude the publications in this area, 80 per cent of the other articles in *Political Studies* in the first period were underpinned by a positivist epistemology, although this had reduced to 64 per cent in the later period. As far as the *British Journal of Political Science* is concerned, it publishes little normative political theory, but 76 per cent of its output in the earlier period and 73 per cent in the later period utilised a behaviouralist or a rational choice approach. Indeed, our figures suggest that *BJPS* is the last real stronghold of behaviouralism, with 64 per cent of the articles published in the later period in that category, only a 1 per cent reduction from the earlier period. Political science in the UK may have some claims to be a more pluralist profession than it is in the US, but, nevertheless, outside the field of normative political theory, non-positivists are generally not published in the two major UK journals.

3 The future of political science in Britain

Some may contest our figures, although we have done our best to make them as accurate as possible. However, as always, the key problem is one of interpretation – why does this asymmetry between the publication of positivist and non-positivist authors occur in major journals? Of course, it could be, and Goodin and Klingemann might well argue this, that the positivists produce the best work. It would not be difficult to establish that if you define good work as work that uses theory to generate hypotheses that are then tested. In other words, if you estab-

lish positivist criteria of what is good work, then you are likely to judge positivist work as good and non-positivist work as bad.

On the other hand, one might claim that political science in both the US and the UK has positivist gatekeepers. Of course, this is what Steve Smith has consistently argued about International Relations (for one example see Smith, 2000); that supporters of the dominant positivist paradigm in US International Relations also act as gatekeepers on the profession, both through their control over appointments and over the key academic journals. In that field Ole Wæver's (1998) figures certainly suggest that there may be validity in Smith's argument. Wæver found that articles from a broadly positivist position accounted for 78 per cent of the articles published in *International Studies Quarterly* and 64 per cent of those published in *International Organization*.

A similar argument lay behind the recent 'Perestroika' movement in the American Political Science Association (APSA). This began with an anonymous letter sent to APSA members, continued with a letter sent by 124 political scientists to the *New York Times* and became a significant alternative force within APSA. In essence, the movement focuses on two main criticisms of APSA and the US profession (for more details see various on-line or hard-copy issues of *PS: Political Science and Politics* – www.apsanet.org where both sides of the argument are rehearsed; and Smith, 2002): first, the dominance of positivism, with its focus upon generalisation and statistics, what some see as the triumph of method over substance; and, second, the strong focus that the *American Political Science Review*, APSA's journal, has on positivist research (a claim substantiated by our figures), which, given the key role the journal plays for hiring decisions in the best US Departments, effectively gatekeeps the profession.

We shall not engage further with this argument here. Suffice it to say that many in political science, and International Relations, have a concern that there is gatekeeping, while our figures clearly indicate the dominance of positivism in some of the profession's main outlets. In our view, the pluralism that Goodin and Klingemann avow is an aspiration, not a reality. However, we also need to recognise that pluralism and rapprochement are not synonyms. Our point is that you cannot move simply towards a rapprochement between different approaches to political science that are rooted in alternate ontological and epistemological positions; we insist that an epistemological position is a skin, not a sweater. In our view, while we need to acknowledge differences and embrace pluralism, we also need to recognise that work based upon different ontologies and epistemologies cannot be simply combined.

This does not mean that the research published by authors operating with a particular ontological and epistemological position cannot be used by others who do not share that position. Rather, we are emphasising that this must be done carefully. Of course, there are differing degrees of common ground between different epistemological positions. For example, we would classify ourselves as critical realists (see Cruickshank, 2003⁵) and acknowledge the importance of the double hermeneutic. As such, we share much in common with the social constructivist strand of interpretism. In addition, as realists, we can acknowledge the utility of positivist research, while still arguing that not all social relationships are directly

observable and that empirical 'results' can be interpreted in a number of different ways depending upon the theoretical position one adopts. Our aim is not to defend realism here. Rather we are defending what may be a narrower idea of pluralism than that advocated by Goodin and Klingeman. To us pluralism involves acknowledging that there are different ways to do political science.

This may seem self-evident, but it doesn't always occur. In our view, this is, in the most part, because positivists have a tendency to claim the superiority of their approach. We do not want to develop this argument here as one of us has made it a number of times before (see in particular the debate between Dowding, 2001, and Marsh and Smith, 2001 for an exploration of this issue which, in our view, illustrates the arrogance of some positivists). However, as we saw earlier, even Sanders, who is an excellent positivist political scientist, tends to judge the quality of 'good' political science using positivist criteria, which most non-positivists would reject, at least in part. Our plea is modest; let us acknowledge political science as a broad church, engaging with people operating from other epistemological positions with an understanding of the positions they take, rather than a rejection of their work out of hand. Let us try to make political science a pluralist profession in the sense that term is used here.

Perhaps we should finish with two more parochial points. Firstly, to the extent that our results indicate a positivist, even a rational choice, bias in political science publication outlets, then this does not reflect the interests and concerns of the UK profession. There have been a number of fairly recent surveys of the British political science profession, which, to an extent, offer different conclusions. Yet, all demonstrate that rational choice theory and behaviouralism, underpinned by positivism, does not dominate British political science. Jack Hayward's (1999) overview of the study of the discipline in Britain may be so narrow as to be perverse (on this see Rhodes, 2002), but it does show that behaviouralism and positivism were strongly resisted in the UK. Rhodes's overview is more interesting and in our view much sounder. He identifies three traditions in British political science: idealism; professionalism; and socialism. It is not necessary to discuss these here. Rather, the point is that there are a variety of traditions (or approaches) and only one, professionalism, shows significant positivist residues. More empirically, the Political Studies Association's review of its membership in 2002 revealed a limited number of members whose main interest was in methods or behaviouralist and rational choice approaches.

Secondly, and there is a more practical chauvinism involved here, if US journals rarely take articles from UK academics, then the UK profession, and particularly any future Politics and International Relations Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) panel, or sub-panel, would be misguided to establish a hierarchy of journals with the US journals at the top. If any panel moved in that direction, then we would not be doing ourselves justice and setting ourselves up to fail.

Notes

We would like to thank Bob Goodin, Rod Rhodes, Pippa Norris, Mark Blythe and two anonymous journal referees for their suggestions. These revisions were completed while David Marsh was a Visiting Fellow in the Politics Programme of The Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

- 1 Of course, the ESRC's move to require a stronger methods training component in its 1 + 3 PhD Programme will probably mean that in future more UK researchers have a stronger grounding in methods.
- 2 To take just a few examples: Hall and Taylor (1996) identify three forms of new institutionalism (rational choice, sociological and historical); by contrast, Peters (1999) develops a sevenfold typology (normative, rational choice, historical, empirical, sociological, institutions of interest representation and international institutionalism; whilst Lowndes (2002) refers to international, historical and empirical forms in order to interrogate the dichotomisation of rational choice and normative approaches.
- 3 We are not positivists, so some might question our use of what could be seen as a positivist methodology. However, as epistemological realists (see either Marsh and Furlong, 2002, or Marsh and Smith, 2001, for a discussion of this position), we accept that some relationships are directly observable and, thus, can be quantitatively studied.
- 4 One issue not considered here is the editorship of the relevant journals. So, as far as *Political Studies* is concerned for example, Michael Moran presided over a period in which there was a move away from normative political theory, and there is some evidence that under Patrick Dunleavy the journal has moved in a more positivist direction – we will track any such changes for a putative follow-up article.
- 5 What is critical realism? Cruickshank (2003, pp.1–2) argues that in ontological terms it is foundationalist:

‘This view of knowledge holds that there is an objective reality, and instead of hoping one day we will somehow have absolute knowledge, the expectation is that knowledge claims will continue to be better interpretations of reality. As knowledge claims are fallible, the best we can do is improve our interpretations of reality, rather than seek a definitive, finished “Truth”’.

As such, in epistemological terms the view is that our access to reality is mediated by theory, and theories are fallible. Thus, as Cruickshank (2003, p. 2) continues: ‘research [is] from the very start influenced by assumptions’. Research is ‘about gaining knowledge of a reality that exists independently of our representations of it’ (Cruickshank, 2003, p. 3). However, that knowledge is interpreted through the theoretical lens of the researcher.

References

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