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POLITICAL INTOLERANCE AND POLITICAL REPRESSION DURING THE MCCARTHY RED SCARE

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I test several hypotheses concerning the origins of political repression in the states of the United States. The hypotheses are drawn from the elitist theory of democracy, which asserts that repression of unpopular political minorities stems from the intolerance of the mass public, the generally more tolerant elites not supporting such repression. Focusing on the repressive legislation adopted by the states during the McCarthy era, I examine the relationships between elite and mass opinion and repressive public policy. Generally it seems that elites, not masses, were responsible for the repression of the era. These findings suggest that the elitist theory of democracy is in need of substantial theoretical reconsideration, as well as further empirical investigation.

Over three decades of research on citizen willingness to "put up with" political differences has led to the conclusion that the U.S. public is remarkably intolerant. Though the particular political minority that is salient enough to attract the wrath of the public may oscillate over time between the Left and the Right (e.g., Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982), generally, to be much outside the centrist mainstream of U.S. politics is to incur a considerable risk of being the object of mass political intolerance.

At the same time, however, U.S. public policy is commonly regarded as being relatively tolerant of political minorities. Most citizens believe that all citizens are offered tremendous opportunities for the expression of their political preferences (e.g., McClosky and Brill 1983, 78). The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is commonly regarded as one of the most uncompromising assertions of the right to freedom of speech to be found in

the world ("Congress shall make no law. . ."). Policy, if not public opinion, appears to protect and encourage political diversity and competition.

The seeming inconsistency between opinion and policy has not gone unnoticed by scholars. Some argue that the masses are not nearly so intolerant as they seem, in part due to biases in the questions used to measure intolerance (e.g., Femia 1975) and in part because the greater educational opportunity of the last few decades has created more widespread acceptance of political diversity (e.g., Davis 1975; Nunn, Crockett, and Williams 1978). Most, however, are willing to accept at face value the relative intolerance of the mass public and the relative tolerance of public policy but to seek reconciliation of the seeming contradiction by turning to the processes linking opinion to policy. Public policy is tolerant in the United States because the processes through which citizen preferences are linked to government action do not faith-

fully translate intolerant opinion inputs into repressive policy outputs. Just as in so many other substantive policy areas, public policy concerning the rights of political minorities fails to reflect the intolerant attitudes of the mass public.

Instead, the elitist theory of democracy asserts, policy is protective of political minorities because it reflects the preferences of elites, preferences that tend to be more tolerant than those of the mass public. For a variety of reasons, those who exert influence over the policy-making process in the United States are more willing to restrain the coercive power of the state in its dealings with political opposition groups. Thus there is a linkage between policy and opinion, but it is to *tolerant elite opinion*, not to *intolerant mass opinion*. Mass opinion is ordinarily not of great significance; public policy reflects elite opinion and is consequently tolerant of political diversity. The democratic character of the regime is enhanced through the political apathy and immobility of the masses, according to the elitist theory of democracy.¹

The elitist theory nonetheless asserts that outbreaks of political repression—when they occur—are attributable to the mass public. While the preferences of ordinary citizens typically have little influence over public policy—in part, perhaps, because citizens have no real preferences on most civil liberties issues—there are instances in which the intolerance of the mass public becomes mobilized. Under conditions of perceived threat to the status quo, for example, members of the mass public may become politically active. In the context of the general propensity toward intolerance among the mass public, mobilization typically results in demands for political repression. Thus, the elitist theory of democracy hypothesizes that political repression flows from demands from an activated mass public.

The theory of “pluralistic intolerance”—recently proposed by Sullivan, Piereson,

and Marcus (1979, 1982) and Krouse and Marcus (1984)—provides a nice explanation of the process through which mass intolerance is mobilized (see also Sullivan et al. 1985). The theory asserts that one of the primary causes of political repression is the *focusing* of mass intolerance on a specific unpopular political minority. To the extent that intolerance becomes focused, it is capable of being mobilized. Mobilization results in demands for political repression, demands to which policymakers accede. The authors claim support for their theory from recent U.S. history:

During the 1950s, the United States was undoubtedly a society characterized by considerable consensus in target group selection. The Communist Party and its suspected sympathizers were subjected to significant repression, and there seemed to be a great deal of support for such actions among large segments of the political leadership as well as the mass public. . . . The political fragmentation and the proliferation of extremist groups in American politics since the 1950s has undoubtedly resulted in a greater degree of diversity in target group selection. If this is the case, such a situation is less likely to result in repressive action, even if the mass public is roughly as intolerant as *individuals* as they were in the 1950s (Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982, 85, emphasis in original).

Thus both the elitist theory of democracy and the theory of pluralistic intolerance are founded upon assumptions about the linkage between opinion and policy.

Despite the wide acceptance of the elitist theory of democracy, there has been very little empirical investigation of this critical linkage between opinion and policy.² Consequently, this research is designed as an empirical test of the policy implications of the widespread intolerance that seems to characterize the political culture of the United States. Using data on elite and mass opinion and on public policy in the states, the linkage hypothesis is tested. My focus is on the era of the McCarthy Red Scare, due to its

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political and theoretical importance. Thus I assess whether there are any significant policy implications that flow from elite and mass intolerance.

Public Policy Repression

Conceptualization

A major impediment to drawing conclusions about the linkage between political intolerance and the degree of repression in U.S. public policy is that rigorous conceptualizations and reproducible operationalizations of policy repression do not exist. Conceptually, I define *repressive public policy* as statutory restriction on *oppositionist political activity* (by which I mean activities through which citizens, individually or in groups, compete for political power [cf. Dahl 1971]) upon some, but not all, competitors for political power.³ For example, policy outlawing a political party would be considered repressive, just as would policy that requires the members of some political parties to register with the government while not placing similar requirements on members of other political parties. Though there are some significant limitations to this definition, there is utility to considering the absence of political repression (political freedom) as including unimpaired opportunities for all full citizens

1. to formulate their preferences
2. to signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action
3. to have their preferences weighted equally in the conduct of the government, that is, weighted with no discrimination because of the content or source of the preference (Dahl 1971, 1-2).

That is the working definition to be used in this research.

Operationalizing Political Repression—the 1950s

There have been a few systematic attempts at measuring political repression as a policy output of government. Bilson (1982), for instance, examined the degree of freedom available in 184 polities, using as a measure of freedom the ratings of the repressiveness developed by Freedom House. Dahl provides system scores on one of his main dimensions of *polyarchy* (opportunities for political opposition) for 114 countries as they stood in about 1969 (Dahl 1971, 232). In their various research reports Page and Shapiro (e.g., 1983) measure civil rights and civil liberties opinions and policies in terms of the adoption of specific sorts of public policy. Typically, however, the endogenous concept in most studies of state policy outputs is some sort of expenditure variable. (See Thompson 1981 for a critique of this practice.) These earlier efforts can inform the construction of a measure of political repression in the policy outputs of the American states.

The measure of policy repression that serves as the dependent variable in this analysis is an index indicating the degree of political repression directed against the Communist party and its members during the late 1940s and 1950s. A host of actions against Communists was taken by the states, including disqualifying them from public employment (including from teaching positions in public schools); denying them access to the ballot as candidates, and prohibiting them from serving in public office even if legally elected; requiring Communists to register with the government; and outright bans on the Party. Forced registration was a means toward achieving these ends.

Of the fifty states, twenty-eight took none of these actions against Communists.⁴ Two states—Arkansas and Texas—banned Communists from the ballot and from public employment, as well as banning the Party itself and requiring that

Communists register with the government. Another five states adopted all three measures against the Communists, but did not require that they register with the government. Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Washington did not formally bar Communists from public employment but did outlaw the party and forbade its members from participating in politics. The remaining twelve states took some, but not all, actions against the Communists. From these data, a simple index of political repression has been calculated. The index includes taking no action, banning Communists from public employment, banning Communists from running candidates and holding public office, and completely banning Communists and the Communist Party. A "bonus" score of .5 was given to those states requiring that Communists register with the government.⁵ Table 1 shows the scores of the individual states on this measure.

This measure can rightly be considered to be a valid indicator of political repression by the states.⁶ In asserting this I do not gainsay that the state has the right—indeed, the obligation—to provide for its internal security. Consequently, statutes that prohibit such actions as insurrection do not necessarily constitute political repression. For instance, Texas made it unlawful to "commit, attempt to commit, or aid in the commission of any act intended to overthrow" the Texas government (Art. 6689-3A, Sec. 5). This section proscribes action, not thought or speech, and is therefore not an appropriate measure of political repression. However, the next subsection of the statute made it illegal to "advocate, abet, advise, or teach by any means any person to commit" a revolutionary act. Indeed, even conspiracy to advocate is prohibited (Art. 6889-3A, Sec. 5 [3]). This is indeed a constraint on the speech of political minorities and therefore is treated as repressive. As the action prohibited moves beyond a specific, criminal behavior, the line be-

tween repressive and nonrepressive legislation becomes less clear. Gellhorn (1952) commented,

Traditionally the criminal law has dealt with the malefactor, the one who himself committed an offense. Departing from this tradition is the recent tendency to ascribe criminal potentialities to a body of persons (usually, though not invariably, the Communists) and to lay restraints upon any individual who can be linked with the group. This, of course, greatly widens the concept of subversive activities, because it results, in truth, in forgetting about activities altogether. It substitutes associations as the objects of the law's impact. Any attempt to define subversion as used in modern statutes must therefore refer to the mere possibility of activity as well as to present lawlessness (p. 360).

There can be little doubt as to the effectiveness of this anti-Communist legislation. Not only were the Communist Party U.S.A. and other Communist parties essentially eradicated, but so too were a wide variety of non-Communists. It has been estimated that of the work force of 65 million, 13 million were affected by loyalty and security programs during the McCarthy era (Brown 1958). Brown calculates that over 11 thousand individuals were fired as a result of government and private loyalty programs. More than 100 people were convicted under the federal Smith Act, and 135 people were cited for contempt by the House Un-American Activities Committee. Nearly one-half of the social science professors teaching in universities at the time expressed medium or high apprehension about possible adverse repercussions to them as a result of their political beliefs and activities (Lazarsfeld and Thielens 1958). Case studies of local and state politics vividly portray the effects of anti-Communist legislation on progressives of various sorts (e.g., Carleton 1985). The "silent generation" that emerged from McCarthyism is testimony enough to the widespread effects—direct and indirect—of the political repression of the era (see also Goldstein 1978, 369-96).

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Table 1. Political Repression of Communists by American State Governments

State	Banned from Public Employment	Banned from Politics	Banned Outright	Scale Score
Arkansas	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.5
Texas	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.5
Arizona	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.0
Indiana	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.0
Massachusetts	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.0
Nebraska	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.0
Oklahoma	Yes	Yes	Yes	3.0
Pennsylvania	No	Yes	Yes	3.0
Tennessee	No	Yes	Yes	3.0
Washington	No	Yes	Yes	3.0
Alabama	Yes	Yes	No	2.5
Louisiana	Yes	Yes	No	2.5
Michigan	Yes	Yes	No	2.5
Wyoming	Yes	Yes	No	2.5
Florida	Yes	Yes	No	2.0
Georgia	Yes	Yes	No	2.0
Illinois	Yes	Yes	No	2.0
California	Yes	No	No	1.0
New York	Yes	No	No	1.0
Delaware	No	No	No	.5
Mississippi	No	No	No	.5
New Mexico	No	No	No	.5
Alaska	No	No	No	.0
Colorado	No	No	No	.0
Connecticut	No	No	No	.0
Hawaii	No	No	No	.0
Iowa	No	No	No	.0
Idaho	No	No	No	.0
Kentucky	No	No	No	.0
Kansas	No	No	No	.0
Maryland	No	No	No	.0
Maine	No	No	No	.0
Minnesota	No	No	No	.0
Missouri	No	No	No	.0
Montana	No	No	No	.0
North Carolina	No	No	No	.0
North Dakota	No	No	No	.0
New Hampshire	No	No	No	.0
New Jersey	No	No	No	.0
Nevada	No	No	No	.0
Ohio	No	No	No	.0
Oregon	No	No	No	.0
Rhode Island	No	No	No	.0
South Carolina	No	No	No	.0
South Dakota	No	No	No	.0
Utah	No	No	No	.0
Vermont	No	No	No	.0
Virginia	No	No	No	.0
West Virginia	No	No	No	.0
Wisconsin	No	No	No	.0

Note: The scale score is a Guttman score. A "bonus" of .5 was added to the scale score if the state also required that Communists register with the government. See note 4 for details of the assignments of scores to each state.

Nor was the repression of the era a function of the degree of objective threat to the security of the state. Political repression was just as likely to occur in states with virtually no Communists as it was to occur in states with large numbers of Communists.⁷ The repression of Communists bore no relationship to the degree of threat posed by local Communists.

It might seem that the repression of Communists, though it is clearly repression within the context of the definition proffered above, is not necessarily "anti-democratic" because the objects of the repression are themselves "antidemocrats." To repress Communists is to preserve democracy, it might be argued. Several retorts to this position can be formulated. First, for democracies to preserve democracy through nondemocratic means is illogical because democracy refers to a set of means, as well as ends (e.g., Dahl 1956, 1961, 1971; Key 1961; Schumpeter 1950). The means argument can also be judged in terms of the necessity of the means. At least in retrospect (but probably otherwise as well), it is difficult to make the argument that the degree of threat to the polity from Communists in the 1940s and 1950s in any way paralleled the degree of political repression (e.g., Goldstein 1978). Second, the assumption that Communists and other objects of political repression are "antidemocratic" must be considered as an empirical question itself in need of systematic investigation. As a first consideration, it is necessary to specify which Communists are being considered, inasmuch as the diversity among those adopting—or being assigned—the label is tremendous. Merely to postulate that Communists are antidemocratic is inadequate. Third, the repression of Communists no doubt has a chilling effect on those who, while not Communists, oppose the political status quo. In recognizing the coercive power of the state and its willingness to direct that power against

those who dissent, the effect of repressive public policy extends far beyond the target group.

Public Opinion Intolerance

Conceptualization

"Political tolerance" refers to the willingness of citizens to support the extension of rights of citizenship to all members of the polity, that is, to allow political freedoms to those who are politically different. Thus, "tolerance implies a willingness to 'put up with' those things that one rejects. Politically, it implies a willingness to permit the expression of those ideas or interests that one opposes. A tolerant regime, then, like a tolerant individual, is one that allows a wide berth to those ideas that challenge its way of life" (Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1979, 784). Thus, political tolerance includes support for institutional guarantees of the right to oppose the existing regime, including the rights to vote, to participate in political parties, to organize politically and to attempt political persuasion. Though there may be some disagreement about the operationalization of the concept, its conceptual definition is relatively noncontroversial (see Gibson and Bingham 1982).

Operationalization

The simple linkage hypothesis is that where the mass public is more intolerant, state public policy is more repressive. Though the hypothesis is simple, deriving measures of mass intolerance is by no means uncomplicated. Indeed, the study of state politics continually confronts the difficulty of deriving measures of state public opinion. Though there are five general alternatives—ranging from simulations to individual state surveys—the only viable option for estimating state-level opinion intolerance during the

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McCarthy era is to aggregate national surveys by state.

The source of the opinion data is the Stouffer survey, conducted in 1954. This survey is widely regarded as the classic study that initiated inquiry into the political tolerance of elites and masses (even though earlier evidence exists, e.g., Hyman and Sheatsley 1953). Two independent surveys were actually conducted for Stouffer: one by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) and the other by the American Institute for Public Opinion (AIPO-Gallup). This design was adopted for the explicit purpose of demonstrating the accuracy and reliability of public opinion surveys based on random samples. Each agency surveyed a sample of the mass public and of the political elites.⁸

Stouffer created a six-point scale to indicate political intolerance (see Stouffer 1955, 262-69). The index is a Guttman scale based on the responses to fifteen items concerning support for the civil liberties of Communists, socialists, and atheists (see Appendix for details). The items meet conventional standards of scalability and are widely used today as indicators of political tolerance (e.g., Davis 1975; Nunn, Crockett, and Williams 1978; McCutcheon 1985; and the General Social Survey, conducted annually by NORC).

The process of aggregating these tolerance scores by state is difficult because the states of residence of the respondents in the Stouffer surveys were never entered in any known version of the data set. Through an indirect process, using the identity of the interviewer and the check-in sheets used to record the locations (city and state) of the interviews conducted by each interviewer, state of residence could be ascertained for the NORC half of the Stouffer data set. The respondents were aggregated by state of residence to create summary indicators of the level of intolerance in each of the states. The Appendix

reports the means, standard deviations, and numbers of cases and primary sampling units for this tolerance scale for the states represented in the NORC portion of the Stouffer survey. Evidence that this aggregation process produces reasonably valid state-level estimates of political intolerance is also presented.

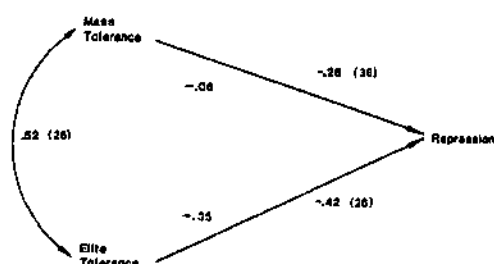
Aggregating the elite interviews to the state level is in one sense more perilous and in another sense less perilous. With a considerably small number of subjects (758 in Stouffer's NORC sample), the means become more unstable. On the other hand, the aggregation is not done for the purpose of estimating some sort of elite population parameter. The elites selected were in no sense a random sample of state elites, so it makes little sense to try to make inferences from the sample to some larger elite population. Instead, the elite samples represent only themselves. The Appendix reports the state means, standard deviations, and numbers of cases.

There is a moderate relationship between elite and mass opinion in the state ($r = .52$). To the extent that we would expect elite and mass opinion in the states to covary, this correlation serves to validate the aggregate measures of opinion. The substantive implications of this correlation are considered below.

The Simple Relationship between Opinion and Policy

Figure 1 reports the relationships between mass and elite political intolerance and the adoption of repressive public policies by the states. There is a modest bivariate relationship during the McCarthy era between mass opinion and repressive public policy. In states in which the mass public was more intolerant, there tended to be greater political repression, thus seeming to support the elitist theory. However, the relationship is

Figure 1. Relationships between Opinion and Policy



Note: Boldfaced entries are bivariate correlation coefficients, with pairwise missing data deletion. The nonboldfaced entries are standardized regression coefficients from a weighted least squares analysis using listwise missing data deletion. The numbers of cases are shown in parentheses.

somewhat stronger between elite opinion and repression. From a weighted least squares analysis incorporating both elite opinion and mass opinion, it is clear that it is elite preferences that most influence public policy. The *beta* for mass opinion is $-.06$; for elite opinion, it is $-.35$ (significant beyond .01).⁹ Thus political repression occurred in states with relatively intolerant elites. Beyond the intolerance of elites, the preferences of the mass public seemed to matter little.

Table 2 reports a cross-tabulation of policy outputs with elite and mass opin-

ion. The opinion variables have been dichotomized at their respective means. Though the number of cases shown in this table is small—demanding caution in interpreting the percentages—the data reveal striking support for the conclusion that elite opinion, not mass opinion, determines public policy. In eight of the ten states in which elites were relatively less tolerant, repressive legislation was adopted. In only six of the sixteen states in which elites were relatively more tolerant was repressive legislation passed. Variation in mass opinion makes little difference for public policy.¹⁰

It is a little surprising that elite opinion has such a significant impact on policy repression. After all, elites tend to be relatively more tolerant than the masses. Indeed, this finding is the empirical linchpin of the elitist theory of democracy.¹¹ This leads one to wonder just how much intolerance there was among the elites in the Stouffer data.

The survey data in fact reveal ample evidence of elite intolerance. For instance, fully *two-thirds* of the elites were willing to strip admitted Communists of their U.S. citizenship (Stouffer 1955, 43). Indeed, one reading of the Stouffer data is that elites and masses differed principally on the degree of proof of Communist party membership necessary before repression was thought legitimate. Much of the

Table 2. The Influence of Elite and Mass Opinion on the Repression of Communists (percentages)

Action	Elite Opinion Less Tolerant		Elite Opinion More Tolerant	
	Mass Opinion Less Tolerant	Mass Opinion More Tolerant	Mass Opinion Less Tolerant	Mass Opinion More Tolerant
Adopted repressive legislation	71	100	33	39
Did not adopt repressive legislation	29	0	67	62
Total	100	100	100	101*
Number of cases	7	3	3	13

*Does not total 100 because of rounding error.

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mass public was willing to accept a very low level of proof of party membership (e.g., innuendo), while many elites required a legal determination of Communist affiliation. Once convinced of the charge, however, elites were very nearly as intolerant of Communists as members of the mass public. Just as McClosky and Brill (1983) have more recently shown significant intolerance within their elite samples, there is enough intolerance among these state elites to make them the driving force in the repression of Communists. Thus it is plausible that elite intolerance was largely responsible for the repressive policies of the era.

At the same time, there is little evidence that the communism issue was of burning concern to the U.S. public. For instance, Stouffer reported that "the number of people who said [in response to an open-ended question] that they were worried either about the threat of Communists in the United States or about civil liberties was, even by the most generous interpretation of occasionally ambiguous responses, *less than 1%*" (Stouffer 1955, 59, emphasis in original). Only one-third of the subjects reported having talked about communism in the United States in the week prior to the interview, despite the fact that the Army-McCarthy hearings were in progress during a portion of the survey period. Stouffer asserted, "For most people neither the internal Communist threat nor the threat to civil liberties was a matter of universal burning concern. Such findings are important. They should be of interest to a future historian who might otherwise be tempted, from isolated and dramatic events in the news, to portray too vividly the emotional climate of America in 1954" (Stouffer 1955, 72).

The issue of communism in the United States was of much greater concern to the elites. Nearly two-thirds of them reported having talked about communism in the United States during the week prior to the interview. When asked how closely they

followed news about Communists, fully 44% of the mass sample responded "hardly at all," while only 13% of the elite sample was as unconcerned (Stouffer 1955, 84). Just as elites typically exhibit greater knowledge and concern about public issues, they were far more attentive to the issue of domestic Communists.

Thus it is difficult to imagine that the repression of the 1950s was inspired by demands for repressive public policy from a mobilized mass public. Indeed, the most intense political intolerance was concentrated within that segment of the mass public *least* likely to have an impact on public policy (see also Gibson 1987). There can be no doubt that the mass public was highly intolerant in its attitudes during the 1950s. Absent issue salience, however, it is difficult to imagine that the U.S. people had mobilized sufficiently to have created the repression of the era.¹²

The actual effect of mass opinion may be masked a bit in these data, however. Perhaps it is useful to treat mass intolerance as essentially a constant across the states during the McCarthy era. Because the mass public was generally willing to support political repression of Communists, elites were basically free to shape public policy. In states in which the elites were relatively tolerant, tolerant policy prevailed. Where elites were relatively less tolerant, repression resulted. In neither case did mass opinion *cause* public policy. Instead, policy was framed by the elites. Nonetheless, the willingness of the mass public to accept repressive policies was no doubt important. Thus, the policy-making process need not be seen as a "demand-input" process with all its untenable assumptions but rather can be seen as one in which the preferences of the mass public—perhaps even the political culture of the state—set the broad parameters of public policy. In this sense, then, mass political intolerance "matters" for public policy.

We must also note that even if the

broader mass public has little influence upon public policy, specialized segments of the public may still be important. For instance, there is some correlation ($r = .31$) between the number of American Legion members in the state and political repression.¹³ Since the American Legion had long been in the forefront of the crusade against communism (see, e.g., American Legion 1937), it is likely that greater numbers of members in the state translated into more effective lobbying power. Thus particular segments of the mass public can indeed be mobilized for repressive purposes.

I should also reemphasize the strong correlation between elite opinion and mass opinion. This correlation may imply that elites are responsive to mass opinion or that they mold mass opinion or that elite opinion is shaped by the same sort of factors as shape mass opinion. Though it is not possible to disentangle the causal process statistically, there is some evidence that both elite and mass opinion reflect the more fundamental political culture of the state. The correlation between a measure of Elazar's state-level political culture and mass intolerance is $-.68$; for elite opinion the correlation is $-.66$. In states with more traditionalistic political cultures both mass and elites tend to be more intolerant. Moreover, there is some direct relationship between political culture and political repression ($r = .31$). Perhaps elite and mass preferences generally reflect basic cultural values concerning the breadth of legitimate political participation and contestation. In the moralistic political culture everyone should participate; only professionals should be active in the individualistic culture; and only the appropriate elite in traditionalistic political cultures (Elazar 1972, 101-2). Perhaps the political culture of the state legitimizes broad propensities toward intolerance, propensities that become mobilized during political crises.

One might also look at the data in

Figure 1 from a very different perspective. Rather than mass opinion causing public policy, perhaps mass opinion is *caused by* policy (cf. Page, Shapiro, and Dempsey 1987). To turn the elitist theory on its head, it is quite possible that the U.S. mass public is intolerant precisely because they have been persuaded and reinforced by the intolerance of U.S. public policy. Through the intolerance of public policy, citizens learn that it is acceptable, if not desirable, to repress one's political enemies. Though I do not gainsay that there are significant norms in U.S. society supportive of political tolerance (see Sniderman 1975), in practice citizens have been taught by federal and state legislation that Communists should *not* be tolerated. It is not surprising that many citizens have learned the lesson well.¹⁴

This argument is somewhat at variance with those who argue that greater exposure to the dominant cultural norms in the United States contributes to greater political tolerance. If the norms are tolerant, then greater exposure should create tolerance. But greater awareness of *repressive* norms—as expressed in public policies—should be associated with greater *intolerance*. Thus the result of political activism, high self-esteem, and other qualities that make us assimilate social norms will vary according to the nature of the norms (see Sullivan et al. 1985).

The norms of U.S. politics are at once tolerant and intolerant. Certainly, no one can doubt that support for civil liberties is a widely shared value. The key question, however, is "civil liberties for whom?" The U.S. political culture has long distinguished between "true Americans" and others and has always been willing to deny civil liberties to those who are "un-American." Foreign "isms" have repeatedly become the bogeymen in ideological conflict in the United States. Thus, citizens learn that civil liberties are indeed important to protect, but only for those

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who have a "legitimate" right to the liberty.

Thus the initial evidence is that political repression during the McCarthy era was most likely initiated by elites even if the mass public in most states would have acquiesced. These findings are not compatible with the elitist views that mass intolerance threatens democracy and that elites are the carriers of the democratic creed.

The Political Culture of Intolerance and Repression

These findings may very well be limited to the specific historical era of McCarthyism. Due to the unavailability of historical data on elite and mass opinion it is difficult to judge whether earlier outbreaks of political repression can also be attributed to elite intolerance. Building on the discussion of political culture above, however, it is possible to give this issue further consideration.

Following World War I roughly one-half of the U.S. states adopted criminal syndicalism statutes.¹⁵ For example, the statute adopted by California shortly after World War I defined the crime as "any doctrine or precept advocating, teaching or aiding and abetting the commission of crime, sabotage (which word is hereby defined as meaning willful and malicious physical damage or injury to physical property), or unlawful acts of force and violence or unlawful methods of terrorism as a means of accomplishing a change in industrial ownership or control, or effecting any political change" (Calif. Statutes, 1919. Ch. 188, Sec. 1, p. 281). Though no opinion data exist for the 1920s, it is possible to examine the relationship between state-level political culture and political repression during this earlier era.

The correlation between state political culture and the adoption of criminal syndicalism statutes is .40 ($N = 50$), indicat-

ing once again that more traditionalistic states were more likely to engage in political repression. That this correlation is slightly stronger than the coefficient observed for the 1950s might speak to the breakdown of homogeneous state cultures as the population became more mobile in the twentieth century. In any event, we see in this correlation evidence that the more detailed findings of the McCarthy era may not be atypical.¹⁶

Discussion

What conclusions about the elitist theory of democracy and the theory of pluralistic intolerance does this analysis support? First, I have discovered no evidence that political repression in the U.S. states stems from demands from ordinary citizens to curtail the rights and activities of unpopular political minorities. This finding differs from what is predicted by the elitist theory of democracy. Second, I find some evidence of elite complicity in the repression of the McCarthy era, a finding that is also incompatible with the elitist theory. Generally, then, this research casts doubt on the elitist theory of democracy.

Nor are these findings necessarily compatible with the theory of pluralistic intolerance advocated by Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus. Though political intolerance in the 1950s was widespread and highly focused, there seems to have been little direct effect of mass opinion on public policy. Like the elitist theory of democracy, the theory of pluralistic intolerance places too much emphasis on mass opinion as a determinant of public policy.

The "demand-input" linkage process implicitly posited by these theories is probably their critical flaw. Early public opinion research that found high levels of mass political intolerance too quickly assumed that mass intolerance translated directly into public policy. The assumption was easy to make since little was

known of the processes linking opinions with policy. As linkage research has accumulated, however, the simple hypothesis relating opinion to policy has become increasingly untenable. The justification for studying mass political tolerance therefore cannot be found in the hypothesis that survey responses direct public policy.

At the same time, however, public opinion may not be completely irrelevant. Tolerance opinion strongly reflects the political cultures of the states, and, at least in the 1950s, political culture was significantly related to levels of political repression. Opinion is important in the policy process because it delimits the range of acceptable policy alternatives. It may well be that mass opinion is manipulated and shaped by elites; nonetheless, those who would propose repressive policies in California face a very different set of political constraints than those who propose repressive policies in Arkansas. This is not to say that repression is impossible—indeed, California has a long history of significant levels of political repression—but rather that the task of gaining acceptance for repression is different under differing cultural contexts.

For over three decades now, political scientists have systematically studied public policy and public opinion. Significant advances have been made in understanding many sorts of state policy outputs, and we have developed a wealth of information about political tolerance. To date, however, little attention has been given to repression as a policy output, and even less attention has been devoted to behavioral and policy implications of tolerance attitudes. The failure to investigate the linkage between opinion and policy is all the more significant because one of the most widely accepted theories in political science—the elitist theory of democracy—was developed on the basis of an assumed linkage between opinion and policy. I hope that this research,

though only a crude beginning, will serve as an early step in continuing research into these most important problems of democracy.

Appendix: Measurement and Aggregation Error in the State-Level Estimates of Mass Political Intolerance

Measurement

The measure of political tolerance employed here is an index originally constructed by Stouffer. He used fifteen items to construct the scale. Eleven of the items dealt with communists; two with atheists (those who are against all churches and religion); and two with socialists (those favoring government ownership of all railroads and all big industries). Stouffer reported a coefficient of reproducibility of .96 for the scale, a very high level of reliability. He also reported that reproducibility was approximately the same at all educational levels.

I decided to use Stouffer's scale even though it includes items on atheists and socialists (1) in order to maintain comparability to Stouffer's research, (2) because an identical scale was created from a survey in 1973 that is very useful for assessment of aggregation error, and (3) because the scale is so reliable. Stouffer had a strong view of what his scale was measuring. He asserted, "But again let it be pointed out, this scale does not measure . . . tolerance *in general*. It deals only with attitudes toward certain types of nonconformists or deviants. It does not deal with attitudes toward extreme right-wing agitators, toward people who attack minority groups, toward faddists or cultists, in general, nor, of course, toward a wide variety of criminals. For purposes of this study, the tolerance of nonconformity or suspected nonconformity is *solely* within the broad context of the

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Communist threat" (Stouffer 1955, 54, emphasis in original).

The Stouffer measures of tolerance have recently been criticized (e.g., Sullivan, Piereson, and Marcus 1982). Perhaps the most fundamental aspect of this criticism is the assertion that the Stouffer items measure tolerance only for a specific group and thus are not generalizable. Because Stouffer was concerned only about intolerance of Communists, his findings may be time-bound; as the objects of mass displeasure evolve, the Communist-based approach to tolerance becomes less relevant and useful. This difficulty does not affect my analysis of policy and opinion from the 1950s, however, because Communists were probably a major disliked group for nearly all citizens in the survey. For instance, only 256 out of 4,933 of the mass respondents were willing to assert that someone believing in communism could still be a loyal U.S. citizen. Even if Communists were not the least-liked group for all U.S. citizens, they were certainly located in the "disliked-enough-not-to-tolerate" range for nearly everyone. Thus the Stouffer measure of tolerance is a valid and reliable indicator.

Aggregation Error

Table A-1 reports the state-level means, standard deviations, and numbers of cases for the aggregation of elite and mass opinion. Not all states are included in Table A-1 because survey respondents were not located in every state. Since the Stouffer survey was not designed to be aggregated by state, it is necessary to try to determine whether there is any obvious bias in the state-level estimates. A few empirical tests can be conducted that, while not assuaging all doubts about the aggregation process, may make us somewhat more comfortable about using the state means.

The Stouffer survey was replicated in

1973 by Nunn, Crockett, and Williams (1978). Their survey was very nearly an exact replication of the Stouffer survey. In terms of the indicators of tolerance, it was an exact replication. Nunn, Crockett, and Williams were even extremely careful to reproduce Stouffer's scaling methodology in creating a summary index of intolerance (pp. 179-91). Thus it is possible to aggregate the same scale variable by state and derive a measure of political tolerance for the early 1970s.

With completely independent samples (including independent sampling frames), one would not expect that there would be much of a correlation between the Stouffer and the Nunn, Crockett, and Williams state-level estimates. Chance fluctuations in the distributions of primary sampling units (PSUs) per state would tend to attenuate the correlation between the state-level estimates. (The average number of PSUs in Stouffer's NORC survey is 2.3; for the Nunn, Crockett, and Williams survey it is 7.8.) Yet the correlation between the estimates from the two surveys is a remarkable .63 ($N = 29$). If I were to exclude the 1973 estimate for Connecticut, an estimate that shows that state to be quite intolerant, then the correlation increases to .77 ($N = 28$). It is difficult to imagine an explanation for this correlation other than that it is due to a common correlation with the true score for the state.

I have also investigated the relationship between state sample size and number of primary sampling units and aggregation error. I first assumed that differences between the t_1 and t_2 estimates of state opinion were due to aggregation error. The residuals resulting from regressing t_2 opinion on t_1 opinion represent this error; if squared, the residuals represent the total amount of error. The correlations between the squared residuals and t_1 sample size and number of PSUs are $-.30$ and $-.27$. The correlations between the residuals and t_2 sample size and number of

PSUs are $-.29$ and $-.29$. These correlations indicate that aggregation error is larger in states in which the number of subjects and number of PSUs is smaller—a not unexpected finding. However, since the relationships are modest, they do not undermine the basic aggregation procedure.

Another bit of evidence supporting the

aggregation process comes from the correlations of tolerance and political culture. The correlation between Elazar's measure of political culture and average state tolerance in the 1950s is $-.68$. This correlation enhances my confidence in the utility of the state-level estimates.

Another, very different tack that can be taken is to estimate the error associated

**Table A-1. State Mean Tolerance Scores, Mass Public, and Elites,
NORC Stouffer Survey, 1954**

State	Mass Public				Elites		
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number of Cases	Number of PSUs	Mean	Standard Deviation	Number of Cases
California	4.47	1.50	174	4	5.09	1.43	65
Missouri	4.44	1.20	18	2	5.45	.69	11
New Jersey	4.41	1.43	61	1	4.90	1.28	60
Washington	4.33	1.44	52	2	5.14	.66	14
Iowa	4.26	1.42	23	1	—	—	—
Wisconsin	4.24	1.56	41	2	5.44	.87	25
Massachusetts	4.22	1.47	81	2	4.51	1.21	41
New York	4.21	1.40	273	6	5.06	1.08	81
Oregon	4.20	1.47	15	1	—	—	—
Colorado	4.13	1.46	23	1	5.29	1.33	14
Connecticut	4.12	1.17	17	1	5.17	.83	12
Nebraska	4.06	1.24	16	1	4.40	1.35	10
Minnesota	3.92	1.43	64	3	5.33	.96	27
Ohio	3.83	1.57	103	4	5.02	1.04	54
Illinois	3.81	1.55	86	2	4.97	1.39	39
Nevada	3.77	1.61	31	1	—	—	—
North Dakota	3.76	1.46	41	1	5.17	1.27	12
Pennsylvania	3.75	1.41	179	6	4.77	1.29	43
Michigan	3.75	1.34	163	4	4.92	1.26	38
Kansas	3.64	1.26	59	2	—	—	—
Florida	3.61	1.43	84	2	4.46	1.47	24
New Hampshire	3.58	1.71	19	1	5.36	1.03	11
Maryland	3.45	1.46	51	2	—	—	—
Idaho	3.45	1.65	22	1	5.15	1.07	13
Oklahoma	3.43	1.44	67	3	5.31	.85	13
Virginia	3.40	1.68	15	1	—	—	—
Indiana	3.36	1.32	129	5	4.61	1.40	36
Alabama	3.32	1.27	37	2	4.30	1.46	27
Texas	3.28	1.05	156	5	4.30	1.49	40
Louisiana	3.27	1.34	26	1	4.33	1.67	12
North Carolina	3.17	1.17	65	3	3.60	1.90	10
Tennessee	2.98	1.62	44	2	—	—	—
Georgia	2.86	1.39	50	3	—	—	—
Kentucky	2.86	1.25	22	1	4.77	1.39	26
West Virginia	2.34	.90	29	2	—	—	—
Arkansas	1.79	1.27	19	1	—	—	—
Average	3.65	1.40	65	2.3	4.88	1.22	29

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with the aggregation process. For each survey, I aggregated the proportion of the respondents having twelve or more years of formal education. These percentages can be compared to census estimates of the level of education in the state. The comparison is not perfect due to two considerations. First, the census data are themselves population estimates drawn from survey samples. Second, the census reports the percentage of residents over the age of twenty-five with twelve or more years of education. I assume that those with twelve or more years of education have a high school degree, although this might not be true for every single respondent. Moreover, it is not possible to isolate those respondents twenty-five years and older in the Stouffer survey. Nonetheless, the correlation for the 1950s data between the survey and census estimates of education is a substantial .72 ($N = 36$). While this correlation does not speak directly to the utility of the state-level estimates of tolerance, it does suggest that aggregation from the survey to the state is not completely inappropriate.

The correlation between elite opinion in the 1950s and elite opinion in the 1970s is .25 (.28 with a minimum-number-of-respondents requirement). That the correlation is not higher is a bit worrisome, although it is not difficult to imagine that there is greater flux in elite opinion over the two decades separating the two surveys than there is in mass opinion. Moreover, there were some slight differences in the composition of the elite samples drawn in 1954 and 1973.

As a means of assessing the validity of the aggregation of elite opinion, it is possible to compare elite tolerance with other elite attitudes. Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1987) have developed a separate measure of the degree of liberalism of state elites. The measure summarizes the ideological positions of the state's congressional candidates, state legislators, political party elites, and national

convention delegates. As an overall index of the liberalism-conservatism of state elites, they take the average score of the Democrats and the Republicans. Thus each state receives a score indicating the degree of liberalism-conservatism of state elites. Though most of the indicators are drawn from the 1970s, the authors believe this to be a more stable attribute of state elites. According to their index, the most conservative elites are found in Mississippi; the most liberal elites are found in Massachusetts.

The correlation of state elite conservatism and political tolerance is $-.46$ ($N = 26$) for the Stouffer elites and $-.22$ ($N = 29$) for the Nunn, Crockett, and Williams elites. Though liberalism-conservatism is conceptually distinct from political tolerance, some solace can be taken in this correlation. The aggregation process seems not to have introduced unexpected or obviously biased estimates of state-level elite opinion.

Notes

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1. The elitist theory of democracy is actually an amalgam of the work of a variety of theorists, including Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954); Kornhauser (1959); Lipset (1960); and Key (1961). The most useful analysis of the similarities and differences among the theories can be found in Bachrach 1967. Some elite theorists emphasize the dominance and control of public policy by elites,

while other theorists emphasize the antidemocratic tendencies of the mass public. The single view most compatible with the hypotheses tested in this article is Kornhauser's (1959). The hypotheses are also to be found in Dye and Zeigler 1987 (see also Dye 1976). Earlier empirical work on the tolerance of elites and masses includes Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lipset 1960; Prothro and Grigg 1960; and McClosky 1964. A more recent analysis of some of the propositions of elitist theory can be found in Gibson and Bingham 1984.

2. Linkage research is fairly common in other areas of substantive policy (e.g., Erikson 1976; Weissberg 1978), but the only rigorous investigation of civil liberties is that of Page and Shapiro (1983). They assessed the relationship between change in opinion and change in policy, and found that in eight of nine policy changes in the area of civil liberties there was opinion-policy congruence. They also found that state policies were more likely to be congruent with opinion than national policies, although the relationship did not hold in the multivariate analysis. Though their analysis was conducted at the national level, their findings seem to suggest that political repression results from demands from the mass public.

3. This is similar to Goldstein's definition, "Political repression consists of government action which grossly discriminates against persons or organizations viewed as presenting a fundamental challenge to existing power relationships or key governmental policies, because of their perceived political beliefs" (1978, xvi).

4. The source for these data is a 1965 study requested by a subcommittee of the Committee on the Judiciary in the U.S. Senate. See also Library of Congress, Legislative Reference Service, 1965; Gellhorn 1952; and Prendergast 1950. Care must be taken in using the Legislative Reference Service data because there are a variety of errors in the published report. Corrected data, based on an examination of all of the relevant state statutes, are available from the author.

The scores shown in Table 1 reflect actions taken by the state governments between 1945 and 1965. The decision to limit the policy measures to this period is based on the desire to have some temporal proximity between the opinion and policy data. This decision has implications for the scores of three states. Kansas and Wisconsin both barred Communists from political participation in legislation adopted in 1941. This legislation is excluded from Table 1. Arkansas is shown as having banned Communists from public employment, from politics, and outright. Only the outright ban was adopted in the 1945-65 period. Because a complete ban necessarily excludes Communists from public employment and from political participation, the score for Arkansas is shown as 3.5.

5. These three items scale in the Guttman sense.

That is, nearly all of the states outlawing the Communist party also denied it access to the ballot and public employment. Nearly all of the states that denied Communists access to the ballot as candidates also made them ineligible for public employment. The registration variable does not, however, exhibit this pattern of cumulativeness. Registration seems to have been a means of enforcing a policy goal such as banning membership in the Party. Because registration can raise Fifth Amendment self-incrimination issues, some states chose not to require it. Statutes requiring registration are treated for measurement purposes as representing a greater degree of commitment to political repression, and for that reason the "bonus" points were added to the basic repression score.

6. Validity means not only that measures of similar concepts converge; measures of dissimilar concepts must also diverge (Campbell and Fiske 1959). Thus it is useful to examine the relationship between the repression measures and measures of other sorts of policy outputs. Klingman and Lammers (1984) have developed a measure of the "general policy liberalism" of the states. General policy liberalism is a predisposition in state public policies toward extensive use of the public sector and is thought to be a relatively stable attribute. I would expect that political repression is not simply another form of liberalism, and indeed it is not. The correlation between general policy liberalism and political repression during the 1950s is only $-.18$. Moreover, the relationship between repression and a measure of New Deal social welfare liberalism policy (see Holbrook-Provow and Poe 1987; Rosenstone 1983) is only $-.22$. Repression occurred in states with histories of liberalism just about as frequently as it did in states typically adopting conservative policies. Thus the measure of repression is not simply a form of political liberalism, a finding that contributes to the apparent validity of the measure.

7. This conclusion is based on figures compiled by Harvey Klehr on the size of the Communist Party U.S.A. during the 1930s (Klehr 1984, tbl. 19.1 and personal communication with the author, 21 May 1986). The data are from the Party's own internal record. Klehr believes the data to be reasonably reliable, and others seem to agree (see, e.g., Glazer 1961, 208, n. 3; and Shannon 1959, 91). There is also a strong relationship between Party membership and votes for Communist candidates for public offices in the 1936 elections (as compiled by the American Legion 1937, 44), as well as a strong relationship with FBI estimates of Party membership in the states in 1951 (U.S. Senate, Committee on the Judiciary 1956, 34).

8. Stouffer defined *elites* as those who hold certain positions of influence and potential influence in local politics. The elite sample was drawn from those holding the following positions: community chest chairmen; school board presidents; library

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committee chairmen; Republican county chairmen; Democratic county chairmen; American Legion commanders; bar association presidents; chamber of commerce presidents; PTA presidents; women's club presidents; DAR regents; newspaper publishers; and labor union leaders.

9. Weighted least squares was used because I could not assume that the variances of the observations were equal. Following Hanushek and Jackson (1977, 151-52), I weighted the observations by the square root of the numbers of respondents within the state. The r -square from this analysis is .14. The regression equation with unstandardized coefficients is: $Y = 7.31 - .14 (\text{mass opinion}) - 1.11 (\text{elite opinion})$.

10. The data in Table 2 suggest that where the state elites are relatively less tolerant, increases in mass tolerance are associated with an increase in political repression. Caution must be exercised in interpreting the percentages, however, due to the small number of cases available. The data reveal that in five of the seven states with a relatively less tolerant mass public, repressive legislation was adopted, while in all three of the states with a relatively more tolerant mass public repressive legislation was adopted. In the context of the numbers of cases, I did not treat this difference as substantively significant.

11. It might be argued that elite opinion serves only to neutralize intolerant mass opinion. This suggests an interactive relationship between elite and mass opinion. Tests of this hypothesis reveal no such interaction. The impact of elite opinion on public policy is not contingent upon the level of tolerance of the mass public in the state.

12. Though it is a bit risky to do so, it is possible to break the policy variable into time periods according to the date on which the legislation was adopted. A total of sixteen states adopted repressive legislation prior to 1954; ten states adopted repressive legislation in 1954 or later. The correlations between pre-1954 repression and mass and elite tolerance, respectively, are $-.05$, and $-.35$. Where elites were more intolerant, policy was more repressive. Mass intolerance seems to have had little impact on policy.

The correlations change rather substantially for the post-1954 policy measure. There is a reasonably strong correlation between mass intolerance and repression ($r = -.32$) but little correlation with elite intolerance ($r = -.13$). If one were willing to draw conclusions based on what are surely relatively unstable correlations, based on limited numbers of observations, one might conclude that early efforts to restrict the political freedom of Communists were directed largely by elites, while later efforts were more likely to involve the mass public. The initiative for political repression therefore was with the elites, though the mass public sustained the repression once it was under way.

At the same time, however, the slight correlation between pre-1954 policy and mass intolerance suggests that mass opinion was not shaped by public policy. Where policy was more repressive, opinion was not more intolerant. The close temporal proximity here should give us pause in overinterpreting this correlation, however.

13. Note that Stouffer found that the leaders of the American Legion were the most intolerant of all leadership groups surveyed (Stouffer 1955, 52). Indeed, the commanders interviewed were only slightly less intolerant than the mass public.

14. At the same time, it should be noted that U.S. citizens became substantially more tolerant of Communists by the 1970s (e.g., Davis 1975; Nunn, Crockett, and Williams 1978). This too might reflect changes in public policy, as well as elite leadership of opinion. As the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated some of the most repressive state and federal legislation of the McCarthy era, and as U.S. political leaders (including Richard Nixon) sought improved foreign relations with Communist nations, it became less appropriate to support the repression of Communists. These comments illustrate, however, the difficulty of sorting out the interrelationships of opinion and policy and also reveal that many efforts to do so border on nonfalsifiability.

15. Between 1917 and 1920, twenty-four states adopted criminal syndicalism statutes. There is some ambiguity in published compilations about the number of states with such laws. Dowell (1969) lists twenty states with such legislation, not counting the three states that adopted but then repealed syndicalism laws. Dowell apparently overlooked Rhode Island, at least according to the compilations of Chafee (1967) and Gellhorn (1952). On the other hand, neither Chafee nor Gellhorn listed Colorado or Indiana as having such statutes (though Chafee did list the states that had repealed their legislation). This latter problem is in part a function of determining whether specific statutes should be classified as banning criminal syndicalism. By 1937, three states had repealed their statutes (although one of these—Arizona—apparently did so inadvertently during recodification). As of 1981, seven of these states still had the statutes on their books, and one additional state—Mississippi—had passed such legislation (Jenson 1982, 167-75). For purposes of this analysis, Dowell's twenty-three states and Rhode Island are classified as having criminal syndicalism laws as of 1920.

16. It should also be noted that political culture is fairly stably related to mass political intolerance. Estimates of state opinion were derived from Roper data on an item about loyalty oaths asked in a 1937 survey. Opinion in more traditionalistic states was more supportive of mandatory loyalty oaths ($r = -.44$, $N = 47$). Similarly, the correlation between political culture and the state aggregates from the Stouffer replication in 1973 (see the Appendix) is

-.58 ($N = 35$). These coefficients are nothing more than suggestive, but they do suggest that political intolerance is a relatively enduring attribute of state political culture.

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