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Why Don't Political Scientists Coin More New Terms?

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This paper explores the relationship between ordinary and political scientific languages by investigating what seems to be a curious fact. Despite the importance of coining new terms to the scientific enterprise, political scientists continue to rely heavily on everyday terms like "politics," "freedom," "democracy," "power," and "interest."[1] Why haven't political scientists invented more neologisms to replace these ordinary words,[2] words that are arguably loose and unscientific?

The Defects of Ordinary Words

Many political scientists regard ordinary words as defective, as far as their scientific utility is concerned. One defect commonly identified is evaluative content. Words like "justice" or "corruption" not only describe, but also evaluate. The danger for science is that the use of such terms can cloak ethical judgement in the garb of empirical observation. Is the statement that "the Nazi regime was unjust" a declaration of fact, a moral verdict, or both? (Oppenheim 1981, 1, 194-98; Nagel 1979, 490-95).

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[1] Much of the lexicon of political science consists of everyday words. It would be difficult to imagine a book or article written without words like "the," "explain," or "every." Even the most technical writers employ everyday and even somewhat vague quantifying terms like "low," "extensive," and "a number" (Channell 1990, 103). More interestingly, political scientists use many commonplace political terms (i.e. political terms widely used and understood by non-political scientists) such as "state," "freedom," and "democracy."

[2] By "ordinary words" I mean commonplace political terms that have become part of the core lexicon of political scientists. A list of about one hundred ordinary words can be found in the appendix. Many of these terms have long histories in political discourse. "Democracy" and "vote," for instance, date to the 1500s, "revolution," "authority," "coalition," and "hierarchy" to the 1600s, and "class" and "constitution" to the 1700s, to give but a few examples (Hughes 1988, 190).

Another oft-cited defect of ordinary words is their bluntness as tools of science. No less an authority than Emile Durkheim, one of the founders of the modern social sciences, argued that "the concepts of ordinary language are necessarily crude, since they are formed day after day, in the course of daily experience, unmethodologically and uncritically" (quoted in Outhwaite 1983, 52; see also Durkheim 1964, 22). This crudeness is said to take three forms: vagueness, ambiguity, and open-endedness (Lundberg 1942, 728; Gregor 1971, 30, 242; Nagel 1979, 7-9; Oppenheim 1981, 1, 177, 182-185; Sartori 1984b, 57-58).

Ordinary words are *vague* to the extent that they refer to groups of things whose boundaries are underspecified. Where does "influence" end and "coercion" begin? Our everyday understanding of these two terms does not provide a set of characteristics to demarcate a clean dividing line.

Ordinary words are *ambiguous* insofar as they have more than one meaning. In everyday American English, for example, the meaning of "democracy" can range from social equality to inclusive participation to the availability of choice. It is, consequently, not always clear which meaning applies when someone makes a statement such as "country x is a democracy" (Schaffer 1998, 11-13).

Ordinary words are *open-ended* to the degree that core meanings are difficult to distinguish from trivial ones, defining properties from accompanying ones. What are the necessary and sufficient criteria to deem something a "revolution" - violence? popular involvement? regime change? change in the social order? (Kotowski 1984).

The vagueness, ambiguity, and open-endedness of ordinary words have the potential to create misunderstanding when used in political science, or in any science for that matter. Their

fuzzy or multiple meanings make it difficult to discern what exactly is intended, what claims are made, or what evidence is marshaled. Some argue that the confusion which results hinders the cumulative advancement of knowledge (Gregor 1971, ix; Sartori 1984b, 26).

Technical Language: Neologism and Reconstruction

To smooth out the imperfections of everyday language, political scientists have found it necessary to create specialized lexicons. As Giovanni Sartori argues, "whatever else 'science' may be, its necessary, preliminary condition resides in the formulation of a *special and specialized language*...whose distinctive characteristics is precisely to correct the defects of ordinary language" (Sartori 1984b, 57-58). Similarly, David Apter finds "much of what seems to be a maze of jargon in social science is a direct result of the effort to cut through so-called common sense terms which, upon intensive probing, prove themselves to be of limited usefulness" (1957, 755). For social scientists who find truth in these statements, the formation of a specialized, technical vocabulary is a *sine qua non* of scientific progress (see, for instance, Finer 1975, Burger 1977).

One technique used to create a specialized lexicon is neologism, coining new terms. Neologisms are words that are either newly manufactured or borrowed from other languages. French is a source of many borrowed neologisms ("évolué," "étatisme," "dirigisme," "lèse-majesté"), as is German ("gemeinschaft," "gesellschaft," "machtpolitik," "weltanschauung"). Other terms have been loaned from Afrikaans ("apartheid"), Arabic ("intifada"), and Russian ("perestroika"). When manufactured, neologisms are most often formed by combining two or more (usually Greek of Latin) morphemes. Among the words created in this way include

"stratarchy," from the Latin *strata* (something spread or laid down) and the Greek *arxia* (rule). This term was invented by Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan (1950, 219-20) and later deployed by Samuel Eldersveld (1964, 98-117) as well as by Frank Sorauf and Paul Allen Beck (1988, 129). It refers, roughly, to a type of rule in which a small elite has been enlarged and stratified. Another example of manufactured neologism is the taxonomy of polities devised by Fred Riggs: "acephaly," "procephaly," "orthocephaly," "hetereocephaly," "metacephaly," and "supracephaly" (1970, 98).[3] More rarely, neologism can be manufactured by clipping an element of a word and using that element as a word itself. For instance, Kenneth Pike's (1967, 37) coinages "emic" (studying behavior from outside a particular system) and "etic" (studying behavior from inside the system) are clipped from "phonemic" and "phonetic," respectively. Rarer still is the creation of new terms out of the blue, such as "Kodak" or "quark." I could not find any such examples from the social sciences.

Only a few neologisms have entered the core lexicon of political science. The use of borrowed neologisms is often restricted to discussions of historically-specific policies or events (évolué, apartheid, intifada, perestroika) or to theories and doctrines in which these terms are embedded (gemeinschaft, gesellschaft, machtpolitik). The use of manufactured neologisms is often limited to the innovator him or herself. One glaring exception is the widely used term

[3] "Acephaly" refers to polities without executive, bureaucracy, legislature, or party system; "procephaly" to polities with executive, but no bureaucracy, legislature, or party system; "orthocephaly" to polities with executive and bureaucracy, but no legislature or party system; "hetereocephaly" to polities with executive, bureaucracy, and legislature, but no party system; "metacephaly" to polities with executive, bureaucracy, legislature, and party system; and "supracephaly" to polities with "all these and more besides."

"genocide" - from the Greek *genos* (race) and the Latin *cidium* (killing) - a term invented toward the end of World War Two by Professor Raphaël Lemkin (1944, xi, 79) of Duke University.[4]

Another, and more important, technique used to create a scientific lexicon is reconstruction: the modification of already existing terms. One way to reconstruct a term is to accord a privileged status to one of its usual meanings. This privileged status may be established in at least four different ways. To *correct* is to argue that one sense of term is valid or authentic, while other senses represent confused or fraudulent (mis)uses of the term. Joseph Schumpeter offered a corrected version of "democracy" when he dismissed purposive understanding of democracy as "patently contrary to fact," and defined it instead as a set of electoral procedures (1962, 264). To *prioritize* is to make one sense of a term logically antecedent to the others. Robert Dahl prioritized when he argued that "power" means many things, but that it contains a "bedrock idea" or "primitive notion" - the exercise of control or influence - which undergirds other senses of the term (1961, 344). To *spotlight* is to focus on one meaning of a term, without passing judgment on the validity, authenticity, or logical primacy of other meanings. Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba spotlighted when they stated simply that they "employ the concept of culture in only one of its many meanings: that of psychological orientation" (1989, 13). To *split* is to preserve one meaning of a term, while attaching (at least some of) its other meanings to a different term. Robert Dahl and Charles Lindblom split "democracy" by preserving that term

[4]This term has served as template for other neologisms such as "ecocide," "ethnocide," and "democide" (Venkatesan 1990, Mohamed Salih 1995, Rummel 1992).

when referring to democracy as a "principle" or "goal," while introducing the term "polyarchy" to refer to its "real-world approximation" (1953, 41, 43).[5]

A second way to reconstruct a term is to stipulate a new meaning for it, one that does not count among its usual senses. Terms reconstructed in this way are sometimes called "neovalents" (Sartori 1984b, 40) or "neosemanticisms" (Maurer and High 1980, 184). "Charisma" is one such neovalent. It is an old term, one found in New Testament Greek, and used in English as far back as the mid-seventeenth century. Originally, it had a theological meaning, and referred to a special gift from God: faith, wisdom, an unusual talent, the ability to work miracles, and the like. In 1922, Max Weber secularized the term, redefining it as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities" (Howard 1977, 7-10).[6] Weber thus provided the term with a novel, sociological meaning. The creation of neovalents, we might say, entails pouring new wine into old bottles.

A third form of reconstruction is transposition - shifting the grammatical use of a term (Marchand 1969, 12-13). One example is the use of "world" as a verb - as in the phrase "worlding women" - the title of a recent book on feminist interpretations of international politics

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[5] Still another way to privilege is to *rank*: to order the various senses of a word according to their moral value. But in hopes of achieving value neutrality, empirical political scientists shy away from this necessarily normative strategy. It is, as a result, more commonly employed by political theorists. Isaiah Berlin, for example, ranked different senses of "liberty" when he distinguished between "negative" and "positive" senses of the term, and then argued that the negative sense is more "humane" than the positive one (1969, 171).

[6] This translation appears in the first English edition of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, published in 1947.

(Pettman 1996, 213). Another example is the transformation of the adjective "political" into a noun - "the political" (Arendt 1958, 38, 43).

A fourth form of reconstruction is what we might call "spinning-off." Spin-offs are words or phrases built up from one or more existing words, and can be generated in two ways. Affixation involves adding a prefix or suffix to an existing word. Examples include "ethnicity" (ethnic+ity) or "infrapolitics" (infra+politics) (Hutchinson and Smith 1996, 4; Scott 1990, 183). Compounding entails stringing together existing words, yielding such phrases as "political culture" (Almond 1956, 396) and "personal rule" (Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Spinning-off is an important source of terminology. We get a sense of just how productive it can be by counting the number of compounds and affixations built around a single word, "democracy." One recent, and not exhaustive, study found it had over two hundred and sixty (Collier and Levitsky, 1994).

The relationship between different forms of reconstruction is, to be sure, complicated. First, various forms of reconstruction can overlay one another. Compounding can be joined with affixation (bureaucratic + authoritarian+ism). Spin-offs such as "ethnicity" and "political culture" can be the subject of privileging or become neovalents (Jackson 1984; Patrick 1984). Second, it is not always easy to discriminate between different forms of reconstruction. It is, for instance, sometimes difficult to determine whether a stipulated meaning of a term is really new. Consequently it is not always possible to distinguish neovalents from instances of privileging. "Polyarchy" is an old term that dates to the early seventeenth century. In its non-technical usage, the word means roughly "rule by many." When Dahl and Lindblom reconstructed it to mean the

real world approximation of democratic ideals, did they invent a new meaning or spotlight an already implicit one? It is hard to say.[7]

The relationship between reconstruction and neologism is also complicated. For one, the dividing line between neologism and certain forms of reconstruction might appear arbitrary. Indeed some linguists classify spin-offs, neovalents, and transpositions as forms of neologism.[8] In adopting a different classification I was guided by the words of the Russian literary critic and social theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. "Every word," he wrote, "gives off the scent of a profession, a genre, a current, a party, a particular work, a particular man, a generation, an era, a day, and an hour. Every word smells of the context and contexts in which it has lived its intense social life" (quoted in Todorov 1984, 56). Spin-offs, neovalents, and transpositions, I would maintain, "smell" in a way that manufactured or borrowed terms do not. Simply put, reconstructed words carry the scent of the non-technical words from which they are derived; they retain (at least some of) the same connotations and overtones. Borrowed or manufactured neologisms might smell (it is hard to use "gemeinschaft" for instance without thinking of Ferdinand Tönnies) but they do not carry the same aromas of ordinariness.[9]

To complicate matters more, political scientists have found it necessary to reconstruct neologisms, especially those that have become most deeply integrated into technical and lay vocabularies, such as "genocide." Social scientists and jurists have stipulated new definitions for

[7] Another vexing word in this regard is "identity." Compare Gleason 1983 and Fearon 1997.

[8] See Marchand 1969, Maurer and Clay 1980; Algeo 1991, and Rey 1995 for a range of definitions of neologism.

[9] This is not to argue that all reconstructed terms smell equally strong. "Freedom," for instance, carries more everyday meanings and thus smells more strongly than "polyarchy."

this term (Chalk 1994). They have also compounded it with everyday terms, yielding spin-offs such as "democratic genocide" (Curtis 1996) or "cultural genocide" (Burton 1991). Still, I find it useful to draw a distinction between neologism and reconstruction, even if the line that divides the two is sometimes blurred.

The Popularity of Reconstruction

Reconstruction is more popular and has received more scholarly attention than neologism.[10] Indeed one innovator observed with bitterness that, as far as coining new terms is concerned, political scientists seem to be in the grips of a "crippling phobia" (Riggs 1970, 89). The relative popularity of reconstruction is puzzling to the extent that this strategy is prone to two nagging problems.

First, contestation and confusion still surround the meaning of many reconstructed political terms. There is still little consensus, for instance, about what power, freedom, politics, and democracy "really are" or how the divergent meanings attached to these terms fit together (Gallie 1955-56; Montefiore 1975; Gray 1977, 1983; Frohock 1978; Connolly 1983).

Second, reconstructed terms are susceptible to what Evelyn Fox Keller (1992, 10) calls "slippage." Slippage occurs when the meaning of a term shifts back and forth between its technical (i.e. reconstructed) and colloquial meanings. An example of slippage can be found in Theda Skocpol's use of "social revolutions" in States and Social Revolutions. Her reconstructed definition of this spin-off is as follows: "Social revolutions are rapid, basic transformations of a

[10] Authors who have examined reconstruction include Sartori 1970, 1984a; Oppenheim 1981; Connolly 1983; and Collier and Mahon 1993.

society's state and class structures; and they are accompanied and are in part carried through by class-based revolts from below" (1979, 4). Yet, as Alexander Motyl explains, Skocpol does not adhere consistently to this definition, and sometimes draws instead upon colloquial meanings of "revolution":

> At times [social revolution] connotes transformations or, more simply perhaps, change; at other times, it clearly is meant to stand for some notion of popular upheaval; at still other times, Skocpol suggests that revolutions and crises are the same, that is to say, that revolutions are merely enormous problems and challenges (1992, 103).

Skocpol's reconstructive efforts, in short, do not do away with problems of ambiguity.

The larger point is that reconstructed terms are more liable to slippage than neologisms because they bear more connotations and colloquial meanings than do borrowed or newly manufactured words (that is, to return to Bakhtin, reconstructed terms retain the smell of ordinariness). The contestedness and slippage to which reconstructed terms are prone would, it seems, limit the attractiveness of reconstructive strategies. In political science, reconstruction is, nevertheless, far more common than neologism.

Why Haven't Neologisms Eclipsed the Use of Ordinary Words? Some Hypotheses

Despite serious problems attending the use of ordinary words - in either reconstructed or unreconstructed form - political scientists have not, by and large, discarded them. Why do political scientists continue to use - and argue over the meaning of - terms like "interest," "state," "politics," "identity," and "culture"? Why haven't neologisms eclipsed their use? Does the continued popularity of ordinary words and their spin-offs in political science tell us anything interesting about how language relates to what we do as political scientists, or about the relationship between ordinary and political scientific languages?

To broach these questions, let us consider six hypotheses about why political scientists continue to use ordinary words:

Hypothesis 1: Political scientists continue to use ordinary words because they find neologisms hard to remember.

One problem with this hypothesis is that neologisms are commonplace in many of the natural sciences. Zoologists, for instance, use a latinate system of nomenclature first devised by Carl Linnaeus in the eighteenth century, and modified several times since (Linsley and Usinger 1959; Heppell 1981; Melville 1995). Particle physicists also make heavy use of invented terms, among them, "quark," "proton," "boson," "muon," and "fermion." The same is true of chemists, whose thousands of neologisms range from "acenaphthene" to "zinckenite." That natural scientists find it possible to remember invented terms raises questions about the difficulty of such a task for political scientists.

Hypothesis 2: Political scientists continue to use ordinary words because they tend to see neologism as an expression of pretentiousness on the part of the innovator.

Drawing conclusions about perceptions of pretentiousness is difficult. Does the more frequent use of neologism by natural scientists mean that they are more pretentious than social scientists? A doubtful conclusion to be sure. Does it mean, alternatively, that natural scientists fail to see the use of neologism as a sign of pretentiousness? Entomologists or physicists, it might be argued, discover new insects or particles, and are customarily granted the right to name these new entities without much contention or acrimony. Social scientists, in contrast, have a

more difficult time demonstrating that they have discovered anything really new, and thus assigning a new name to the phenomenon in question stirs controversy and charges of egotism (Riggs 1981, 13). In short, different attitudes toward neologism may reflect the different character of "discovery" in the natural and social sciences.

This argument sounds compelling, but exaggerates the role of discovery as an impetus for neologism in the natural sciences. Turn-of-the-century naturalists, for instance, adopted the linnaean system of nomenclature partly to impose order on a chaotic jumble of lay and technical terminology for already well-known animals and plants.[11] One African mammal, for instance, had a variety of names, which ranged from river horse, sea horse, and behemoth to river paard and water elephant. As Harriet Ritvo, a historian of zoological classification, notes: "this unmanageable profusion of names...was a constant irritant to working naturalists" (1997, 53). The consensus built around the linnaean naming system meant that the scientific community would thereafter know this animal as *hippopotamus amphibius*. This consensus was not built easily, to be sure. As Ritvo explains, there were plenty of complaints in the naturalist community about what she calls "egotistical excesses" - usually caused by an individual's desire to name a new species, even when the scientific merits of such a claim were dubious (64). The lesson for us is that neither debates about which discoveries were really new nor bad feelings about pretentious innovators deterred permanently the development of zoological and botanical

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[11] Similarly, a number of astronomers are today concerned about the multiplicity of names by which celestial objects are known. Typical is the case of HD 115968, a star that has over 20 other names (Griffin 1981, 310). There are, as a result, efforts underway to devise a more standardized nomenclature (Fernandez, Lortet, and Spite 1983).

neologism. We must seek other reasons, then, for the relative rarity of neologism in political science.

Hypothesis 3: Political scientists continue to use ordinary words because such terms are part of a long political tradition.

This hypothesis has been articulated most clearly by Sartori, who suggested the following:

> In spite of bold attempts at drastic terminological innovation, it is hard to see how Western scholars could radically depart from the political experience of the West, i.e., from the vocabulary of politics which has been developed over millennia on the basis of such experience (1970, 1034).

Do political scientists continue to use ordinary words, then, because of difficulties involved in making a clean break with tradition? A glance at the experience of other sciences might again be instructive. Certainly scientists in other fields have retained words with long traditions. Mediaeval physiologists and common folk believed that fluid "humours" - blood, phlegm, choler, and melancholy - determined a person's temperament. Though modern biochemists have abandoned such notions, they still speak of mood-regulating substances like serotonin and noradrenaline as "neurohumours."

Scientists do, however, sometimes free themselves from received vocabularies. Modern chemists do not believe, as medieval alchemists once did, that concoctions called "elixirs" can change metal into gold. "Elixir," consequently, no longer figures into the technical vocabulary of chemistry. Similarly, cosmologists once held that a single substance called "ether" filled the upper regions of space, and constituted the material of stars. Modern astronomers reject such ideas, and no longer use that term. They hold that space and stars contain a number of elements,

most importantly hydrogen and helium, but also calcium, sodium, and ammonia. Advances in knowledge, then, sometimes lead to the abandonment of outmoded terms. It is not a long history of politics that in and of itself accounts for the retention of old, ordinary words. These words must somehow remain relevant and useful to political scientists.

Hypothesis 4: Political scientists continue to use ordinary words because of the heuristic utility or rhetorical force of such words.

To develop new ideas, or to persuade others that their ideas are sound and important, scientists use a variety of heuristic and rhetorical devices. One such device is metaphor, which achieves these goals in at least two ways. The first is to render new phenomena or concepts familiar and intelligible. Astronomers, for instance, find it helpful to give everyday names to their far flung celestial discoveries and theories - from "dwarfs" and "giants," to "envelopes," "the big bang," and "black holes." Imagining DNA to be a genetic "code" guided the research of James Watson and Francis Crick (Gross 1990, 28-31; Doyle 1997, 25-38). In the realm of politics, English intellectuals borrowed the term "revolution" from astronomy and astrology to describe the unprecedented events surrounding the establishment of the Commonwealth in 1649 (Lasky 1970a, 1970b; Hill 1990; Rachum 1994).

The second way in which metaphor can be used to probe or persuade is to place familiar phenomena in new light. Political scientists seeking to explain differences in how states relate to their societies, for instance, invite their peers to think of states as either "strong" (autonomous) or

"weak" (penetrated).[12] By saying that states have strengths or weaknesses in the same way that, say, fortresses can, these scholars attempt to inaugurate fresh ways of thinking about what states can accomplish or resist.

So does the scientific use of metaphor explain the persistence of ordinary words in political science? Certainly the role of metaphor helps explain how "revolution" entered the political vocabulary of seventeenth century England. It does not, however, explain why political scientists continue to use the term today. And while the heuristic and rhetorical importance of metaphor can explain why political scientists find it useful to describe states as "strong" or "weak," it does not explain why they find it necessary to use the term "state" in the first place.[13]

Generalizing beyond these cases, it seems that the first use of metaphor (to render the unfamiliar intelligible) can account for the introduction of some nonpolitical terms into the lexicon of political scientists today. Terms and phrases that have entered political science in this way include "game," "free rider," and "prisoners' dilemma" as used by rational choice theorists. It also accounts for my appropriation, in this paper, of words such as "smell" and "slippage." This use of metaphor cannot account, however, for the persistence of older, ordinary political terms.

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[12] See, for instance, Krasner 1978, 55-61. For slightly different notions of strength and weakness see Nordlinger 1987; Migdal 1988, 32-41.

[13] Ordinary words can, of course, be used metaphorically, but such metaphorical uses tend not to occur in political science writings. Metaphoric uses of "democracy," for instance, often appear in the contexts of sports (the "hardwood democracy" of the basketball court where each athlete is free to take a shot) and music (where "band" or "orchestral" democracy refers to each performer having the opportunity to play a solo). See Schaffer 1998, 11-13.

As for the second use of metaphor (placing the familiar in a new light), it does help account for the generation of compound spin-offs, as political scientists find new ways of "seeing" familiar phenomena - seeing states as strong or weak, hard or soft, small or swollen. It does not, however, explain the continued use of ordinary words upon which such compounds are built, such as "state," "culture," or even "revolution."

There is, one might argue, a more robust way of formulating this hypothesis, one that shifts our focus from metaphor to evaluative connotation. One might argue that ordinary words are powerful rhetorically because they provoke strong reactions, either positive or negative. To call a government "just," as we have seen, is not simply to describe the regime in question, but to evaluate or judge it, in the same way that calling a person "compassionate" or "unfeeling" not only describes the individual's behavior, but praises or condemns it. The same may be true of other terms relating to society and politics. It could be that political scientists call upon these terms, what Quentin Skinner (1973, 298) calls "evaluative-descriptive" words, to subtly guide and sway.

Political scientists, needless to say, do try to guide and sway. Even seemingly objective, neutral statements do not merely describe or represent the world. As J. L. Austin (1975) has taught us, such statements also warn, plead, exhort, admonish, commend, condemn and the like. Do evaluative-descriptive terms play a special role in these efforts? Skinner's analysis of Robert Dahl's conception of democracy suggests that they might. As Skinner remarked, "the application of the term *democracy* to the type of political system Dahl describes constitutes an act of political conservatism: it serves to commend the recently prevailing values and practices of a political system like that of the United States" (1973, 303). If Skinner is right, and the case of

"democracy" generalizable, the use of evaluative-descriptive terms would appear to enable political scientists to produce certain effects upon their readers while maintaining an appearance of neutrality.

The force of Skinner's insight is limited, however, by two considerations. First, many of the ordinary words used by political scientists today do not have an obvious evaluative charge. To use words like "administration," "country," "economy," "identity," "institution" or "party" is not to laud or reproach, at least not in ways that are immediately evident. Indeed, it is difficult to determine just how many ordinary political terms are in fact evaluative-descriptive since there is much debate about whether terms like "liberty," "equality," or even "democracy" are in fact evaluative.[14] It may simply be that many Americans like liberty, equality, and democracy in many (but not all) contexts.

Second, this explanation may be too cynical in attributing to authors motives that they just do not have. Some political scientists have tried, quite earnestly it seems, to neutralize the rhetorical power of certain evaluative-descriptive terms. Notable are attempts to redefine "corruption" in ways that reduce the need for social scientists to insert their own ethical judgements. J. S. Nye, for instance, defines corruption as self-regarding behavior that violates formal rules (1989, 966). Arnold Heidenheimer, alternatively, takes it to be actions that deviate from local moral norms (1989, 160-61). These two definitions still rely on the evaluative content of the term, but no longer require the social scientist to impose his or her standard of proper conduct; that standard is supplied instead by law or local opinion. Of course this type of

[14] Compare Gallie (1956-57), Skinner (1973), and Connolly (1983, 126) with Oppenheim (1981, 150-156) and Freeden (1996, 55-57).

reconstruction may not succeed completely, since it is susceptible to the same type of slippage that dogged Skocpol's use of "social revolution." All the same, these reconstructive efforts suggest that political scientists do not always retain ordinary words, even evaluative-descriptive ones, for the express purpose of persuasion.

Hypothesis 5: Political scientists continue to use ordinary words because these terms are superior to neologisms in the conduct of science.

Durkheim, we may recall, argued that everyday words are formed in quotidian life, without method, and are therefore only "crude" tools of science. An opposing view is that everyday words reflect the accumulated wisdom of many generations and are therefore more refined as tools than neologisms. This latter view is articulated well by Austin:

> Our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth making, in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be more numerous, more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon - the most favoured alternative method" (1979, 182; see also Peters 1960, 50).

Political scientists may continue to use ordinary words, then, because of the fine distinctions these terms make.

Austin masterfully shows the subtle shades of meaning carried by everyday words such as "mistake" and "accident." This subtlety does not, however, automatically make ordinary words good tools of science. One problem is that the various distinctions mapped out by a term, however sophisticated, may be conflicting or incompatible. To give but one example, English speakers make many fine distinctions about what "democracy" means. As we have seen it may

signify, among other things, choice, equality, or participation (and more finely still, it may refer to different *kinds* of choice, equality, and participation). What complicates matters is that people may disagree about which of these dimensions is most essential to democracy. What makes a situation democratic along one dimension may undermine it in another. The achievement of economic equality, for instance, may well limit the range of choices available to the previously better-off.

The problem is spelled out succinctly by Hanna Pitkin. "The various cases out of which the meaning of a word is compounded," she writes, "need not be mutually consistent; they may - perhaps must - have contradictory implications. These inconsistent or contradictory implications are what give rise to conceptual puzzlement and paradox" (1972, 85). And indeed it is in part to reduce this conceptual puzzlement that political scientists have found it necessary to reconstruct ordinary words or to coin neologisms (Sartori 1984b, 57-58).

Perhaps a modified version of this hypothesis will hold up better. It could be that political scientists continue to use ordinary words because such terms are essential for understanding the social phenomena they investigate. Voting, political parties, property, and citizenship are real to political actors themselves. To accurately interpret the intentions of such actors, it may be that political scientists find it necessary to take seriously the words (and the categories these words reflect) of actors themselves. It would be difficult, for instance, to understand the institution of voting in the United States without learning the meaning of the word "vote." As Charles Taylor put it, "the realities here are social practices; and these cannot be identified in abstraction from the language we use to describe them, or invoke them, or carry them out" (1977, 117; see also Keat and Urry 1975, 171-72).

This argument is powerful. Indeed, studying the terms and categories used by political actors is an essential tool of political analysis, especially when the people under investigation are from a culture different from one's own (Schaffer 1998). There is, nonetheless, a problem with this hypothesis. While it may be necessary for political scientists to learn the words used by political actors, it does not mean that scientists need to adopt the very same terms and distinctions in making their analyses. That the Nazis never spoke of their actions as "genocide" should not prevent scholars studying the holocaust from describing it as an instance of genocide - though in arriving at that conclusion they may well need to figure out what the Nazis meant by words such as "*endlösung*" (final solution), "*sonderbehandlung*" (special treatment), or "*aussiedlung*" (evacuation).

Hypothesis 6: Political scientists continue to use ordinary words because they are a necessary prerequisite for the creation of a technical vocabulary.

Maybe political scientists continue to use ordinary words because it is impossible for them to coin neologisms (or to devise a technical language more generally) without them. Technical words, that is, may be tethered to ordinary ones. Pitkin seems to have something like this in mind when she writes that "technical terms still reflect our conceptual system, in relation to which they must be defined" (1972, 275). Peter Winch describes the nature of these defining relations with regard to "liquidity preference" as used by economists:

> Liquidity preference is a technical concept of economics: it is not generally used by businessmen in the conduct of their affairs but by the economist who wishes to *explain* the nature and consequences of certain kinds of business behaviour....Its use by the economist presupposes his understanding of what it is to conduct a business, which in turn involves an understanding of such business concepts as money, profit, cost, risk, etc.

> It is only the relation between his account and these concepts which makes it an account of economic activity as opposed, say, to a piece of theology (1977, 148-49).

In analogous fashion, the meaning of "genocide" is logically reliant upon an understanding of ordinary words like "murder" and "nation," as the meaning of "stratarchy" is upon "power" and "elite," and "procephaly" upon "bureaucracy" and "legislature." Ordinary words, it seems, are the vehicles political scientists use to make technical language meaningful.

This insight is no doubt true, but does not explain why political scientists tend to avoid coining new words. Nor do the terms of political science in this respect seem different from those of the natural sciences. To grasp what "fermion" means requires one to understand first the significance of "particle." To distinguish "*hippopotamus amphibius*" from other species requires an understanding of terms like "skin," "body," "mouth," and "nostril."

Ordinary Words and the Culture of Political Science

This survey of hypotheses suggests that it is important to keep separate two related, but distinct, accounts. To figure out why political scientists use ordinary words is not to explain adequately why political scientists don't coin more new terms. As we have seen, there are several reasons why political scientists retain ordinary words. They are useful as interpretive tools, rendering meaningful the beliefs and actions of political actors. They also provide a foundation of understanding upon which technical vocabularies are built. A limited number of evaluative-descriptive terms, in addition, may have special rhetorical power.

None of these factors explain, however, why political scientists generally eschew neologism. (It is, after all, possible to have both lots of ordinary words *and* lots of neologisms - as is the case in astronomy, where "planets" and "stars" commingle with "gegenschein" and

"periastron.") Nor can the paucity of neologisms be explained by difficulties political scientists have in remembering new terms, by fears potential innovators have of appearing pretentious, or by the existence of an old, inherited vocabulary of politics.

Let me, then, advance another hypothesis for why relatively few neologisms figure into the core lexicon of political scientists, one that focuses on the status of political science as an "immature" science. Political science is immature in the Kuhnian sense that it has seen few, if any, achievements of paradigm status, achievements that are "accepted examples of scientific practice" which "provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research" (Kuhn 1970, 10). There is, consequently, little agreement in the field on which methods are appropriate for proving or disproving hypotheses, or for evaluating and criticizing theories and explanations. Political scientists do not agree, therefore, on the relative merits of cultural and economic models, of qualitative and quantitative methods, of small-N and large-N studies, of structuralist and agent-focused explanations, and the like.

Kuhn suggests that scientific practice in an immature field such as political science is random because "all the facts that could possibly pertain to the development of a given science are likely to seem equally relevant" (15). Interestingly, political science does not seem totally random in this sense. Political scientists may disagree about which particular facts are relevant, but that does not mean that just any fact will do. Even in the absence of a paradigm, there is, it seems, some restraint on what kinds of questions are considered important, what kinds of evidence can be marshaled, what kinds of criticisms can be leveled.

Ordinary words, I would argue, play a role in creating this restraint. In the absence of agreed upon exemplars, methods, and procedures, ordinary words provide an otherwise unsettled

and fragmented discipline with a shared culture. I use culture here as intended by David Laitin. Culture in this sense is, as Laitin puts it, a set of "points of concern" which define "the questions generally considered worth asking and the cliches implicitly accepted" (1986, 29). We might think of ordinary words as those implicitly accepted cliches that help political scientists define the questions worth asking. Few neologisms are part of the shared culture because there are no agreed upon methods or procedures to determine the value or aptness of newly proposed terms.[15] Scholars often just ignore them, finding them marginal to the central debates of the field. Ordinary words have the advantage of already being important to the lives of real people, and thus of immediate interest and availability to political scientists. The atypical case of "genocide" is here illuminating. The popularity of this neologism in political science owes much to its early status as a central legal term in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The word became important to political scientists because it had first become important to politics.

Confirming evidence for the idea that a well-developed corpus of neologisms requires paradigmatic achievements comes from the field of chemistry. Kuhn tells us that chemistry was an immature science until the 1660s, when Robert Boyle's work on the properties of gases and on the existence of elements generated one of the first paradigms in that field. Other revolutions followed, led most notably by Georg Ernst Stahl, who developed the phlogiston theory of combustion in the early 1700s; by Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier, whose oxygen theory of

[15] Contrast physics, where experimental evidence was key in building a consensus for the naming of "muons" and "mesons" (Hacking 1983, 97-90).

combustion discredited the idea of phlogiston in the 1780s; and by John Dalton, who devised the atomic theory of matter in the early 1800s (Kuhn 1970, 15, 56, 132, 142-43).

Before chemistry had become a mature science, its language relied heavily on everyday words and experiences. Maurice Crosland, in his sweeping Historical Studies in the Language of Chemistry, noted of this early period:

> As chemistry had an origin which was both indefinite and heterogeneous, it is understandable that its terminology shared these characteristics. If we think of some of the terms used by chemists before the reform of nomenclature, terms like *sugar of lead*, *butter of antimony*, *oil of vitriol*, *cream of tartar* and *milk of lime*, we see the point in Dumas' remark that chemistry had borrowed its language from the kitchen (1962, 65-66).

With successive scientific revolutions, neologisms became integrated into the chemist's lexicon. Boyle popularized words such as "cycloid" and "deliquate." Stahl did the same for "phlogiston." Lavoisier, together with Guyton de Morveau, established the system of nomenclature used by chemists today. Dalton, though not an inventor of words, did introduce a system of atomic symbols (Crosland 1962, 116, 153-214, 256-64).

The strongest disconfirming evidence I could find for a link between paradigms and neologism comes from biology. Linnaeus, after all, developed his system of nomenclature prior to the paradigmatic achievement of Charles Darwin. The story is, however, more complicated. Various versions of the linnaean system were common during the early and middle parts of the nineteenth century, prior to the publication of The Origin of Species in 1859 (Ritvo 1997, 52-68). Despite efforts to standardize these naming conventions, it was not until 1901 that an international group of zoologists agreed upon a unified system (Linsley and Usinger 1959, 41-42; Heppell 1981, 136-39). Origin helped generate that consensus to the extent that it rendered moot taxonomic disputes that animated previous debates over nomenclature (Bowler 1989, 176,

193-94).[16] As the new evolutionary paradigm gained adherents, nomenclatural differences became easier to reconcile, and a system of neologisms was decided upon. The case of zoological nomenclature does not, then, undermine the argument that a well-developed body of neologisms requires paradigmatic scientific achievements, though it does caution against making any simple claims about the relationship of one to the other.

Conclusion

Some seventy years ago Charles Titus remarked that "confusion reigns almost supreme in the field of political science, particularly when the meaning of terms is involved" (1931, 45). Many political scientists would argue that little has changed since that time. They view, moreover, the present lack of consensus around the meaning of ordinary words as a major cause of that confusion. This paper suggests that there may be another way to view such terminological disputes, for they also seem instrumental in making political scientists talk to one another. That is, in the absence of any discipline-wide agreement on method, fighting over the meaning of ordinary words provides political science its focus, it defines what the discipline is, what its practitioners do. This does not mean, of course, that political scientists merely fight over words. They have also learned, and continue to learn, important things about the political world. But a shared stock of ordinary words provide the mechanism by which they understand this knowledge

[16] Current taxonomic debates between numeric pheneticists (who classify according to similarities in characteristics), cladists (who base classification on genealogy alone), and evolutionary classifiers (who look at both similarities and genealogy) date only to the 1950s and 60s. As Ernst Mayr (1994, 277) explains, "for nearly a century after the publication of Darwin's *Origin* no well-defined schools of classifiers were recognizable. There were no competing methodologies. Taxonomists were unanimous in their endeavor to establish classifications that would reflect 'degree of relationship.'"

to be knowledge about politics, and not, say, about art, physics, or economics. Neologisms play only a bit part in the making of this culture because there are no widely accepted rules within the field for determining their salience or worth.

Appendix: Some Ordinary Words

Provided in parentheses is the date each term first occurred in the English language, as established by the Oxford English Dictionary; c. = circa and b. = before. Some words entered the English language long before they became words of politics. For instance, "revolution" as an astronomical term dates to the fourteenth century, and did not become a term of political discourse until the 1600s. "Lobby" as a monastic term dates to the sixteenth century, and did not enter political discourse until the 1830s.

Accountable (1583)
Administration (c. 1315)
Alliance (1297)
Association (1535)
Authority (c. 1230)
Autonomy (1623)
Ballot (1549)
Budget (1432-50)
Bureaucracy (1818)
Change (b. 1225)
Citizenship (1611)
Civil (1362)
Class (1596)
Campaign (1628)
Coalition (1612)
Colony (1382)
Community (1375)
Competition (1605)
Compromise (1426)
Conflict (c. 1430)
Consensus (1854)
Consent (b. 1225)
Conservative (c. 1384)
Constitution (c. 1380)
Control (c. 1475)
Corruption (1340)
Country (c. 1275)
Culture (c. 1420)
Democracy (1574)
Dependency (1594)
Deterrence (1861)
Development (1756)
Dictatorship (1586)
Domination (c. 1386)
Economy (c. 1530)
Election (c. 1270)
Equality (1398)
Elite (1387)
Empire (1297)
Ethnic (c. 1375)
Faction (1509)
Federal (1645)
Force (b. 1300)
Freedom (c. 888)
Government (1483)
Hegemony (1567)
Hierarchy (c. 1380)
Ideology (1796)
Identity (1570)
Influence (c. 1374)
Institution (c. 1380)
Interest (1450)
Justice (1137-54)
Law (b. 1000)
Leader (c. 1290)
Left (b. 1175)
Legitimacy (1691)
Liberal (c. 1375)
Liberty (b. 1374)
Lobby (1553)
Modern (1500-20)
Nation (b. 1300)
Opinion (b. 1300)
Opposition (c. 1386)
Order (b. 1225)
Organization (1432-50)
Participation (c. 1374)
Party (c. 1290)
Peace (c. 1154)
Plural (1377)
Political (1551)
Politics (b. 1529)
Policy (c. 1386)
Power (c. 1290)
Property (1303)
Private (c. 1380)
Public (1436)
Right (c. 825)
Reform (b. 1340)
Regime (1776)
Representation (c. 1425)
Resistance (1417)
Revolution (1390)
Rule (b. 1225)
Security (1432-50)
Society (1531)
Sovereignty (c. 1340)
Strategy (1688)
State (b. 1225)
Succession (b. 1325)
Terror (c. 1375)
Tradition (c. 1380)
Transition (1551)
Trust (c. 1200)
Violence (c. 1290)
Vote (c. 1460)
Welfare (1303)
War (1154)
World (832)

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