**“Realism for Democrats”**

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This essay is a critical response to Achen and Bartels’ *Democracy for Realists,* the latest in a series of powerful studies to propose a realism of lowered expectations in response to empirical research into political knowledge and public preference formation. I object to Achen and Bartels’s argument because I see it as replacing one “folk” theory with another. Their new “*group theory* of democracy” (Achen and Bartels 2016, 16) rests on what sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2006, 9) would characterize as a “‘folk sociolog[y]’” about groups: it posits groups as the building blocks of society, the basis for party coalitions, and the ground of political power. This paper argues *against* a realism of lowered expectations and *for* a democratic realism drawing on the work of mid-century American politics scholars, E.E. Schattschneider and Jack Walker. These two scholars (who do not come up in the “return to realism” scholarship in political theory), offer a realism with a critical edge and a democratic vision, both of which this paper will elaborate.

Introduction

This essay aims to provide a counterweight to the various elitisms that scholars and political commentators periodically advance in the name of democracy. I address two of these here, Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels’s (2016) *Democracy for Realists* (2016) and Jason Brennan’s *Against Democracy* (2016). Both make strong arguments against representative democracy. Achen and Bartels counsel that if we want US public policy to fairly and equally reflect the preferences of ordinary citizens, we need to give up on elections as a way to bring that about. Not that they would do away with voting but that they would accord more latitude to interest groups and the judiciary in policy-making. (Just how they imagine redirecting today’s interest arena—a preserve of the wealthy—toward progressive change *without* popular opposition, the authors do not say.) Brennan proposes requiring that individuals be licensed to vote, as they must be to drive or practice law and medicine, so as to prevent uninformed but “politically active citizens” from harming or imposing “unjustified risk of harm on their fellow citizens” (243).

I see nothing realist in faulting citizens for the flaws of the processes to which they are subject. And I see nothing democratic in the empowerment of technocratic or epistocratic elites. This essay proposes a realism for democrats that I draw from the work of mid-century critics of pluralism who sought to shift attention from the psychological propensities and epistemic weaknesses of citizens to the effects of what Schattschneider termed the “conflict system.” This realism is not a chastened political stance for democrats who no longer believe in the competence of citizens. I treat realism not as an attitude but as a theory of politics, which I count as distinctive for establishing the centrality of conflict to democratic empowerment. The realism that I draw from this mid-century work focuses on the power of democratic institutions to mobilize and demobilize political actors by soliciting group identifications and landscaping relations of alliance and enmity.

Democracy for “Realists”

*Democracy for Realists* claims to present a new “*group theory* of democracy” (16). Contrary to the interest-based group theory of liberal pluralism, Achen and Bartels claim that “ordinary voters” today derive their sense of “what they want” not from their self-interests and still less from any commitment to a public good but from the “affective tribal loyalties” that sustain their partisanship (Achen and Bartels 2016, 325). These voters make elections “capricious collective decisions,” casting their ballots to express “emotional attachments” to identities that are impervious to reasoned argument and factual challenge (Achen and Bartels 2016, 16, 228). This is their new “*group the*ory of democracy”—the idea that the building blocks of society, the basis for party coalitions, and the grounds of political power derive not from ideology but from ethnic, religious and racial group identifications (Achen and Bartels 2016, 16). It drives what they term “realism”: the counsel that we democrats may want “more effective democracy,” characterized by a “greater degree of *economic and social equality*,” but we will probably never see it if we rely on mass elections to bring it about (Achen and Bartels 2016, 325).

In his provocatively titled *Against Democracy* (2016), noted policy scholar Jason Brennan takes this same premise, that elections are capricious, to an antidemocratic extreme. He asserts that since so few of us do it conscientiously, “fewer of us should be allowed” to vote (Brennan 2016, 19). Brennan divides citizens of mass democracies into two types. They are either “hobbits,” who pay little attention to current events, lack the “social science theories and data” to properly evaluate them, and mostly don’t vote (Brennan 2016, 6). Or they are “hooligans,” who follow their favorite political party as they do their favorite sports team (Brennan 2016, 6). Hooligans are more informed and engaged than hobbits but because they “process political information in deeply biased, partisan, motivated ways,” political outcomes would be less “harmful” for everyone (the hooligans included) if they stayed home (Brennan 2016, 37). Brennan (2016, 9) portrays democracy as a system that gives political incompetents free rein to impose badly-made “decisions on innocent people.” His cure is “epistocracy,” a regime in which citizens would have to be licensed to vote—by taking an examination, getting a college or advanced degree, participating in a “*competence-building process*”—as they must be to drive, to practice medicine, law, or any other expert field that has the potential to do life-altering harm to its patients or clients (Brennan 2016, 214).

2016—surely a banner year for Anglo-American citizen incompetence—made these works seem prescient. UK citizens voted to exit the EU on the promise that it would save money and alter neoliberal austerities. Advocates had falsely argued that a vote to “Brexit” would return nearly half a million dollars weekly to national coffers (they failed to mention the subsidies that Britons receive from EU policy and the benefits from open trade with European markets). Months later, an electorally consequential minority of the US electorate voted a former reality television star into the White House, rallied by his pledges to restart the coal industry, tear up international agreements on free trade, climate change and nuclear non-proliferation, and build a wall along the entire length of the US-Mexico border. The blatant nationalism in both campaigns can be readily interpreted as validating the new group theory. The US result went even further to suggest that reality itself is now group-based. Wave upon wave of postelection investigative reporting revealed that the US electoral outcome depended in no small measure on the aid of a Russian-sponsored social media hack. By liking, sharing and following posts, individuals on Facebook unwittingly spread misinformation to an estimated 129 million Americans. Some of it was warfare, manufactured by cyber soldiers in St. Petersburg. Some was sheer entrepreneurship, cartoon scenarios circulating on the internet as click bait for cash.[[1]](#footnote-1)

It may seem “realistic” to take this evidence as proof that most citizens do not deserve to vote and that electoral outcomes like “Brexit” or the Trump “presidency” ought not to count. But to equate realism with the cultivation of lowered expectations is to reduce a rich concept to an ordinary attitude. It is also to tap an all too available antidemocratic elitism. Political Science analysis of the 2016 US election suggests another realism and a very different response.

In November 2016, more than 4 million people who had voted for President Obama in 2012 went “missing” (McElwee et al 2018).[[2]](#footnote-2) Composed of slightly more people of color (51%) than whites (49%), this population mostly earns less than $50,000 a year and expresses preferences about Obamacare, immigration, the environment and criminal justice that put its members significantly to the left of the largely white (84%) voters who switched from Obama to Trump between the two elections (McElwee et al 2018). Although they are “quite close to the emerging Democratic consensus on issues of class, race, gender and the environment,” just 43 percent of these non-voters reported being contacted by a candidate in 2016,” which suggests that the Clinton campaign overlooked more than half of them (McElwee et al 2018).

Are citizens the incompetents here? To the contrary, if we follow E.E. Schattschneider (1975, 97), who declared nonvoting to “shed light on the bias and the limitations of the political system,” this analysis suggests quite the opposite. It points to a failure of mobilization, one that is consistent with a nearly 50-year trend in Democratic Party politics to give up hunting “where the ducks are” (ideological allies and likely votes) so as to chase down geese that lay golden eggs (wealthy donors).[[3]](#footnote-3)

This essay counters “democracy for realists” by flipping the title. I develop a “realism for democrats” out of the work of mid-century critics of pluralism E.E. Schattschneider and Jack Walker. [[4]](#footnote-4) Schattschneider’s critique is especially pertinent to the “new” group theory for the way that he criticized the “old” group theory: for overestimating the capacity of citizens to mobilize themselves and, so, lending democratic legitimacy to pressure politics—a conflict system that privileged the rich. Walker elaborates Schattschneider’s analysis by breaking with his faith in party politics to examine social protest as a transformative political force.

Let’s Begin with the “Group”

Achen and Bartels put forward their “new group theory of power”offering neither a definition nor a theory of groups. They use that term as casually as they do the term realism (whose meaning is no more self-evident), merely following the conventions of mid-twentieth-century group theory scholarship. They treat groups as demographic categories that take on heightened political significance—as identities—when they become central to an individual’s “self-concept” (Achen and Bartels 2016, 228). This appears to be their definition, that groups are highly-charged demographic categories. They state their theory in one sentence: “‘groupiness’…is fundamental to thinking about the beliefs, preferences, and political behavior of democratic citizens” (Achen and Bartels 2016, 231). They borrow this term “‘groupiness’” from Karen Stenner (2005, 18), who proposes it to capture the idea that individuals’ attachment to authoritarian regimes is motivated by a general desire for “self and others to conform to *some* system, not [by a] commitment to a specific normative order.” Stenner’s concept naturalizes group formation, treating it as the effect of a psychological propensity.

There is no denying that the average person and even the average scholar thinks of groups this way. They picture groups as basic social building blocks, imagine themselves belonging to groups, and believe groups to be basic units of political action and participation. Sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2006, 9) would characterize such notions as a “‘folk sociolog[y]’” that conceives of groups naturalistically and apolitically, as—in Achen and Bartels’s terms—the “foundation” of the contest for institutionalized power (#??). From Brubaker’s perspective, their argument replaces one “folk” theory with another.

It is one thing for scholars to accept that groups possess this kind of representational force for ordinary people and quite another to concede that they actually exist in the world (Brubaker 2006, ##). The distinction is, admittedly, difficult to grasp. What can it mean to admit something is *real* but deny that it *exists*?

Brubaker recommends that we think about “groups” as we think about race. We can accept the fact that “racial idioms, ideologies, narratives, categories and systems of classification…are real and consequential, especially when they are embedded in powerful organizations.” This in no way obligates us to “posit the existence of races” (Brubaker 2006, 11). Just as “race” conceived as a real difference or natural basis for hierarchy gives little analytic purchase on white supremacy, “group” affords little analytic purchase on the phenomena of identity, loyalty and mobilization that we tend to use it to explain.

To approach groups as Brubaker (2006, 11, 13) recommends would shift the focus from groups as foundations of politics to “*group-making*” as a “fluctuating” political process. This shift recasts groups from effects of a psychological propensity to political phenomena. Group-making can have different kinds of political effects. It may bring actual groups into being, “bounded collectivit[ies]” that recognize themselves and reliably act in concert over some period of time (Brubaker CITE?). It may also give rise to constructs like “sanctuary city” or “welfare queen,” discursive entities that cannot be legally warranted or empirically observed but that have measurable political consequences. Politicians invoke them to mobilize resistance to or support for consequential measures of public policy (Footnote Soss et al).

In *Democracy for Realists*, Achen and Bartels set out to vanquish the “folk theory” of democracy but end up producing a “group theory” that so thoroughly naturalizes groups as to rule the politics of group-making out of the scope of critical analysis. Just like the group theorists of the mid-twentieth century, they lack a theory of groups *as political* (Walker 1991, ##). The “realism” in *Democracy for Realists* is an attitude, not a theory of politics. Their title functions not as a theoretical proposition but as wise counsel: be realistic about your expectations of mass electorates.

For a “Constructivist” Realism

To align constructivism with realism may seem confused. As I argued in the Introduction to this book, I use the term “constructivism” to affirm that there can be no society, social groups or political agents without representation understood as a conceptual, aesthetic and political activity that gives form and meaning to forces that are heterogeneous and dispersed. I join these strands in order to oppose the naturalistic premise—that conflict originates in group difference –to a Schattschneiderian maxim: that conflict drives group formation. Schattschneider (1975, 64) proposed the term “conflict of conflicts” to name a central aspect of the activity of representing in mass democracy, the struggle by representatives to solicit constituencies by substituting a dominant “cleavage” (such as racial or sectional conflict) with a new “antagonism” that brings previously “subordinated conflicts” to the fore (1975, 126; 71-71).

Schattschneider’s “conflict of conflicts” is not determined by the social; it landscapes the social. It selects, out of a multiplicity of demographic categories and competing divisions and alliances, a conflict that creates a new division of “factions, parties, groups, classes,” mobilizing new people for a politics that is “*about* something new” (Schattschneider 1975, 60, 102).

The mid-century democratic realists understood constructivist realism even if they would not have claimed the label. They distinguished themselves from both pluralist and elite theories of democracy by contesting their reigning assumption that “political mobilization is the result or end product of certain types of social cleavage and social change” (Cameron 1974, 139). Pluralist and elite theories of democracy, however different they may otherwise be, both posit social relations as a political substrate. Schattschneider (60; emphasis original) challenges this determinism, emphasizing that “what happens in politics *depends on the way in which people are divided* into factions, parties, groups classes, etc.,” and that political outcomes depend “on which of a multitude of conflicts gains the dominant position.” The choice of conflict and its staging, in a public or private venue, on a broad or narrow scale, creates the topography of the social. Schattschneider (30, 69) coined a term to theorize this dynamic relationship among conflict, political participation, and social relations of enmity and alliance: the “*mobilization of bias*.”

In everyday speech, mobilization means taking action, often in response to a call. Among political scientists, especially scholars of US politics, the word circulates unmodified as a synonym for turning voters out to the polls. “Political mobilization” stands for the particular, narrow activity of voter participation. “Mobilization” is a keyword in almost every other subfield of political science, where it tends to be modified as, for example, “ethnic” mobilization or “interest-group” mobilization. Its first robust conceptualization dates back the political behavior scholarship of Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee (1954), who defined it “as a key mechanism that fashions group identities into political blocs” (Egan 2012, 598). In all of this work, mobilization works *on* group identities.

As I use the term, mobilization does not work *on* groups but solicits them into being. It is a constitutive force, actively shaping social relations of enmity and alliance, not merely tapping into preexisting cleavages. Although uses of “mobilization” in this constructivist sense were rare in post-WWII political science, one leading journal did publish a critique of “social determinism” in the “standard framework” for research on political mobilization (Cameron 1974, 138-39). David Cameron objected to scholarship that posited political mobilization as the “result or end product of certain types of social cleavage and social change” for two reasons. First, because it treated “induction” into a group “as passive and inevitable” and, second, because it failed to “consider the impact of the organization as an agent of mobilization” (1974, 139-40).

Cameron follows the logic of Schattschneider’s “mobilization of bias” here, although without acknowledging him. Cameron urged scholars to take account of agents of organization (such as political parties) that frame social changes so as to provoke a response in a particular partisan direction, and that use the “infrastructure” of local social organizations to tap existing predispositions (Cameron 1974, 140).[[5]](#footnote-5) Without the mediating work of these agents, “social changes and conflicts” would not necessarily register politically; Cameron emphasizes that they “may be important for politics only when they become defined as politically important, that is, when they receive negative and positive references in the political system” (145). In conclusion, Cameron (1974, 161) makes a full constructivist turn to argue that rather than resting on social divisions “mobilization may…be a cause rather than an effect” of those cleavages and group identities. In what may be the most recent permutation of the use of the term, the mobilization of “affect,” political psychology scholars have carried the constructivist impulse so far as to dissolve group identities into individual predispositions that can be activated or depressed by stirring up different emotions (Marcus, Neuman and MacKuen 2000).[[6]](#footnote-6)

At first glance Schattschneider seems to use the term mobilization in a straightforward way, to mean voter participation or political participation more broadly. It gets more complex because he breaks with a central premise of the most prominent democratic paradigms of the time, the pluralists and democratic elitists, who understood voter participation, interest organizing and participation in other forms as a spontaneous expression of political interests and commitment. This assumption—that voters would participate and groups would organize if they had an interest or a strong concern—provoked debate over how to interpret widespread nonparticipation in the US political system.

Realists Debate Pluralists: Why Don’t People Vote?

Prominent mid-century scholars framed nonparticipation as an apathy problem. They took low turnout rates and other indicators of voter indifference as evidence that politics makes little claim on most people’s attention and time. This premise supplied the ontological foundation for what Lipset (1962, 33) named the “‘elitist’ theory of democracy”. These scare quotes are semiotically significant (although it is typical for interpreters of Lipset—including Walker—to drop them).[[7]](#footnote-7) Lipset put “elitist” in scare quotes to position the thinkers he identified as “elitist” *democrats* in opposition to antidemocratic elitists like Michels, whose iron law of oligarchy demonstrated the “impossibility of democracy” in mass society by virtue of the gap that develops between party leadership and party members (Lipset 1962, 33).[[8]](#footnote-8) Antidemocratic elitists like Michels rely on an idealized classical notion of democracy that counts “*any separation* between leaders and followers as *ipso facto* a negation of democracy” (Lipset 1962, 33-34). The *democratic* “elitists” want to rescue mass democracy by rejecting that notion. They counter that modern democracy need not conform to the “ideal of the Greek city state or of small Swiss cantons” to count as democratic. The mass-elite separation could even be mass democracy’s “distinctive and most valuable element,” provided that elites engage in “competitive struggle for the votes of a mainly passive electorate” (Lipset 1962, 34, 36).[[9]](#footnote-9)

Self-proclaimed democratic “elitists” like Lipset and pluralist or “empirical” democrats like Dahl share an aim and a belief. They aim to defend mass democracy and they believe that passivity is a feature of voters in mass electorates. Neither to be celebrated nor lamented, high rates of nonparticipation were simply a fact of US politics, one that confronts political scientists with “problems for both empirical and normative theory” (Dahl 1966, 299). Mid-century scholars hoped that a competitive system with protections for free speech and a free press could sustain mass democracy despite this fact.[[10]](#footnote-10) Elitists like Schumpeter and Lipset proposed that mass democracy could function satisfactorily, even reducing high-minded notions of citizen participation to voting in competitive elections, and even if large numbers of citizens declined to do even that. Dahl (1966, 301) regarded political participation rates in the US as “deplorably low,” and rejected the idea that electoral participation is a sufficiently valuable activity that increasing it alone would shore up US democracy.

Schattschneider strikes out a unique position in this debate. He shares Dahl’s sense that nonparticipation is a problem but, unlike Dahl or the “elitists,” he does not regard it as a feature of voters in mass electorates. Schattschneider framed non-participation as a mobilization problem that he explained in terms of what he called the “bias” of the “conflict system.”

Readers may not recall that Schattschneider develops his notion of “mobilization” through the example of a riot. In Schattschneider’s hands, rioting serves not to warn against the dangers of popular participation but to disclose what he terms the “central political fact in a free society”: the “tremendous contagiousness of conflict” (Schattschneider 1975, 2). Public conflict mobilizes publics. Private conflict suppresses popular action. The outcome of private conflict can be fairly reliably predicted from the start because the “relative strengths of the contestants are likely to be known in advance” (Schattschneider 1975, 4). Public conflict is different. Its outcome is “determined by the *scope* of its contagion” (Schattschneider 1975, 2). Enlarging the “scope” of conflict, by including more people or by altering its frame, “changes [its] nature” and “changes the balance of the forces involved” (Schattschneider 1975, 2-3).

From this “central fact” Schattschneider (1975, 6) distills a new “principle”—that “the scope of conflict determines its outcome”—which forms the basis for the realist analysis of power that he pursues throughout his slim volume. Schattschneider invites analysts to approach democratic institutions as systems of crowd control. He contends that the “nub of politics” in a free society concerns, “first, the way in which the public participates in the spread of conflict and, second, the processes by which the unstable relation of the public to the conflict is controlled” (Schattschneider 1975, 3). Restricting the franchise is only the most obvious method of crowd control. It is neither the most effective nor the most pervasive. Schattschneider (1975, 108) emphasizes that exclusion through the conflict system, “by extralegal processes, by social processes, by the way the political system is organized and structured may be far more effective than [exclusion by] the law.” It follows that the “struggle for democracy” doesn’t end with winning the right to vote, for the “vote can be vitiated as effectively *by placing obstacles in the way of organizing the electorate*” as by denying people the ballot (Schattschneider 1975, 100; emphasis added).

Schattschneider introduced these concepts to reframe nonparticipation from an index of apathy or consent to an index of power: “abstention reflects the *suppression* of the options and alternatives that reflect the needs of the nonparticipants” (1975, 102; emphasis added). Those currently in power have every interest in ensuring that nonparticipants remain “self-disenfranchised” because their entry into politics as an organized force could “produce the most painless revolution in history” (Schattschneider 1975, 99, 96). The only way to change entrenched patterns of participation is to change the terms and possibly also the locus of the fight, to introduce “a new kind of political system based on new cleavages and *about* something new” (Schattschneider 1975, 102). This attention to the relationship between political cleavages and the mobilization—or demobilization—of political action is Schattschneider’s contribution to democratic realism.

Realism for Democrats: Part One

Schattschneider captivated many readers with his title—*The Semisovereign People*—which vividly proclaimed his project, to challenge the “schoolbook definition of democracy” which imagines that the people can, should and “really do decide” questions of public policy (1975, 130). Equally important, but less remarked upon, is the subtitle: “A Realist’s View of Democracy in America.” Despite identifying as a “realist,” Schattschneider does not specify what he means by it. He certainly did not use the term to endorse the notion that power not morality, ethics or ideology explains political outcomes. Realism as Schattschneider practiced it was not merely reproductive or validating of the status quo. Like many who called themselves realists in his time, Schattschneider (1975, 108) had a normative project, to counter the “classical” theories of democracy that had “overestimated the strength and universality of the self-generated impulse of people to participate in the life of the political community.” Such theories set both citizens and democratic institution up to fail. Just as a “locomotive can do [little] without rails,” mass publics can do little without “conflict, competition, leadership and organization” to structure popular choice (Schattschneider 1975, 136).[[11]](#footnote-11) They cannot be expected to choose meaningfully—much less act spontaneously—without “a tremendous effort to define the alternatives, to organize the discussion and mobilize opinion” (Schatttschneider 1975, 136; emphasis added). Pluralist democrats are wrong to imagine that members of mass publics organize themselves when they have something at stake. Classical democrats are wrong, too, to imagine that they can and should want to do more.

Take the locomotive image as a realist metaphor. The “rails” are the policy “alternatives” at any given moment that solicit some groups and individuals to ride the train and discourage (or even prohibit) others from doing so. The networks of railways and stations make up the “conflict system,” a phrase Schattschneider (#) uses to denote, by turns, the principles (such as universal rights or particularistic demands), governing mechanisms (such as markets and states), and modes of organizing (political parties, social movements, interest groups) that set the context within which conflicts come to the fore or remain submerged. Schattschneider’s “conflict system” concept turns the reigning group theories of politics upside down. He argues that interests do not motivate individuals to organize groups and participate in politics; rather, whether they organize or not “is determined largely by the conflict system, for it is conflict that involves the people in politics and the nature of conflict determines the nature of the public involvement” (Schattschneider 1975, 126). [[12]](#footnote-12)

Schattschneider maintained that democratic institutions are not neutral. They have a “bias in favor of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others” (69) This “mobilization of bias” (69?) may be overt, as in the case of apartheid, or quietly written into a seemingly innocuous or, at least, facially neutral procedural detail such as a voter identification requirement or an obscure provision of the tax code.[[13]](#footnote-13) The point is that no institution treats “conflict impartially, [any more than] football rules…treat all forms of violence with indiscriminate equality” (Schattschneider 70). Just as football is a game of managed violence, politics is a game of managed conflict in which political leaders aim to mount battles that reproduce long-established cleavages and to tax those that might generate unconventional alliances, bringing new people into politics.Bias is democratically significant for affecting political mobilization by prioritizing some conflicts over others and by favoring more or less “contagious” modes of organizing.

Schattschneider’s “conflict” might be fruitfully compared with Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985, #) term “antagonism.” Antagonism stages a test “between conflicting alternatives” that is irreducibly political because it cannot be decided by an appeal to reason, morality, or efficiency (Mouffe ##). Schattschneider (1975, 68, 66) likewise recognizes that conflict in democratic politics involves not simply a “conflict of interests” nor “an intercollegiate debate in which opponents agree in advance on a definition of issues.” He describes a “conflict of conflicts” where “the antagonists can rarely agree on what the issues are because power is involved in the definition” (66). This “conflict of conflicts” affects the “direction and location” of lines of “cleavage” that “determine the place of each individual in the political system,” establishing possibilities for alliance and opposition that affect what the “opposing sides are,” how large they are, and ultimately decide “who wins” (Schattschneider 1975, 61).

The conflict system concept is significant for calling attention to a dimension of power that Dahl and other pluralists cannot account for. Schattschneider proposes a shift from taking conflict as derivative, an expression of competing interests and the relative distribution of power, to treating it as a constitutive force. The struggle to determine the agenda of conflict determines the “*way in which people are divided* into factions, parties, groups, classes, etc” (Schattschneider 1975, 60; emphasis in original). That division, in turn, decides who gets organized into and who organized out of politics. This is realism in Isaac’s (1987, 5) sense of the term, conceiving power “in terms of the structures within which behavior takes place.”

Achen and Bartels miss this structural concern. When Schattschneider (1975, 135-136) objects to versions of popular sovereignty that “attribute to the people a mystical, magical omnipotence,” they read him to advocate, with the democratic elitists, for reduced expectations of what citizens can do based on what (little) they know. But Schattschneider is emphatic that this is a structurallimitation of mass democracy not a cognitive one. The classical democrat’s “disservice” to the democratic cause” is not to overestimate what mass citizens know but to take “no cognizance of what very large numbers of people cannot do *by the sheer weight of numbers*” (Schattschneider 1975, 136; emphasis added). Schattschneider considers it “an outrage to attribute the failures of American democracy to the ignorance and stupidity of the masses” (Schattschneider 1975, 132).[[14]](#footnote-14) Schattschneider proposed an altogether different way of thinking about participation and non-participation: a democratic realism that recognizes conflict as a mobilizing force. It shapes group identities and interests and both solicits *and* discourages public involvement in politics. Although he would not have used the word, Schattschneider anticipates what I have termed “constructivist” realism by portraying group action, interest and identity as effects of conflictrather than as its origin or cause.

Schattschneider proposes a paradigmatic shift in interpreting group formation, participation and abstention. His analytic framework refutes the notion that the intensity of group interests (or their legitimacy) decides which groups form and last and which are repeatedly frustrated. He treats forming and fading of groups as indices of the “bias” of the conflict system. Schattschneider makes “bias” at once a descriptive term, an account of how conflict *produces* power as opposed to merely expressing it, and a critical concept that draws attention to the patterns of exclusion to which the structural relations of pluralism give rise.

This lexicon--“scope” of conflict, “mobilization of bias,” and “conflict system”—directs the analysis of power to the “*mise en scène”* of conflict rather than to its outcomes. A phrase that French democratic theorist Claude Lefort appropriated from theater into mass politics, “*mise en scène*” refers to the discursive and material tactics that politicians use to draw lines of cleavage and thereby bid for constituents. Issue framings orient people in relation to an issue; those framings joined to selective mobilization strategies map a typography of allies and enemies. In theater, the *mise en scène* is a deliberate organization of space that situates a play geographically and historically, orienting actors and audience alike toward the action and affecting the considerations they bring to bear on the events of the play. (Think of the differences between staging *Julius Caesar* in ancient Rome, orienting the audience toward classical history, or in Elizabethan time, orienting it toward the literary classic of the play itself, or in the 2016 US elections with an orange-haired Caesar and an unkempt rabid Brutus). In politics, *mise en scène* focuses analysis on the political constitution of the social “ground” of conflict.

Lefort was as significant a defender of democracy in France during the late 1970s and 1980s as Schattschneider was in the US a decade earlier. Thinkers in both countries questioned the competence of mass democratic citizens. In the US, the debate centered on (and still centers on) theories of political behavior and the result of survey research. In France, scholars debated the legacy of the French Revolution. Did it give rise to a uniquely democratic “form of society” (Lefort 14) that led directly to totalitarianism as François Furet famously maintained. Or was its “political originality” to open up political fundamentals—such as the social order and the terms for settling questions of legitimacy—to “a debate…without any guarantor and without any end” (Lefort 39)? This is Lefort’s definition of democracy, a regime defined not by popular sovereignty but by the “dissolution of the markers of certainty” with respect to where power resides and what makes it legitimate (19).

Schattschneider can be fruitfully compared to Lefort (a thinker whose work he surely never read) for the realist commitment that he proclaims in his subtitle. Schattschneider, like Lefort, breaks with the assumption that democracy is merely the inversion of the sovereignty of the monarch, a regime that seats law in a self-authorizing people rather than in a divinely-anointed king. He defines democracy, as Lefort does, by its openness to antagonism, the kind of conflict that creates new social divisions and institutes new patterns of alliance. His arguments rebut the “realistic” pessimism of the elitists without falling back on a romanticized ideal of an informed citizenry rationally deciding its interests and organizing to promote them. He proposes an alternative realism, a theory that is democratic for valuing popular participation and realist for its attention to the ways that conflict systems empower or disempower popular majorities by shaping group identities and interests and soliciting or discouraging public involvement.

Realism For Democrats: Part Two

Schattschneider inspired a series of well-known scholars to develop a novel line of argument about power. Their work shifted political science analysis from the “first” face of power that is manifest in conflict, to its second “face,” which can be observed in decisions that suppress conflict, and to a “third” face that shapes individual preferences so as to foreclose conflict entirely—altogether eliminating the need to either prevail over or suppress one’s opponents (Bachrach and Baratz 1962; Lukes 1974). Yet none of these scholars redeemed the *realist* promise of Schattschneider’s approach. However ground-breaking their arguments may have seemed, Isaac has argued that they remained captured by the behavioralist premise that “power is the empirical causation of one actor’s behavior by that of another actor” (1987, 15). Although each of these critics points toward the need to specify the “structural dimension of power,” and Lukes gets credited with having begun to illuminate precisely that, Isaac (1987, 14-16) argues that they all share the notion that power is necessarily held by an actor and necessarily exercised “in interaction” with others. They neither capitalize on Schattschneider’s “conflict system” nor pursue his theorization of a power that does not have to be manifest to have effects: the institutional “biases” that mobilize some groups and demobilize others.

Jack Walker is an exception. A leading theorist of interest group mobilization in the 1980s, Walker is known for his intervention into the debate between pluralist theory and the economic analysis of Mancur Olson. Pluralists, as exemplified by David Truman (1951), posited that interest groups emerge spontaneously when their interests are threatened, Olson (1965), demonstrated how thoroughly a calculus of material costs and benefits works against mass mobilization (Walker 1981). Walker observed that if Olson were correct, which was the consensus of the field at the time, the dramatic WWII increase in US interest groups should not have occurred.[[15]](#footnote-15) Walker argued that both positions overlooked a significant agent of mobilization: “patrons of political action”—federal government agencies, private corporations, foundations, labor unions, wealthy individuals and more—who subsidize the costs of collective action around dispersed, non-excludable benefits (1983, 402).

Walker’s patronage thesis was a realist insight in Schattschneider’s mode. Like Schattschneider, he sought to counter the “schoolbook” democratic stereotype of spontaneous action starting from the grass roots. By theorizing the role that patrons play in interest mobilization he redirected the analytic focus from the “psychological and social characteristics of individuals” to the conflict system, casting political participation “as the result of the incentives, constraints, and opportunities created by the society’s legal system and the intervention in political life of its largest economic, social, and governmental institutions” (1991, 49). Walker’s work develops a realist account of democracy that elaborates two of Schattschneider’s central insights. First, that conflict as is a systematic rather than spontaneous political force, and, second, that conflict determines who gets representation in mass democracies because it solicits group formation and mobilization by some elements of society while frustrating that of others.

Walker was especially concerned to explain the systemic dynamics that enable some groups to emerge, organize, and establish themselves while other “elements of the population who are experiencing great distress remain without representation,” either because they remain unorganized or because they are unable to last (1991, 16). He is most known for the work he produced by pursuing this question in the arena of interest group politics. Before that work, Walker studied grass roots social protest, a research agenda that, in the discipline of political science in the early 1960s, was genuinely radical. His controversial 1996 article, “A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy” poses an urgent political question, What is the significance of social protest for democratic politics?[[16]](#footnote-16)

Imagine the power of such a question at a time when a liberal, representative theory of democracy predominated, characterized by a “marketplace” model that edited violence and other strong passions out of public life (Isaac 1998, 29-31).[[17]](#footnote-17) It is striking that Walker posed this question and even more striking that he took his answer from groundbreaking work on popular uprisings by social historians George Rudé (1964) and Eric Hobsbawm (1959). These two British Marxist historians were the first to treat riots and mobs with sociological precision and scholarly dispassion, specifying their membership, identifying their conditions of emergence, and enumerating their tactics and goals. Walker draws on their work because it enables him to set aside the moralizing and outraged responses to social protest that were common among scholars and citizens alike in order to propose a realist analysis that makes social protest an index to the “biases” of the conflict system.

This is Walker’s thesis about the US democracy: that its party system and interest system alike have a bias against “sharp conflict” (Walker 1966, 291). Walker (1966, 291) explains that in a “fragmented society which contains numerous geographic, religious and racial conflicts,” party leaders have to sideline “highly controversial, politically explosive issues” or risk seeking the “*ad hoc* coalitions” that they build temporarily, around “specific programs” fall apart (Walker 1966, 291). The interest system, in its turn, catches office holders at all levels of the political system “in a web of cross pressures which prevent them from making bold departures in policy” (Walker 1966, 292). It also allows business leaders “indirect influence” on politicians which keeps them from proposing legislation or even broaching issues that they anticipate would provoke opposition from the business community (Walker 1966, 292). If Walker elaborates the core of Schattschneider’s realism, the idea that scholars should look to the conflict system to understand disparities in representation and mobilization, he jettisons the moralized binary that Schattschneider set up between party conflict and interest conflict.[[18]](#footnote-18)

By “sharp conflicts,” Walker means battles that introduce new institutions, that secure new rights, and encourage new “political and social mobilization” (Walker 1966, 293). As examples of the innovations that “sharp conflicts” bring about, he names the social security system, the Wagner Act, the Subversive Activities Control Act of 1950, or the Civil Rights Bill of 1964, ever came about.” Look at the incongruity of this list, which places the anti-communist McCarren act in the company of victories for collective bargaining and black civil rights. Walker’s realism shows itself here, in his frankness that not all popular movement conduces to liberal gains. It is also evident in his conviction that conflict is not neutral. It is an institutional force that mobilizes *and* demobilizes popular participation. It follows that nonparticipation should be an “intense concern” of democratic theory (Walker 1966, #).

It was controversial for Walker to charge that “democratic elitists” (a overbroad category into which Walker cast self-proclaimed elitists together with pluralist democrats) did not share this concern. At the time, this charge seems to have offended Dahl more than any other feature of Walker’s argument. Over the course of his career, Dahl may well have grown more concerned to foster responsible citizen participation. In 1956, Dahl famously praised pluralism as a stable system because it is, first, based on “a broad consensus on the underlying values of democracy” (Walker 1991, 45) and, second, “open to any organized group” which perceived those values to be under threat (Dahl #). His purportedly “empirical” democratic theory encouraged scholars to read abstention as consent and discount the political significance of violence.[[19]](#footnote-19)

It is only fair to acknowledge that as Dahl published *A Preface to Democratic Theory* in 1956, must have finished writing it the year before. The year “in press” proved cataclysmic. In 1955, white Americans launched their decades-long backlash against *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). The murder of Emmett Till sparked southern black activists to coordinated civil rights organizing. And on December 5, activists in Montgomery rallied around Rosa Parks to launch the Bus Boycott that would bring the movement its first national attention. Dahl cannot possibly have anticipated these events.[[20]](#footnote-20) Yet is difficult not to be struck by the incongruity between his classic statement of pluralist democracy and the brutal violence and vivid social protest that were setting the South on fire. In 1966, Walker dares to state the obvious: “it is hard to believe, in these days of protest demonstrations, of Black Muslims and the Deacons of Defense and Justice, that the mood of cynical apathy that affects so many American Negroes is an indication of their satisfaction with the political system.”

Against the mid-century theorists of democracy who premised their “group theories” of politics on the activities of voters and legitimate, organized interests, Walker launched his from the perspective of protest politics. Not only that, but he deliberately called attention to elements of the civil rights movement that even movement activists deemed controversial: urban riots like that in Watts, black nationalism, and the Deacons of Defense and Justice, a group that organized in 1964 to provide armed protection to southern civil rights activists and engaged in armed struggle against the Klan. Walker neither criticizes nor criminalizes nationalism and armed protest. He reads them as an index to the conflict system, to the “tangible deterrents” that (violently) discourage African-Americans from the simplest acts of registering to vote and turning out to the polls and, also to the “weak, essentially meaningless alternatives” that the party system “usually presents to them” (Walker 1966, 289-290).

Walker’s (1966, 291-293, 286) analysis of the bias against “sharp conflict” in the US system is an account of hegemony—a detailing of built-in “elements of rigidity and constraint” that sustain what the pluralists celebrated as a stability based on “overlapping consensus” (Dahl ##). Walker (1966, 291) judged this system to purchase its much-vaunted stability at the cost of “suppressing and controlling internal conflict.” He expected that when the political system cannot or will not stage such conflicts, they will be expressed in forms of protest that, though “pre-political” are significant for provoking “trials of strength between contending forces or ideas” (Walker 1966, 294).

These two terms—“pre-political” and “trials of strength”—come from the work of social historians George Rudé (1964) and Eric Hobsbawm (1959) on popular uprisings. This work offered a unique analysis of social unrest that sought neither to assign it rationality nor denounce it as irrational. Hobsbawm and Rudé (1964, 9) took aim at a persistent stereotype, inherited from 19th-century French conservative Gustave LeBon, that characterized the crowd “as irrational, fickle, and destructive; as intellectually inferior to its components; as primate or tending to revert to an animal condition.” Both aimed to de-criminalize what Hobsbawm (1959) termed “primitive rebels.” They did so by taking the “disembodied abstraction” of the “crowd” or “mob” and rendering its participants in their particularity as men and women of various occupations, located at various geographical sites (rural and urban), reacting to varied political contexts (feudal and revolutionary) (Rudé 1964, 9). Their work is striking for the fact that neither one treated these actors to a republican whitewash. On the contrary, they deliberately resisted glorifying them as popular heroes or precursors of the working class.[[21]](#footnote-24)

Hobsbawm (1959, 2; italics original) makes an important political theoretic contribution by labeling them “*pre-political*” and specifying what it means to do so. This concept, which Walker cites explicitly, serves neither to denigrate the “mob and its riots” nor to dismiss them as politically insignificant (Hobsbawm 1959, 110). Instead, it offers a precise category for “social protest”—expressions of popular unrest where there is “no question of overthrowing the government or established order, of putting forward new solutions, or even of seeking redress of grievances by political action” so as to assess its significance to democratic struggle. The “crowd” (Rudé) and the “mob” (Hobsbawm) is not organized, as workers would be by the labor movement. Its participants lack an explicit ideology or “specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world” (Hobsbawm 1959, 3). That would come later as the revolutionary “ideas of the ‘rights of man’ and ‘popular sovereignty’…gripped the popular imagination” in 1789 (Rudé 1964, 234). Food riots erupted repeatedly in the early 18th century as a pressure tactic (Rudé 1964, 71) one that played into feudal expectations to keep “rulers ready to control princes and to distribute work or largesses” (Hobsbawm 1959, 116). Hobsbawm describes the dynamics of popular action changing with the democratic revolutions, which brought about new expectations, inaugurated what Schattschneider would have termed a new “conflict system”, and eventually saw the institutionalization of the industrial working class and a style of protest that is nearly opposite to that of the mob. Hobsbawm characterizes Its “very being [as] organization and lasting solidarity, [where]as that of the classical ‘mob’ is the intermittent and short ‘riot’” (1959, 124).

Primitive rebels did not stand for (or against) anything. They did not aim for much beyond “limited or short-range objectives”; they did not have to in order to have significance for democratic struggle (Hobsbawm 1959, 122). Rudé cautions that we will miss their import if we assess them by instrumental measures. He weaves them into a narrative of progress that begins with protest and ends in organized action that achieves greater popular empowerment. In Rudé’s (1964, 268) words, “the crowd…has left its legacy to succeeding generations. As the sans-culotte, small freeholder, and cottager have given way to the factory worker and farm laborer, so the machine wrecker, rick burner, and ‘Church and King’ rioter have given way to the trade unionist, labor militant, and organized consumer of the new industrial society.” He sums up their import with a particularly suggestive phrase: “it is perhaps not unreasonable to see these earlier, immature, and often crude *trials of strength*…as forerunners of later movements whose results and successes have been both significant and enduring” (Rudé 1964, 298; emphasis added). It makes sense that Walker would borrow this phrase “trials of strength” from Rudé because it recognizes the importance of social actors who may not win in the arena of interest politics but who test a new line of conflict, one that potentially gives rise to a fresh division of “factions, parties, groups, classes” (Schattschneider 1975, 60).

As to the significance of social protest for democratic struggle, Walker finds the answer to this question in Rudé’s text. They are instigators of “sharp conflict” that are readily misunderstood when assessed by the instrumental measures of pressure politics. Walker (1966, 294) writes, “By confronting the political authorities, or by locking themselves in peaceful—or violent—conflict with some other element of the society, social movements provoke trials of strength between contending forces or ideas.” Although he does not cite Rudé specifically for the phrase “trials of strength,” he does footnote Rudé’s work and uses the term largely as Rudé does, to name a disruption that succeeds in Schattschneider’s realist terms as a test of “democratic institutions and even the social fabric” with the potential to both change the “agenda of controversy” and spark the “political and social mobilization” of previously marginalized or excluded groups (Walker 1964, 293-294). But whereas Rudé presents “trials of strength” as part of a progressive narrative of popular empowerment, Walker does not. In Walker’s recounting, a transformed US conflict system can just as readily mobilize groupings based on fear and prejudice as by proposing new rights claims.

From Hobsbawm, Walker (1966, 293-4) picks up this concept of “*pre-political*” to characterize the phenomenon whose political importance he believes that reigning theories of democracy either “overlooked” or denigrated “as threats to democracy, as manifestations of ‘political extremism’.” He offers examples from a range of movements—“the Negroes’ drive for civil rights, or the Midwestern farmers’ crusade for fair prices in the 1890’s, the Ku Klux Klan, or the ‘radical right’ movements of the 1960’s”—surely not all of which Hobsbawm would have counted as “primitive” rebels.[[22]](#footnote-25) Nonetheless, Hobsbawm gives Walker a language for bringing social movements and social protest into the ambit of a political science discipline that mirrored two-party pluralism in its aversion to sharp conflict. Walker cared about this. He began his career by writing one of the first political science analyses of the Greensboro lunch counter sit-ins in a (DATE) working paper for the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University, and partnered with Eric Aberbach to mount a ground-breaking survey of Detroiter’s attitudes toward the slogan “Black Power” in Fall 1967, just months after the uprisings.[[23]](#footnote-26) Walker aimed to do for the social protest of his time what Hobsbawm and Rudé had done for the mobs and riots of the past, to decriminalize them and recognize their democratic significance without romanticizing them.

It may seem to denigrate these groups by characterizing them as prepolitical. Why not argue, rather, that rioting *is* politics—particularly for those who are excluded from its conventional arenas? Piven and Cloward, also drawing on Rudé, made a forceful case against the impulse to “normalize” social protest and to edit out of the picture precisely those controversial movements that feature centrally in Walker’s account (1991, 448). They argue that whereas marginalized populations are “easily…ignored” when they form coalitions and otherwise cooperate with mainstream actors, strikes, protests, and riots give them real leverage: they “have some possibility of influence…if their actions violate rules and disrupt the workings or an institution on which important groups depend” (Piven and Cloward 1991, 451). Protest politics need not be violent, just disruptive. Nonviolent civil rights protests in the South “changed the political calculus” of the national Democrats regarding the importance of holding on to the Dixiecrats. By “activating northern liberals and the growing concentrations of black voters in the northern cities, and especially by enlarging the tide of southern white defections” they consolidated both political parties on new geographic bases, completing a process that had begun with the New Deal (PIven and Cloward 1991, 454).[[24]](#footnote-27)

Walker was no more interested than Schattschneider in specifying abstract concepts. Still, the argument of his 1966 essay puts at stake the fundamental question of what it means to be a “realist.” Walker does battle with the realists of the mid-century who, like Achen and Bartels presented themselves as being realistic about the limitations of mass democracy, and attributed these to the failings of citizens. Walker’s realism, like Schattschneider’s, focuses on modes of conflict and the mobilizaitons that they foster and forestall.

Conclusion

I believe it is urgent to face up to the empirical findings regarding the context-dependency of individuals’ reasoning without stoking the elitist bonfire. This is not to say that I would resurrect the “folk theory” of a politically engaged, popularly sovereign and rational public (Achen and Bartels 2016, 1). I believe that modern democracy’s defining feature and radical core is *not* that the people rule themselves. Every democratic constitution has rightly embraced mediation by a body of elected representatives. This embrace gives democratic politics its truly radical power: to rally unexpected popular coalitions in pursuit of convention-challenging, liberty-expanding, equality-enhancing goals. I contend that political representatives of all kinds—not just elected office-holders but social movements, religious leaders, interest groups, minor political parties—are at their most democratic when they re-map social conflict to call new constituencies into being and give words to previously unthinkable demands. Realism for democrats focuses attention on the institutional conditions for and impediments to that kind of organizing.

1. Again, New Yorker cite. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. At 7 percent of Obama 2012 voters, this is just under the 9 percent who voted for Obama in 2012 and switched to the Republican in 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The phrase of course is Barry Goldwater’s, a 1961 plea that Republican party activists go after white Southerners’ votes, an inspired contravention to Civil War era partisan loyalties which counted those votes for the Democrats and African-Americans’ for Republicans (Perlstein 2001, 190). Perlstein, Rick. *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus.* New York: Hill and Wang. Hacker and Pierson (2010) track the trend for the Democratic Party to put donor cultivation ahead of mobilizing its popular base and examine its electoral and policy implications. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Footnote to realist debates in political theory here? [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cameron cites as one case example how the National Socialist Party captured the votes of farmers in the 1930s, “…not because of some inherent predisposition or set of conditions unique to that occupational group but rather for the simpler and more political reason that ‘the National Socialist party appeared to pursue their interests with more determination than any other party.’” [citing *from Democracy to Nazism* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1945), 75-76. No author]. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bibliography for further exploration: Banks, Antoine J. 2016. “Are Group Cues Necessary? How Anger Makes Ethnocentrism Among Ethnic Whites a Stronger Predictor of Racial and Immigration Policy Opinions.” *Political Behavior* 38(3): 635-57. Brader, Ted. 2006. “Affective Intelligence and Beyond: Next Steps in Research on Emotion in Politics.” *Political Communication Report* 16 (3). Marcus et al. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago. Valentino, et al. 2018. “Moblizing Sexism.” *POQ.* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Walker (1966, 287) offers an especially polemical reading, charging that “elitist theorists” suggest that “democracies have good reasons to fear increased political participation” and “argue that a successful (that is, stable) democratic system depends on widespread apathy and general political incompetence.” He claims that Lipset “sees ‘profoundly anti-democratic tendencies in lower class groups’” (Walker 1966, 292), reading out of context a phrase that Lipset uses to make the broader point that the struggles for economic and political liberalism are linked only contingently, not necessarily. He has noted that whereas “lower-class groups” tend to be liberal on workers’ rights but less so on civil liberties, these struggles can be linked when political freedoms are “necessary weapons” in workers’ struggles (Lipset 1981, 123). The full quote reads: “Despite the profoundly antidemocratic tendencies in lower-class groups, workers’ political organizations and movements in the more industrialized democratic countries have supported *both* economic and political liberalism” (Lipset 1981, 121; emphasis CHECK). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Dahl (1966, 297) noted in response to Walker (1966), that Lipset “may have had his reasons” for using the occasion of “writing a preface to the major work of Michels” to coin the expression “elitist theory of democracy” and apply it to a diverse group of thinkers (Weber, Schumpeter, Parsons and Lipset himself) but he does not consider them. Dahl is so anxious to distance himself from what he regards as a “pejorative, even a polemical epithet,” that he does not stop to consider that Lipset had very good reasons to propose this term in an introduction to Michels: precisely because he wanted to argue for a kind of elitism that need not be antidemocratic as it is in Michels. Dahl lends credence to his own fear of the phrase by omitting Lipset’s scare quotes. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. “This image of democracy as conflict of organized groups and of access by the ruled to their rulers may be far from the ideal of the Greek city state or of small Swiss cantons, but in operation as a system it is far better than any other political system which has been devised to reduce the potential exploitation of man by man” (Lipset 1962, 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Note to Isaac here about how pluralism was aspirational even though it called itself “empirical.” [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Although Schattschneider (1975, 136) emphasizes the indispensability of competition and choice in mass democracy, clearly he is no Schumpeterian elitist. Schumpeter’s (2003, 296) definition of democracy—as an “institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote”—gives representatives total discretion. Compare Schattschneider’s (1975, 138; emphasis original): “*Democracy is a competitive political system in which competing leaders and organizations define the alternatives of public policy in such a way that the public can participate in the decision-making process*.” [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Schattschneider identifies two major conflict systems in US society. There is the party system, which promotes participation by “socializing” conflict, staging it publicly for a broad audience, and the interest system, which privatizes conflict and depresses participation. This dichotomy surely oversimplifies. Hacker and Pierson have shown that political parties can narrow the scope of conflict…. Private interests sometimes find it to their advantage to socialize conflict—eg Koch brothers funding “grass roots” opposition to the ACA and climate legislation. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Footnote something on the effect of voter id law on turn out. Give a short precis of Hacker’s argument about the public-private pension system. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Were he able to address Brennan, Schattschneider (1975, 132) might say: “Only a pedagogue would suppose that the people must pass some kind of examination to qualify for participation in a democracy. Who, after all, are these self-appointed censors who assume that they are in a position to flunk the whole human race?....Democracy is something for ordinary people, a political system designed to be sensitive to the needs of ordinary people regardless of whether or not the pedants approve of them.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Walker wrote: “The work of Olson largely undermined Truman’s theory of the spontaneous generation of groups, and yet, despite the power of Olson’s analysis, at first glance recent increases in the number of groups suggest that Truman has the data on his side” (1983, 396). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This question got lost in the reception of the time which got caught up in what Dahl was right to criticize as so polemical a critique of democratic elitism as to verge on “caricature” (1966, #). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Walker’s article appears four years before Carole Pateman’s *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970) launched the rival tradition of “participatory democracy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. --p. 22: **Refutes EE’s romanticized view of political parties:** “The real live American political parties…are not so consistently dedicated to mobilizing the public or coordinating the governemtn as the advocates of party government might wish, nor is the interest group system, taken as a whole, as selfish and narrow as it is portrayed in these accounts. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Need to warrant these claims. See Isaac 1992 and Skinner essay on “democratic elitism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Check reviews from the time: does anyone notice this? [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Hobsbawm (1959, 125) singles out “the mob” as the one among many “groupings of the poor” that can “rarely rouse” the historian’s “sympathy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
22. The Southern Civil Rights movement stands out in particular because it was organized, it had a well-articulated ideology, and it did call for a transformation of segregation, the governmental structure of the South. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
23. Walker and Aberbach set out explicitly to “lay to rest the so-called ‘riffraff’ theory,” put forth in 1964 by the Governor’s commission that investigated the uprisings in Watts, that “black power appeals strictly to the less privileged in the black community” (Aberbach and Walker 1970, 379; need cites—see p. 375). To the contrary, Aberbach and Walker found that the slogan appealed to a broad range of black Detroiters, who saw it “as another call for a fair share for blacks or as a rallying cry for black unity” (1970, 373). They found expressions of what scholars now study as “linked fate” among middle-class blacks who expressed favorable views of black power not out of “personal dissatisfaction” but out of a shared “set of beliefs” and “mood of protest” regarding the slow pace of progress for the black community as a whole (1970, 379). They also found expressions of racial resentment among a majority of white respondents who interpreted the slogan “black power” as a symbol of “a black desire to take over the country, or somehow deprive the white man” (Aberbach and Walker 1970, 373). For white respondents to perceive African American racial solidarity and demands for things like fair wages, neighborhood and school desegregation as “an illegitimate, revengeful challenge” (Aberbach and Walker 1970, 386), is an unvarnished admission that they hold to “whiteness as property” (Harris 1993). They inhabit the material privileges that US society has attached not to hard work, as the ideology holds, but specifically to a white racial status, a status that necessarily entails the subordination of black Americans. From this position of precarious privilege, black power cannot be heard as a simple call for a “fair share”; it is necessarily a bid for dominance in a zero sum game where “blacks can gain something only at the expense of whites and vice versa” (Aberbach and Walker 1970, 372). [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
24. For a detailed account of the grass roots and state-level party action that initiated the realignment that went national in 1968, see Schickler (2016). [↑](#footnote-ref-27)