



# The Left Orientation of Industrial Relations

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[LINK TO ABSTRACT](#)

In this article I document something that will not surprise anyone. I show that the field known as industrial relations (IR) leans overwhelmingly to the political left. I investigate the voter registration and political contributions of IR researchers, showing overwhelming Democratic Party favor and a tendency toward left ideology. Also, I analyze the content of four field periodicals.

Why bother? One reason is that students, parents, taxpayers, policymakers, and citizens, all influenced by academics, need to know that practically all academic fields in the United States are preponderantly left oriented.<sup>2</sup> My investigation of IR serves to inform such interested parties.

Daniel Klein and Charlotta Stern (2009b) discuss the left orientation in academia in terms of groupthink. The term *groupthink* is pejorative, presupposing that the thinking that predominates within the group is defective. The puzzle is, first, how defective thinking comes to dominate, and second, how it resists correction and extends its domination. Klein and Stern do not address the first issue, how

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2. Surveys, voter registration studies, and political contribution studies have illuminated the ideological profile of faculty and researchers. Klein and Stern (2009a) offer an overview of survey and voter-registration findings. They suggest that, as of 2009, an overall Democratic-to-Republican ratio of about 8:1 is probably safe for all humanities and social science faculty (excluding two-year colleges). Economics is a standout, with a ratio more like 3:1. So, if one were to think of non-economics faculty, the ratio may be more like 9:1 or 10:1. Meanwhile, more recently Hurtado et al. (2012) report that the faculty profile has shifted even further to the left (see Jaschik 2012). Recommended studies of the leftward tilt in academia include Klein and Stern 2005; Rothman, Kelly-Woessner, and Woessner 2011; Yancey 2011; and Shields and Dunn 2016.

groupthink comes to dominate. They do, however, explain two mechanisms by which it resists correction and extends its domination.

One mechanism is the decisionmaking procedure in university departments. The departmental procedure is based on majoritarianism and a feeling of consensus—a tendency to promote one who thinks as we do. The other mechanism is the structure of prestige and validation throughout the discipline: Departments are ranked nationwide, even worldwide, with departments at schools such as Harvard at the apex. Every discipline and field has its own all-inclusive pyramid. At the top, the most prestigious departments produce the most new Ph.D.s, and they place their graduates as high as they can within the pyramid.<sup>3</sup> The graduates take over the journals and organizations of the discipline; thereafter, they create self-validating systems. Once the top departments develop a pattern of groupthink, the two mechanisms—the pyramid of disciplinary prestige and majoritarianism in the individual department—combine to lock in their thinking throughout the pyramid.

The Klein-Stern groupthink story is not an iron logic producing lockstep uniformity in political orientation, but it does zero in on central structural features and mechanisms that help to explain the imperviousness of left dominance to opposing viewpoints. By discussing the field of industrial relations, I illustrate structural forces and mechanisms that characterize virtually all academic disciplines and subfields.

Also, my own professional involvement in IR moves me to write this article. For decades I have worked in, or at least around, IR. For decades I have coped with the field's groupthink, often feeling embattled. I hope that this article makes IR researchers more self-aware about their own habitus and more open to discussion about the issue of left dominance in IR.

Uniformity is dangerous. Katherine Phillips (2014), for example, describes a behavioral experiment in which groups of Democrats and groups of Republicans were told that their work would be reviewed by members of the opposite party, and the quality of decisions made in the context of the experiment improved. For the field of social psychology, the dangers of uniformity and the benefits of diversity are richly explored in a high-profile conversation recently published in *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. The lead article is authored by José Duarte, Jarret Crawford, Charlotta Stern, Jonathan Haidt, Lee Jussim, and Philip Tetlock (2015) and is published with follow-up commentary by 33 important people in that field and a reply by the original authors. That project is a model for IR and other fields to

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3. For striking evidence of just how dominant the top ten to twenty departments and schools are, see on political science Oprisko 2012; on sociology Burriss 2004; on economics Klein 2005; on law Katz et al. 2011; and on numerous fields Terviö 2011.

emulate. The present article is a gesture toward such candid and open discussion for the field of IR.

## **I like the people who like me, and the people who like me are like me**

Before turning to IR, it is worth reminding the reader that professors and researchers are human beings, and they behave like human beings. A principal interest of every human being is to be validated, morally and socially, especially by those with whom one lives or works. One wants to be esteemed as one esteems oneself, or even more. We are naturally inclined to like those who like us, and those who like us generally are like us. It is no accident that the word *like* means, as a verb, to value or to favor and, as an adjective, similar or alike; moreover, the word *kind* shows a similar duality of meanings.<sup>4</sup>

The literature on group dynamics, group behavior, value homophily, and social conformity shows that the people whom we tend to like are people who like us and are like us. Recent research supports Adam Smith's idea that one person's approval of another is intimately and always connected to likeness between their sentiments, or sympathy (Smith 1790, 13, 323–325). For instance, Karen Gift and Thomas Gift (2015) conduct an experiment in which they send 1,200 resumes indicating a private sector job applicant's party affiliation to employers in a predominantly conservative county and in a predominantly social democratic county. In the conservative county overt Republicans received 39.2% more callbacks than did overt Democrats, while in the social democratic county overt Democrats received 31.3% more callbacks than did overt Republicans. Shanto Iyengar and Sean Westwood (2015), using associative tests of affect concerning partisanship and race, find that the effects of party on personal preferences are greater than the effects of race. Data on marriage rates appear supportive of that finding: A poll by the Pew Research Center (2015) indicates that interracial marriages are now 12 percent of all marriages, while Iyengar and Westwood (2015) state that interparty marriages are only nine percent of the total.

Diana Mutz writes that the workplace is, by far, "the social context in which political conversation across lines of difference most often takes place" (2006, 55). In academia, the exclusion of non-left people may limit the extent to which academics themselves ever interact sympathetically with those with whom they disagree. As a result, their own skills (e.g., respectful communication toward oth-

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4. See, e.g., the entries in Douglas Harper's *Online Etymology Dictionary* for "like" ([link](#)) and "kind" ([link](#)).

ers) may degenerate. Students may increasingly lack models as to how respectful deliberation can occur because there is little disagreement among their professors.<sup>5</sup>

Among the most important dimensions of shared values or sentiments are criteria for status. Studying a late 1930s Italian-American street gang, for example, William Whyte (1993) explains that a significant way to elite status was success at bowling. An academic department, field, or discipline is a group, a sort of community, and the same principles apply. In academia, publications, citations, honors, and so on serve the function that bowling played in the street gang. But these validation systems themselves are influenced by value homophily. In *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, Edgar Schein observes:

As members of different occupations, we are aware that being a doctor, lawyer, engineer, accountant or manager involves not only technical skills but also adopting certain values and norms that define our occupation. If we violate some of these norms, we can be thrown out of the occupation. (Schein 1992, 8)

Developing a social psychological model of how individuals rise in status in a group, Michael Hogg (2001a; 2001b) notes that ordinary group members have preconceptions about how to become elite members. Individuals rise in a group hierarchy through ingroup and outgroup prototypes that result in “stereotypical homogenization.” Prototypes maximize both similarities within ingroups and differences from outgroups, and they are often polarizing. Hogg writes:

The social identity analysis of categorization processes suggests that group cohesion or solidarity is not only attraction among group members, but also attitudinal and behavioral consensus, ethnocentrism, ingroup favoritism and intergroup differentiation, and so forth—the entire range of effects of categorization-based depersonalization. (Hogg 2001b, 65)

A related model is discussed in textbooks on managerial skills: Conformity to group norms and to broader organizational cultures confers legitimacy, which in turn leads to ascension in organizational hierarchies (Whetten and Cameron 2016, 236).

In the groupthink model, the ideological character of the top of the pyramid is particularly impervious to ideological challenge or diversity. It has long been found that the more elite the university, the more consistently left-leaning is the faculty, and that continues to prove true. The IR voter registration and political contributions evidence provided in this paper bears out the theme of ‘even more

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5. Gross (2013) and Zipp and Fenwick (2006) offer alternative views of the issue of ideological lopsidedness in the academy. I have written a critique of Gross (2013), which will appear in the spring 2016 issue of *Academic Questions*. For a critique of Zipp and Fenwick 2006, see Klein and Stern 2008.

left at the top.’ Also, like the study of the American Economic Association by William McEachern (2006), which shows rising Democratic Party support as we ascend from members, to authors, to editors, to officers of the AEA, this paper finds ascending leftward lopsidedness at the IR periodicals.<sup>6</sup>

Defenders of academia, who do not regard political leftism as defective or wrongheaded, will claim that academia upholds unbiased standards, rewards impartial research, and so on. Critics like me will say that such claims do not escape the problem of self-validation, that the ‘good’ journals are themselves expressive of and conformant to the particular editors who control them, and the editors are, with few exceptions, left academics themselves. Those of us who believe that political leftism is wrongheaded will say that it is groupthink and self-validation all the way down.

## Industrial relations: A bit of history

One might offer explanations for the pervasiveness of left-oriented political thinking. Here I note factors particular to its pervasiveness in IR. The field has direct lineage to the German historical school of economics led by Karl Gustav Adolf Knies and Gustav von Schmoller. Schmoller was particularly known for his support for labor unions and government activism in Germany, advancing reforms such as collective bargaining, minimum wages, and social insurance. Knies and Schmoller influenced Richard T. Ely, founder of the American Economic Association, who in turn trained John R. Commons, arguably the founder of the industrial relations field. The field of IR grew out of interests and ideologies favoring the New Deal in the United States, much of which was compatible with Schmoller’s program. Bruce Kaufman says of the field’s institutionalist economists and the leadership of the field: “The prevailing ideology has been supportive of the New Deal system of collective bargaining and protective labor legislation” (1993, 193).

Kaufman (1993, 88–90) notes that institutionalist professor Richard Lester’s (1946) article rejecting marginalism led to rebukes by Fritz Machlup (1946) and George Stigler (1947). The institutionalists disagreed with mainstream, neoclassical economists about the minimum wage and regulation, and so, led by Lester, Clark Kerr, and Arthur Ross, they founded in 1947 the Industrial Relations Research

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6. In their landmark book *The Divided Academy*, Ladd and Lipset (1975, 91) wrote: “Faculty at the elite, cosmopolitan, research-oriented schools are significantly more liberal-left than are their colleagues at lesser institutions. The relatively liberal subcultures prevailing at the major institutions pull their faculty members in a liberal-left direction.” For more recent evidence, see Rothman et al. 2011, 88.

Association (IRRA), later known as the Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA). The field's leading journal, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, was launched at Cornell University, also in 1947. The Cornell industrial relations school had been founded in 1945. In 1961 Ross led the founding of a second journal, *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, which is based at Berkeley's Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (Ross 2012/1961). Kaufman notes that from the field's beginning a key element of IR has been "the promulgation of progressive public policy" (1993, 187).

One might wonder how the field of 'industrial relations' is distinguished from, or relates to, sister fields such as labor economics, human resources, or management. The distinctions are subtle and somewhat blurry, but nonetheless IR functions as a community and a research program. Without question, ideological bent is a factor in the social construction of IR. The name 'industrial relations' gives focus to the relations between parties in industry, and the parties that IR researchers have primarily in mind are unions and employers. Kaufman has described the industrial relations field as having originally been formed to integrate the study of unions, human resource management, and labor markets, adding: "By the late 1960s, however, the perceived domain of industrial relations had narrowed to the study of unions and collective bargaining and, of secondary importance, the employment problems of special groups in the work force (e.g., minority workers, the aged)" (1993, 191).

The College of Business Administration of California State University, Long Beach, provides "Academic Journal Classifications" ([link](#)) that rank the top ten human resource journals in this order:

1. *Human Resource Management*
2. *Personnel Psychology*
3. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*
4. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*
5. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*
6. *Industrial Relations*
7. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*
8. *Journal of Labor Economics*
9. *Journal of Labor Research*
10. *Labor Law Journal*

*Human Resource Management* has an academic-and-practitioner orientation, while *Personnel Psychology*, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, and *International Journal of Selection and Assessment* are psychological in orientation. *Journal of Labor Economics* focuses on labor market issues. *Labor Law Journal* focuses on legal issues. *British Journal*

of *Industrial Relations* is based in the UK. The U.S.-based regular journals in IR, then, are *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, *Industrial Relations*, and *Journal of Labor Research*. Of these, the leading IR schools emphasize *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* and *Industrial Relations*. Kaufman (1993), for instance, does not discuss *Journal of Labor Research*, but he does discuss *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* and *Industrial Relations*.

## IR today: A personal testimony

As a participant-observer of many years, I feel that I know the genuine character of the field of IR. I offer a couple of anecdotes, simply to illustrate that character.

When I first joined the now-defunct industrial relations Ph.D. program at the Columbia University Business School in 1986, I was under the impression that I was going to study human resource management, a subject that I did not think would have any more ideological baggage than did marketing or business strategy. At Columbia Business School, though, a minority of courses, especially one in collective bargaining, adopted an outspoken left-oriented perspective. More importantly, I found the learned society, IRRA (now LERA)—the chief venue in which a doctoral student would make contacts for both publication and career advancement—to be characterized by ideological tendentiousness. For instance, former IRRA president Thomas Kochan titled his 2000 presidential address as “Building a New Social Contract at Work: A Call to Action.”<sup>7</sup> In the address Kochan (2000b) argued that firms ought to have fiduciary duty to multiple stakeholders.

When I next attended a LERA meeting, in 2011, there was overt political talk in many of the presentations. That year, at the unveiling of the Employment Policy Research Network (EPRN), a LERA website, Lisa Lynch, who had been chief economist at the Department of Labor under President Clinton, and Seth Harris, who was then deputy secretary of labor under President Obama, stated that they had worked together on the Obama campaign. Thomas Kochan stated that there is both a power struggle and an ideological struggle in which EPRN aims to participate. Professor Emeritus James Scoville of the University of Minnesota stood up from the floor to say that the website would counteract misinformation in the “mantra” of the “other side.” By “other side,” Scoville was referring to the

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7. Kochan’s presentation specifically characterized it as “A Call to Action for a Renewed IRRA” (Kochan 2000a).

Republican Party. In attending LERA's meetings I noticed representatives of the labor movement but few if any representatives of opposing viewpoints.

## The financial dimension

In examining a random sample of LERA's 2015 national membership directory (described in more detail below), I find that about 47 percent of LERA's members are academics, 10 percent work for government (mostly in the Department of Labor), 32 percent work in industry (mostly in fields that depend on a financially viable labor movement), and 10 percent work for labor organizations.<sup>8</sup> Members who work in industry include labor lawyers, labor arbitrators, policy institute employees, and corporate human resource managers of unionized firms. I tried, without success, to obtain a list of organizational donors to both LERA and Cornell University's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Despite several emails to both, the most recent list of organizational donors to LERA I could find was from 2002. Appendix 1 lists LERA's 2002 sustaining members, who paid between \$5,000 and \$10,000.<sup>9</sup>

Scholars and commentators of diverse ideological viewpoints suggest that academic research is influenced by the markets for intellectual products (see, e.g., Nakhaie and Brym 1999). If governments, lawyers, unions, or businesses sponsor research or create markets for research outputs, then that will tend to prosper academics who fit their interests, and it may lead some others to conform to those interests. If these interests tend to favor government intervention, then a market-based explanation of left orientation will reinforce the groupthink-based and historical explanations.

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8. As for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), I searched LERA's national membership roster of 916 members, and I found eight representatives of SEIU.

9. A report by LERA on a 2010 meeting of its executive board states: "[O]ur development efforts this year should focus more on asking for Sustaining Sponsorships with a membership component rather than co-sponsorship of the NPF. Gordon Pavy will again work towards sending a letter from the AFL-CIO to its various labor organizations, and pointed out we also need an equivalent letter on the corporate side. It was suggested that perhaps union representatives could ask their management counterparts to become Organizational members/sustaining sponsors as well. Iain Gold will find out if Change to Win could make a small contribution, and he will report back to the board" (LERA 2011, 203).

## *The Journal of Labor Research is different*

The *Journal of Labor Research* (*JLR*) stands apart from the rest of the IR field. Decades after the founding of LERA and the other journals, in 1980, James T. Bennett, a classical liberal economist at George Mason University who studies not-for-profit organizations, founded *JLR* as a response to omissions of topics that resulted from the field's ideological orientation.

Bennett writes in an email:

I went to the Olin Foundation in 1979 seeking funds to start a labor journal that would address issues largely (if not totally) ignored in the extant journals which you mention [*Industrial and Labor Relations Review* and *Industrial Relations*], e.g., unions as political organizations, union violence, corporate campaigns, right-to-work, etc. (Bennett 2015a)

Bennett attempted to integrate a wide range of viewpoints into *JLR*. Bennett often invited unionists and pro-union academics to participate in his journal, but many would refuse his invitations because they were intolerant of his free-market views (Bennett 2004).

In a series of brief articles published upon Bennett's retirement from *JLR*, several authors indicate that *JLR* is more open to diverse viewpoints than are other journals in the field. For example, Kaufman (2008, 2) calls Bennett "a staunch anti-monopolist in the realm of labor scholarship." *JLR* book review editor John Delaney, consistent with Bennett's (2015b) email, writes that he gave many in the IR field a chance to write reviews for the journal, but they refused:

Some people refused to consider writing a book review because they felt that *JLR* was "anti-union." Some told me that Jim had an axe to grind and that I was a pawn in some sort of conservative conspiracy. Frankly, I was puzzled. Although I gave these individuals a chance to write reviews of important books on the labor movement or review essays supporting organized labor, they apparently did not believe my description of the review process. (Delaney 2008, 8)

*JLR* can therefore be viewed as a response to the ideological tendencies in the other publications and LERA.

Despite, or perhaps because of, *JLR*'s openness to diverse viewpoints, most researchers who work in the field of IR consider *JLR* to be lower in academic status than the other two journals that I discuss (see the ranking reproduced above). The prestige of the three regular journals that I study in this paper is ranked in the following order:

1. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (ILRR)
2. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society* (IR)
3. *Journal of Labor Research* (JLR)

In their mission statements, none of the three journals nor LERA indicates that they take any ideological position. On LERA's website ([link](#)) it is stated:

The Labor and Employment Relations Association (LERA) is the singular organization in the country where professionals interested in all aspects of labor and employment relations network to share ideas and learn about new developments, issues, and practices in the field. Founded in 1947 as the Industrial Relations Research Association (IRRA), the National LERA provides a unique forum where the views of representatives of labor, management, government and academics, advocates and neutrals are welcome.

The *ILRR* website at Cornell University ([link](#)) says:

Our goal is to publish the best empirical research on the world of work, to advance theory, and to inform policy and practice. We welcome papers that are bold and original, novel theories, innovative research methods, and new approaches to organizational and public policy.

The overview section of *IR*'s website ([link](#)) includes this text:

Corporate restructuring and downsizing, the changing employment relationship in union and nonunion settings, high performance work systems, the demographics of the workplace, and the impact of globalization on national labor markets—these are just some of the major issues covered in *Industrial Relations*. The journal offers an invaluable international perspective on economic, sociological, psychological, political, historical, and legal developments in labor and employment. It is the only journal in its field with this multidisciplinary focus on the implications of change for business, government and workers.

The “Mission Statement” of *JLR*<sup>10</sup> says in part:

The *Journal of Labor Research* provides an outlet for original research on all aspects of behavior affecting labor market outcomes. The *Journal* provides a forum for both empirical and theoretical research on labor economics. The journal welcomes submissions on issues relating to labor markets and employ-

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10. This statement is found by following the “Aims and Scope” link that appears on the journal homepage ([link](#)).

ment relations, including labor demand and supply, personnel economics, unions and collective bargaining, employee participation, dispute resolution, labor market policies, types of employment relationships, the interplay between labor market variables and policy issues in labor economics are published by the *Journal*.

## Participants in the IR field

To study the ideological orientation of IR quantitatively, I assembled from several sources a data set of participants in the IR discourse. I included all authors of all articles published in the LERA annual meeting proceedings or in one of the three IR journals during the five years 2009 to 2013.<sup>11</sup> I also included all editors and members of the editorial boards of the three journals. I further included all officers of LERA, plus a sample of 200 individuals selected at random from the population of national LERA members as of 2015 (the complete population numbering 916).<sup>12</sup>

If an individual wrote multiple articles and served as an editor or officer, he or she was included in the data set multiple times. Thus, the same individual might be a LERA officer, an author of one or more articles, and an editor of one or more of the journals, and I counted each person-role separately. In all—including the samples from LERA (proceedings authors, members, and officers), and each of the three journals (authors and editors of *ILRR*, *IR*, and *JLR*)—there are 920 person-roles, deriving from 709 actual persons. I also coded the person-roles as to whether they were affiliated with an academic institution, as opposed to, e.g., government, labor unions, or industry. The person-roles are shown in Table 1.

In the remainder of the paper I provide statistics using varying bases, including the full data set, each of the four sample sources (LERA, *ILRR*, *IR*, and *JLR*), or only the academics in the full data set and in each of the four sample sources, or only the authors of articles published in the four periodicals (the LERA proceedings and the three journals). Recognizing that none of the bases provides an idealized random draw from a well-defined population, and that one may offer this or that objection to the implied weights my sampling procedure places on the various sources, I nevertheless push on.<sup>13</sup>

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11. I used this particular five-year time frame because at the time I developed the sample the 2014 LERA proceedings had not been posted. Also, I assumed that this five-year sample period would reasonably reflect recent decades of industrial relations research and that any ideological differences between the sample and the population of published researchers between 2000 and today would be effectively random.

12. To do so, I used a random number table to select pages in the 2015 online membership directory; then, again using the random number table, I selected an individual from the randomly selected page, repeating this process 200 times (when I obtained a repeat name, I redrew new random numbers).

13. As the sociologist Marion Levy dryly noted, “Only God can make a random selection.”

TABLE 1. My sample of U.S. person-roles in the IR field, 2009–2013

Source	Authors	Editors	Members	Officers	Total	Academics	Academics with voter-registration data available
<i>ILRR</i>	160	45	N/A	N/A	205	185	126
<i>IR</i>	183	42	N/A	N/A	225	205	145
<i>JLR</i>	119	35	N/A	N/A	154	148	88
LERA	95	N/A	200	41	336	181	107
Total	557	122	200	41	920	719	466

## Voter registration data

I investigate the voter registration of the 920 U.S.-based IR person-roles. VoterListsOnline.com maintains a database of political affiliations called Aristotle. For each registered voter in 30 states, Aristotle lists a file containing voter registration information for residents. Puerto Rico and twenty states do not permit the release of voter registration information, so such data are not in Aristotle. My voter registration data, therefore, is based on only the 30 states included in Aristotle; fortunately, the important states of California and New York are among those thirty.<sup>14</sup> The data are imperfect; errors could include inaccurately spelled names, identical names, and the individual's having moved (resulting in a different state of residence). It is possible that the match I made for an IR individual and a name in Aristotle was mistaken, but I took pains to avoid such errors.

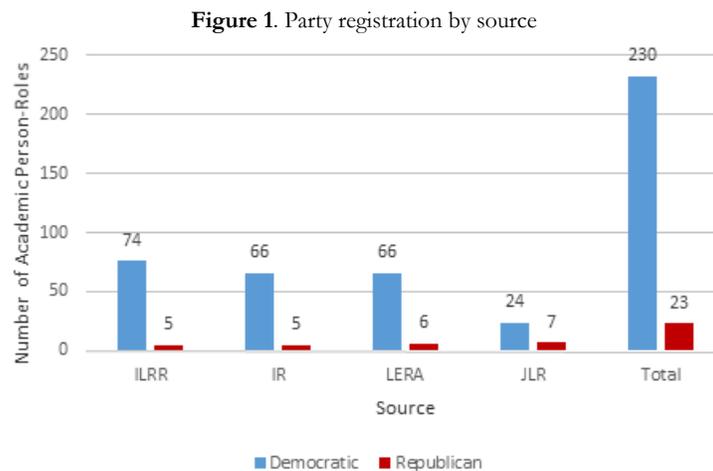
Figure 1 and Table 1 show voter registration of academic person-roles in IR by sample source. I focus on academics because I here mean to engage in particular the groupthink interpretation of social processes in academia. In the figure, and elsewhere in this paper (aside from Table 2), “Democratic” actually includes two minor left parties, and “Republican” actually includes the Libertarian Party (the numbers for these three minor parties are small, as shown in Table 2 below). For the 30 states for which there are data, the Democratic-to-Republican ratio for aca-

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14. The unavailability of voter registration data from these 20 states likely introduces some bias to the results of this paper. While the bias is not necessarily proportional to the differences at the population level, I did look at results of the 2012 U.S. election, summing up the Democratic and Green votes for President in each state, and also the Republican and Libertarian votes. For the 30 states and D.C. where there is party registration data in Aristotle, the ratio of Democratic and Green votes to Republican and Libertarian votes was 1.16:1, while for all 50 states and D.C. it was 1.07:1. That could suggest a small upward bias in the D:R ratios I report.

demic person-roles in IR is 10.0:1 (230 to 23),<sup>15</sup> with the ratios by sample source being:

- 14.8:1 for *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* (ILRR)
- 13.2:1 for *Industrial Relations* (IR)
- 11.0:1 for LERA
- 3.4:1 for *Journal of Labor Research* (JLR)



The *JLR* stands out from the other periodicals. If one were to treat the other three periodicals, representing ‘mainstream’ IR, and average their three ratios, one gets a Democratic-to-Republican ratio of nearly 13:1. Such a ratio exceeds plausible estimates of that ratio for U.S. humanities and social science faculty (perhaps 10:1, see note 2 above) and far exceeds what seems to be typical of business schools.<sup>16</sup>

If one looks at unique persons in the data set rather than person-roles, the Democratic-to-Republican ratio is 8.2:1 (148 to 18). The reason it falls is that the Democratic-to-Republican ratio of those who were able to contribute multiple times or in multiple roles—for instance, to publish two papers in five years, or both to hold an editorship and publish a paper) is 11.8:1 (47 to 4).

15. Among all U.S. person-roles in the IR field—that is, when including nonacademics—the Democratic-to-Republican ratio is 8.4:1 (310 to 37).

16. In a voter-registration study of 11 California schools, based on 2004 data, Cardiff and Klein (2005, 246) find a Democratic-to-Republican ratio of 1.3:1 for business school faculty. It is likely that the business school ratio has risen considerably since 2004.

**TABLE 2. Party registration of U.S. person-roles in the IR field**

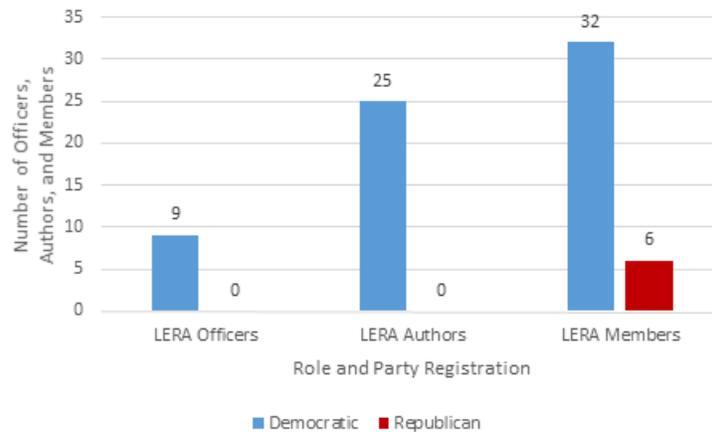
Registration	All	Academics only				
		All academics	<i>ILRR</i>	<i>IR</i>	<i>LERA</i>	<i>JLR</i>
Democratic	304	227	73	65	66	23
Other left parties	4	3	1	1	0	1
Republican	34	20	5	3	6	6
Libertarian	3	3	0	2	0	1
Registered, but no party	111	86	18	28	11	29
Not registered	144	127	29	46	24	28
Unavailable*	320	253	59	60	74	60
Totals	920	719	185	205	181	148

\*Includes residents of twenty states that do not make registration information available and deceased participants.

## Voter registration and the higher stations

Figure 2 shows Democratic-to-Republican ratios among those LERA officers, proceedings authors, and members who have academic affiliations. We see that there are zero Republicans among the academic officers and authors, but several Republican members.

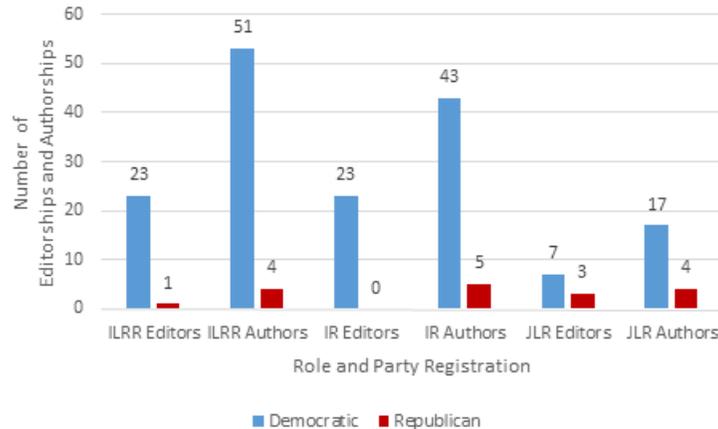
**Figure 2.** Political registration of academic LERA officers, authors, and members



A similar pattern is found with regard to leadership at two mainstream journals, as shown in Figure 3—the Democratic-to-Republican ratio is much higher among journal editors than among article authors. At *JLR*, arguably, the opposite

pattern holds: There are 17 Democratic authors to four Republicans, and seven Democratic editors to three Republicans.

**Figure 3.** Political registration of academic *ILRR*, *IR*, and *JLR* authors and editors

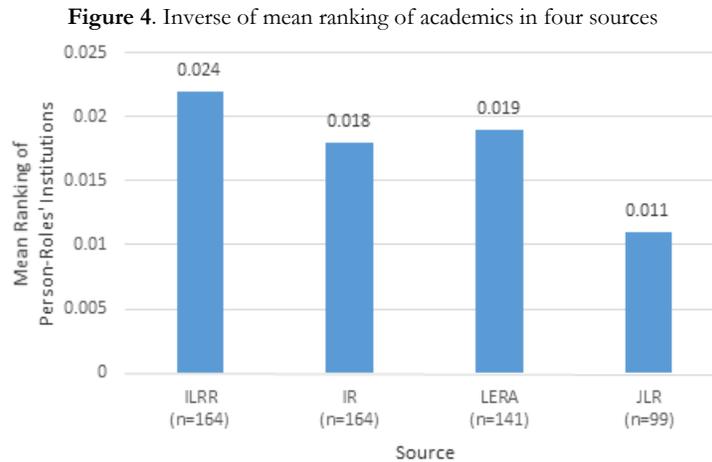


I also found that the authors, editors, members, and officers of the three ‘mainstream’ sources (*ILRR*, *IR*, and *LERA*) are at higher-ranked institutions than are the editors and authors of *JLR*. To obtain a measure of the participants’ positions in the academic hierarchy, I determined whether each officer, editor, author, and member works at a university or liberal arts college ranked for quality by *U.S. News and World Report*, and I coded the rankings.<sup>17</sup> Thus, I was able to differentiate ideological orientation across ranked and unranked status, and to examine the differentiation across ranked institutions.<sup>18</sup>

Figure 4 depicts the inverse of the mean ranking of the *U.S. News and World Report* nationally ranked institutions in which the participants in the four sources work. Participants in *JLR* work in institutions ranked considerably lower than those of participants in the more left-leaning journals. The more social democratic-oriented the industrial relations journals are, the better the rankings of the colleges and universities of the participants’ employers.

17. I did not attempt to ‘merge’ the two lists, but simply entered each liberal arts school’s ranking among liberal arts schools, and each research university’s ranking among research universities; this is to say, for example, that Williams College and Princeton each were assigned a ranking of “1” in my data set.

18. Some universities are regional, some are unranked, and some, by choice, have undisclosed rankings. Regional campuses include Elon University, Shippensburg University, and Brooklyn College. Nationally ranked universities with undisclosed rankings include Georgia State and the University of Massachusetts at Boston. Unranked institutions include Penn State Harrisburg and Penn State Beaver.



## Political contributions

The website of the Federal Election Commission allows lookup of donors who contributed in excess of \$200 to a political candidate. I went through the list of IR editors, officers, authors, and members, and I identified place of work from author credits, the LERA membership directory, and from online sources such as employers' websites. I included all contributions listed in the FEC database, which are from 2000 to 2015 (the FEC keeps a rolling fifteen-year listing of federal contributions). Combining geographic location with middle initials, I could identify almost all the names with reasonable certainty. The data listed in the FEC website are imperfect; the contribution amounts and whether contributions were made are measured with error. Errors include inaccurate coding, identical names, differently spelled names, and moves resulting in different states of residence, for the data are listed by state of residence. Hence, some coding errors are inevitable.

If an individual's Democratic contributions were more than their Republican contributions, I counted that person as Democratic, and vice versa, in Figure 5.<sup>19</sup> I counted Green and Working Family Party contributions as Democratic, and I counted Libertarian contributions as Republican; this third-party element was, again, minor.

In reviewing the party contributions I again focus on academics because my claim is that groupthink characterizes social processes in academia. Once again we see a different pattern for *JLR*. For *JLR* the Democratic-to-Republican ratio is

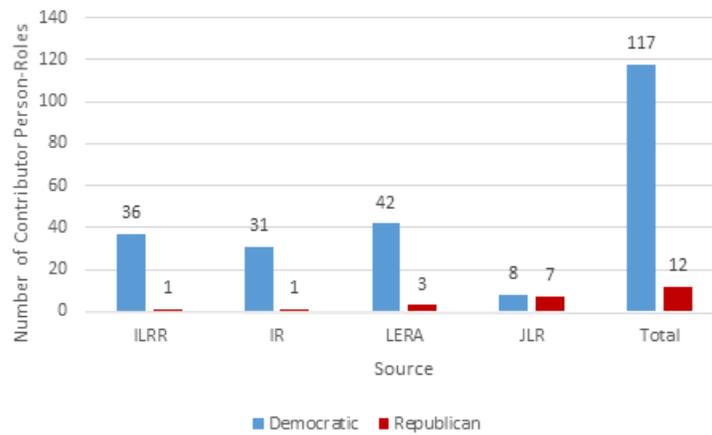
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19. Only three academics contributed to both parties.

eight to seven, nearly even. For *ILRR*, *IR*, and LERA combined, the ratio is 22:1 (109 to 5). For all academics, the mean contribution of the Republican contributors was \$1,731, while the mean of the Democratic contributors was more than twice that amount, \$3,573.

Using political contributions, we again find that the mainstream officers and editors are more active in Democratic support than authors, showing that the higher stations are even more lopsidedly Democratic. For example, of the 20 LERA officers, six were contributors to Democratic politics, and zero to Republican. Further results are reported in a footnote.<sup>20</sup>

**Figure 5.** Democratic-to-Republican academic contributor ratios by sample source



**TABLE 3.** Campaign contributions, 2000–2015, among U.S. person-roles in the IR field

Registration	All	Academics only				
		All academics	<i>ILRR</i>	<i>IR</i>	LERA	<i>JLR</i>
Democratic (or Green or Working Family) Party contributors	155	117	36	31	42	8
Republican (or Libertarian) Party contributors	18	12	1	1	3	7
No contributions in FEC database	747	590	148	173	136	133
Total	920	719	185	205	181	148

20. Here I report raw-number academics’ political-contribution Democratic-to-Republican ratios by sample source (again, “Democratic” also includes a few cases of minor left parties, and “Republican” a few Libertarian). For LERA: Among all 20 officers who are academics, I found 6 D and 0 R; for all 69 academic authors 16 D and 0 R; for 92 members who are academics I found 20 D and 3 R. For *ILRR*: Among all 44 academic editors I found 15 D and 1 R; for all 146 academic authors 21 D and 0 R. For *IR*: Among all 36 academic editors I found 14 D and 0 R; for all 169 academic authors 17 D and 1 R. For *JLR*: Among all 35 academic editors I found 5 D and 3 R; for all 113 academic authors 3 D and 4 R. Once again we see that the *JLR* is different from the others.

## My scoring of each article's ideological orientation

For 539 articles published 2009–2013 in the four periodicals, I scored the article's ideological orientation along two dimensions. One is what I will proceed to call “regulation,” by which I mean government interventions, not only regulatory and but also related to social insurance. The other concerns unions. Kaufman tells of “the pro-union value system predominant in industrial relations” (1993, 192). Although unions involve a voluntary element and could exist in a free market, I nonetheless score articles along an anti- or pro-union dimension. Unions as they actually exist in the United States depend not only on freedom but also on coercive privileges from the government, particularly directed against employers and would-be employers; furthermore, unions themselves are typically active in promoting left-leaning policies and Democratic politics.

I used the ‘find’ feature in the article PDF files to identify key words such as *union*, *regulation*, *labor*, and *legislation*. If the article did not discuss regulation or unions, I did not score it, coding the article “NA” in the spreadsheet that accompanies this article ([link](#)). Assigning the scores involved my own personal judgment. The scoring is transparent and accessible online; others can easily spot-check the scores and raise objections. I scored each article on a scale from –5 to 5, where negative scores indicate anti-regulation or anti-union sentiment, argument, or evidence; zero indicates neutrality; and positive scores indicate pro-regulation or pro-union sentiment, argument, or evidence. I view scores of –3, –2, and –1 as reflecting mildly unfavorable sentiment, and of 1, 2, and 3 as reflecting mildly favorable sentiment toward regulation or unions. Scores of –5, –4, 4, and 5 reflect strongly worded or repeated assertions of sentiment toward unions or regulation or research findings that are strongly supportive of or antagonistic to unions or regulation. The scorings are not meant as evaluation of the quality of the research.

For example, consider an article by John Goddard and Carola Frege (2013) in *ILRR*, titled “Labor Unions, Alternative Forms of Representation, and the Exercise of Authority Relations in U.S. Workplaces.” The authors write:

Labor unions have long been argued to be the primary institutions of workers in the United States, providing not only improved wages and benefits but also rights and protections related to the exercise of authority and ultimately to the realization of democratic values at work (Chamberlain and Kuhn 1965; Sinyai 2006). Union decline might therefore be seen, in this respect, to represent a diminishment of American democracy... First, to the extent that unions can

still be shown to democratize authority relations at work, the case for stronger labor laws is supported. Second, to the extent that management-established systems appear to serve as effective alternatives to union representation, the case for repealing legal prohibitions against these systems may also be strengthened...Our conclusion that unions continue to matter to workplace authority relations (even if indirectly, through employer practices) is consistent with arguments for labor laws reforms to enhance union organizing effectiveness. Second, our finding that management-established representation systems are not associated with union voting propensities, coupled with our finding that they may serve as a part of a bundle of practices with positive implications for authority relations, is consistent with arguments for the repeal of section 8(a)(2) of the Wagner Act. (Goddard and Frege 2013, 142–165)

Although the authors argue for repeal of section 8(a)(2) of the Wagner Act, they also argue for a fine tuning of the regulatory system, which they fundamentally support. Also, they argue for labor law reforms to enhance union organizing effectiveness. I therefore assigned a 1 with respect to regulation. Because their motive includes support for unions or related institutions, I assigned a 3 with respect to unions.

In the same issue of *ILRR*, in an article entitled “Unionization and Certified Sickness Absence: Norwegian Evidence,” Arne Mastekaasa writes:

This study has shown that unionized employees in Norway are absent from work considerably more often than are their nonunionized counterparts. This is the case even when comparing people with the same detailed occupation and industry codes, who should therefore be in very similar if not identical jobs. Depending on the choice of absence measures, the differential varies between 9 and 20% for higher-grade employees and 20 and 47% for lower-grade employees. (Mastekaasa 2013, 136)

The findings are unflattering to unions, so I assigned a –5 with respect to unions. As to regulation, Mastekaasa writes in a positive tone of Norway’s “very generous system of sick pay,” and of government regulations imposing “high standards” of health and safety. Thus, I assigned a 2 for regulation.

Of the 539 articles that I reviewed in *ILRR*, *IR*, *JLR*, and the LERA proceedings, including international and nonacademic authors, 205 (38 percent) concern economic analysis of labor markets; 155 (29 percent) concern institutional analysis of labor unions; and about 179 (33 percent) concern analysis of firm-level human resource policies.

Of the 539 articles, I identify 170, or 32 percent (66 percent of those that discuss regulation), as pro-regulation. I score 56 articles, or about 11 percent (22 percent of those that discuss regulation), as neutral toward regulation. I identify 33,

or about 6 percent (12 percent of those that discuss regulation), as anti-regulation. The overall ratio of pro-regulation to anti-regulation articles is thus about five to one. Regulation is not discussed in 280 (52 percent) of the articles. Table 4 gives an overview of these data.

**TABLE 4. Ideological orientation of articles in four IR periodicals toward regulation and unions, 2009–2013**

Periodical	Total no. of articles	Pro-regulation	Anti-regulation	Neutral toward regulation	Regulation not discussed	Pro-union	Anti-union	Neutral toward unions	Unions not discussed
<i>ILRR</i>	177	62 (70%)	8 (8%)	19 (22%)	88	56 (63%)	5 (6%)	28 (31%)	88
LERA proceedings	88	39 (81%)	1 (2%)	8 (17%)	40	39 (70%)	1 (2%)	16 (29%)	32
<i>IR</i>	163	51 (70%)	10 (14%)	12 (16%)	90	45 (63%)	11 (15%)	16 (22%)	91
<i>JLR</i>	111	18 (37%)	14 (29%)	17 (35%)	62	21 (47%)	4 (9%)	20 (44%)	66
Total	539	170 (66%)	33 (12%)	56 (22%)	280	161 (61%)	21 (8%)	80 (31%)	277

With respect to unions, 161 of the 539 articles, or about 30 percent (61 percent of the articles that discuss unions), are pro-union. Twenty-one of 539, or about 4 percent (eight percent of those that discuss unions), are anti-union. Eighty articles, or 15 percent (31 percent of the articles that discuss unions), are neutral toward unions. The articles reviewed are thus strongly pro-union, with a ratio of seven pro-union articles for every anti-union article.<sup>21</sup>

Of the 1,073 authorships<sup>22</sup> in the four publications for the years 2009 to 2013, 557 are from authors based in the United States, with 515 from authors in other countries. Of the 557 U.S.-based authorships, 492 are from persons employed as academics (see Table 5).

**TABLE 5. Authorship characteristics in four IR periodicals, 2009–2013**

Periodicals	Total authorships	Non-U.S.	U.S.	U.S., with academic affiliation
<i>ILRR</i>	380	220	160	141
LERA proceedings	134	39	95	69
<i>IR</i>	336	153	183	169
<i>JLR</i>	223	104	119	113
Total	1073	516	557	492

21. Regulation is not discussed in 280 of the articles, and unions are not discussed in 278 articles, or about 51 percent each.

22. Again, a single person sometimes corresponds to multiple authorships.

## The ideological drift of journal articles

Table 6 shows the breakdown of the articles' ideological orientation by the minus-5-to-plus-5 scale that I apply. For regulation, the largest categories are 5 (pro-regulation), with 23.1 percent, and 0 (neutral), with 24.3 percent. For unions, the biggest single category is 0 (neutral), with 31.6 percent, and the second biggest is 5 (pro-union), with 25.9. A leftward tilt is apparent.

TABLE 6. Orientation of articles discussing regulation/unions, all authors

	Ideologically Right Articles						Ideologically Left Articles						Chi-Sq.
	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5		
Regulation (n=256)	4.4%	0.0%	1.2%	6.0%	3.6%	24.3%	17.1%	11.6%	5.6%	3.2%	23.1%	166.2***	
Unions (n=264)	0.4%	0.0%	0.8%	0.0%	2.7%	31.6%	21.3%	11.4%	4.9%	1.1%	25.9%	277.3***	
***p<.0001.													

Table 7 separates the results by publication. The mean scores (again, the range is -5 to 5) for articles published in the three mainstream IR journals range from 1.3 to 2.2; hence, the means are tilted to the left. In contrast, the *JLR* mean scores are -0.3 for regulation and 1.1 for unions, showing again that *JLR* is different from the other three periodicals.

TABLE 7. Mean ideological orientation of articles in IR periodicals, 2009–2013 (standard deviations in parentheses)

	<i>ILRR</i>	<i>IR</i>	LERA proceedings	<i>JLR</i>	All four periodicals
Mean orientation toward unions, among relevant articles	2.2 (2.3) n=75	2.1 (2.2) n=73	1.8 (2.0) n=63	1.1 (1.7) n=52	1.9 (2.6) n=263
Mean orientation toward regulation, among relevant articles	2.2 (2.9) n=76	1.3 (2.2) n=80	2.1 (2.1) n=50	-0.3 (2.4) n=45	1.4 (2.1) n=251

Table 8 shows the differences in the means of the ideological orientation scores for Democrats and Republicans for the articles of authors in the thirty states that report registration. I counted authors as Democrats or Republicans if they were either registered as Democrats or Republicans or had contributed to the Democratic or Republican parties (recall that I am counting a few minor left party registrants as Democrats and a few Libertarian Party registrants as Republicans).

The t-tests for differences in means are significant for Democrats—in other words Democratic authors in the thirty states that report party registration

published articles with significantly further left ideological content than other authors. The difference in means for Republicans for the articles on regulation is significant for the traditional equal-variance t-test, but I used the unequal variance t-test for the Republicans because an F test rejects the assumption of sample variance equality. The sample sizes for the Republicans are only seven and eight. The small number of articles by known Republicans in the years 2009 to 2013 have mean scores that are well below those for other articles, both for articles on regulation ( $-0.8$  for Republicans versus  $1.5$  for non-Republicans) and articles on unions ( $1.0$  versus  $2.0$ ), but according to the t-test these differences are not statistically significant.

**TABLE 8. Mean ideological orientation of articles in four IR periodicals, 2009–2013, by party affiliation of authors (standard errors in parentheses)**

	Mean orientation toward regulation, among relevant articles			Mean orientation toward unions, among relevant articles		
	Mean	N	T-statistic	Mean	N	T-statistic
Authors known to be Democratic-affiliated	2.0 (0.3)	81		2.3 (0.3)	69	
All other authors	0.8 (0.3)	81	3.2**	1.6 (0.3)	67	2.0*
Authors known to be Republican-affiliated	$-0.8$ (1.5)	8		1.0 (1.3)	7	
All other authors	1.5 (0.2)	154	0.2	2.0 (0.2)	129	0.8

\*P<.05. \*\*P<.01.

Table 9 shows the results of analysis of variance with the authors' party affiliation, when known, as the predictor and the scoring of the ideological orientation of their articles as the dependent variable. The results of the ANOVA are modest, but they validate the ideological tilt measured in my scoring. I scored the articles before reviewing the data on affiliations; nevertheless, the associations between the authors' political registrations and the scored ideological orientation are statistically significant for three of four ANOVAs. This is so despite the ad hoc nature of my scoring process, which introduced error. In ANOVAs not shown, inclusion of the inferred observations in the states that do not report party registration increases the sample size from 161 to 250 and 136 to 262, the F statistics retain their significance, and the  $R^2$  statistics are approximately the same.

TABLE 9. Analysis of variance of ideological orientation of articles in four IR periodicals, 2009–2013, from party affiliation of authors

Dependent variable:	Regulation scoring of articles		Union scoring of articles	
Independent variable:	Authors known to be Democratic-affiliated	Authors known to be Republican-affiliated	Authors known to be Democratic-affiliated	Authors known to be Republican-affiliated
Model sum of squares	68.1	39.0	19.2	6.8
Error sum of squares	1080.9	1110.0	643.6	656.0
F	10.1**	5.6*	4.0*	1.4
R <sup>2</sup>	0.06	0.03	0.03	0.01
N	161	161	135	135
*P<.05. **P<.01.				

## Conclusion

This study finds that articles published in the industrial relations field reflect a social democratic political ideology and that political affiliations of researchers in the field are preponderantly Democratic. Moreover, the researchers' political affiliations statistically explain, to a modest degree, the ideological orientation of their findings. Researchers with Democratic (or minor left party) registration tend to publish research that reflects social democratic ideology. Moreover, status is associated with ideology: More social democratically oriented academics publish in the more prestigious journals and work at the more prestigious universities. Editors of the most elite journals have a stronger tendency toward Democratic affiliations than do the authors whose articles appear in those journals. These findings coincide with McEachern's (2005) study of American economists and Klein and Stern's (2009b) groupthink model.

Thus, for our sample of person-roles in the industrial relations field, the ratio of Democratic (or minor left party)-to-Republican (or Libertarian) voter registration is 10.0 to 1, and for campaign contribution the ratio is 9.8 to 1. Those ratios, however, include editors and authors of the *Journal of Labor Research*, which is something of an aberration from the left-leaning orthodoxy of industrial relations; if *JLR* entries are excluded from the sample, the political registration ratio rises to 13 to 1, and the contribution ratio becomes 22 to 1. If one looks at those who serve in multiple roles, for instance as an editor and an author or as the author of several articles, the registration ratio is 11.8 to one.

The editorship of the leading American industrial relations journals is even more oriented toward left politics. Among *Industrial and Labor Relations Review's* edi-

tors, I find 23 registered Democrats and only one Republican; among *Industrial Relations's* editors, I find 23 registered Democrats and zero Republicans. The less-prestigious *JLR* is again different: Among its editors, I found seven registered Democrats but also three Republicans.

As I said at the outset, these results will not surprise anyone. Yet, to come to terms with the facts, it is important not only that everybody know, but that everybody know that everybody knows.

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Organizational Members of the Industrial Relations Research Association, 2002**

This listing is reproduced from the IRRA *Proceedings of the 54th Annual Meeting* (IRRA 2002, 318):

#### **SUSTAINING MEMBERS\***

- AFL-AFL-CIO
- The Alliance for Growth and Development
- Boeing Quality Through Training Program
- Ford Motor Company
- General Electric
- National Association of Manufacturers
- National Education Association
- UAW-Ford National Education, Training and Development Center
- United Steelworkers of America

#### **ANNUAL MEMBERS 2002\*\***

- Albert Shanker Institute
- American Federation of Teachers
- Bechtel Nevada Corporation
- Chapman University
- Communications Workers of America
- Cornell University - School of Industrial and Labor Relations
- Georgia State University, Beebe Institute

## LEFT ORIENTATION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

- International Brotherhood of Teamsters
- Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology - Sloan School of Management
- Michigan State University - School of Labor & Industrial Relations
- New York Nurses Association
- Rutgers University - School of Management and Labor Relations
- Society for Human Resource Management
- St. Joseph's - Erivan K. Haub School of Business
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign - Institute of Labor & Industrial Relations
- University of Michigan - Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations
- University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, Industrial Relations Center
- University of Notre Dame - Higgins Labor Research Center

\*Sustaining Members—one-time contribution of \$5,000 to \$10,000

\*\*Annual organizational memberships are available at the following levels:

**Benefactor**, \$5,000 or more—6 employee members

**Supporter**, \$1,000 to \$4,999—6 employee members

**Major University**, \$500—2 employee members

**Educational or Non-Profit**, \$250—2 employee members

## Appendix 2. Data

Data used in this research (Excel and SAS formats) and some accompanying documentation are available for download ([link](#)).

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