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Entrepreneurship and Leadership

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Adam Sheingate has made an important contribution to the literature on political entrepreneurship. He takes a concept that has been widely but casually employed by political scientists studying institutions and policies and sets out to supply that concept with clarity and content. Appropriating the concept for historical institutionalism, he connects the role of the political entrepreneur to the processes of institutional change, posing a powerful challenge to the familiar view of institutions in equilibrium. Especially important for readers of this journal, he expands upon previous uses of the concept by arguing that it offers a new vantage point on American political development, with political entrepreneurs posited to be critical sources of endogenous change.

In developing his account of political entrepreneurship, Sheingate pursues four themes that I find particularly insightful. First, he links dynamic political action by an entrepreneur with dynamic possibilities thrown up in the routine functioning of political institutions. Institutional politics, he argues, is not a field of stability that only opens up space for change in moments of crisis; intrinsic institutional characteristics of uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity make political innovation an ever-present potential. Second, Sheingate highlights the heterogeneity of politics as a ground for innovation; rather than depicting, in conventional fashion, the fragmentation and disjunction of a Madisonian system designed to frustrate change, he finds that political complexity provides entrepreneurs with "*resources* for the creative acts of recombination at the heart of innovation" (192). Third, Sheingate challenges disciplinary practices that study American institutions in isolation from one another. Entrepreneurial action, in his account, most often crosses borders between institutions in the effort to expand jurisdictions or achieve monopolistic power. Fourth, Sheingate ingeniously applies the concept of "entry barriers" to the study of optimal conditions for political innovation. In the final part of his article, he arrives at an intriguing hypothesis about why political innovation in the United States was more extensive between 1890 and 1940 than in the years since.

Sheingate's work is particularly ambitious in its hope to expand the scope of the concept of political entrepreneurship and make it central to the study of American political development. The examples he deploys in the paper are designed to "illustrate the broad applicability of entrepreneurial innovation to American political development and questions of institutional change" (195). On the conceptual plane as well, he wants to suggest "how entrepreneurship can address larger questions of American political development" (198).

Much as I admire the ingenuity of Sheingate's thesis, however, I am uneasy about the displacement of a traditional language of political leadership by a now-fashionable language of political entrepreneurship. The concept of political entrepreneurship, I argue, is saddled with a great deal of baggage, especially its individualistic core, its economistic roots, and its nondemocratic implications. When applied as an explanation for political change in American history, its utility is largely limited to the kinds of cases for which it has already been effectively adapted: congressional rules changes, bureaucratic autonomy, middle-level policy innovations, among others. The concept of political leadership, I propose, is free of the baggage that limits the scope of political entrepreneurship. Speaking to larger and more inclusive processes of political action, it is political leadership and not political entrepreneurship that will be found when we study the broadest and most consequential developments in American political history.

WHO ARE ENTREPRENEURS?

Perhaps the most severe limitation of the concept of entrepreneurship in politics is its individualism. Sheingate acknowledges this individualism in his initial definition: "For our purposes, entrepreneurs are individuals whose creative acts have transformative ef-

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fects on politics, policies, or institutions" (185). But in the remainder of the article he resolutely attempts to steer away from this individualism in the name of providing an account of "the characteristics of institutions themselves that make innovation possible" (202). In highlighting the uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity that provide entrepreneurial opportunities, Sheingate deliberately eschews inquiry into the individual actors who might seize these opportunities:

> Although one might be tempted to examine entrepreneurs themselves, we should avoid diverting our attention from the structure of institutions to the personal qualities or characteristics of an individual, for this would limit the utility of the concept to the study of "great men." (198)

Yet if the concept of entrepreneurship is to have utility, it must be given substance; it is not sufficient to elaborate on the "characteristics of institutions that facilitate or frustrate" the political entrepreneur without identifying the characteristics of that entrepreneur as well (193). And when we begin to identify the entrepreneurs, we run into the irreducibly *individualized* core of the concept. Although Sheingate argues that "it is the president who is perhaps the entrepreneur *par excellence* in American politics," it is a distortion of the meaning of the term to ascribe entrepreneurship to a particular office or institution (195). Not every businessperson is an entrepreneur; not every New Haven mayor is Richard Lee; not every bureau chief is Gifford Pinchot or J. Edgar Hoover. And surely not every president can be credited with creative actions that transformed the American polity.

What characteristics distinguish political entrepreneurs? Let me propose the following:

> (1) Political entrepreneurs are self-activated. They have the ability to see and seize opportunities that others in the same offices or positions would not have. They use these opportunities to impose their will on others.
> (2) Political entrepreneurs – at least the successful ones – have the further ability to guide or stay on top of the process of political change that they have initiated. (Case studies of entrepreneurs – say Dahl's Mayor Lee, Lewis's J. Edgar Hoover, or Carpenter's Gifford Pinchot – present them as driving the process of change from start to finish.)[1] Entrepreneurs stamp change with their own personal visions.
> (3) Political entrepreneurs reconstruct some portion of the world through their drive and talent and reap the reward of self-fulfillment, whether it be measured in money, power, or fame.

Although Sheingate understandably shies away from associating his subject with "the study of 'great men'," the characteristics of political entrepreneurship suggest that the political actors who are to be placed in this category should be exceptional, or at least untypical, when compared with the generality of those in the same line of endeavor. If we turn to the intellectual antecedents that Sheingate cites for the concept of the political entrepreneur, we find a frank recognition of a dependence on the exceptional individual. As Joseph Schumpeter put it:

> To act with confidence beyond the range of familiar beacons and to overcome [the environment's] resistance requires aptitudes that are present in only a small fraction of the population and that define the entrepreneurial type as well as the entrepreneurial function.[2]

When Robert Dahl appropriated the concept of entrepreneurship from Schumpeter, he carried over the emphasis on the exceptional. In the passage from Dahl about entrepreneurship that Sheingate quotes, he leaves out Dahl's adjective: "gifted political entrepreneur."[3]

It is the individualism inherent in the concept of political entrepreneurship that most sets it apart from the concept of political leadership. There are no leaders without followers; the concept of leadership is inherently relational and interactive. Later in this response, after some further considerations on political entrepreneurship, I will elaborate on how the interactive quality of leadership makes it a broader and more useful concept than entrepreneurship for understanding politics or explaining political change over time.

In drawing a sharp distinction between entrepreneurship and leadership on a conceptual plane, I want to acknowledge at the outset some practical complications. First, many of the same skills are relevant for both entrepreneurs and leaders. The ability to grasp political opportunities or to craft shrewd political strategies is equally germane for an entrepreneur or a leader. Second, it is possible for the same person to be an entrepreneur in one situation and a leader in another. Sheingate mentions Ted Kennedy as an entrepreneur for promoting airline deregulation in the 1970s. In the same period Kennedy was a leader among liberal Democrats in challenging the centrism of the Carter administration. Finally, there are gray areas where a political actor might be labeled an entrepreneur or a leader depending on which activities of that actor are given primary causal importance.

1. Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961); Eugene Lewis, *Public Entrepreneurship: Toward a Theory of Bureaucratic Political Power* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984); Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862–1928* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

2. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy,* 3d ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1950), 132.

3. Dahl, *Who Governs?,* 6.

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Nonetheless, it is important to keep the two terms analytically distinct, for the dynamics to which they refer are quite different. New concepts are useful in sharpening distinctions; however, when they are stretched too far, they collapse distinctions instead. By attempting to expand the usage of an inherently limited phenomenon, Sheingate's approach points us toward murky formulations, such as "entrepreneurial leadership."

THE PROBLEM OF ECONOMISM

The concept of political entrepreneurship is limited by its individualism, by its reliance on the political agency of creative and exceptional individuals. However, this is not the full extent of the difficulty in expanding the concept into a prime causal force in political development, as Sheingate seeks to do. The concept of political entrepreneurship is also saddled with problems that derive from its intellectual provenance: the problem of economism and the problem of democracy.

Like many contemporary political scientists, Sheingate draws his principal terms from the literature of economics, although, in his case, special attention is paid to a maverick Austrian school of economists. He characterizes the political world through analogies with economic phenomena: for example, market disequilibria, monopoly profits, entry barriers. For Sheingate, the political entrepreneur is the dynamic agent in this world, establishing or exploiting opportunities, creatively recombining existing political fragments into new wholes, consolidating a dominant position over an enlarged political jurisdiction.

Sheingate is aware that when economic terms are used to describe political phenomena, the analyst is employing analogies and not identities. Political life is more multidimensional than economic life. Thus, Sheingate observes that "this entrepreneurial search for monopoly profits might be inappropriate to political contexts: what we mean by political 'profits' is not clear, nor is it accurate to ascribe purely maximizing behavior to entrepreneurs, economic or otherwise." (190). Money is the metric of economics, but, in many political situations, there may not be any common metric for different actors; indeed, there may not be a single metric even for individual actors.

But the limits of economic analogies for capturing political action lie deeper than the problem of determining the metrics of political success and failure. Albert Hirschman's critique of the parsimony of economic discourse is even more telling when applied to economism in political science. Economists, Hirschman observes, treat market actors as guided by their preferences. In economists' parsimonious theories, there is not a place for a deeper strata of values, a strata in which individuals can reflect upon and alter their preferences. To the economist, the citizen is a consumer of public goods and is presumed to have "unchanging or arbitrarily changing tastes in matters of civic as well as commodity-oriented behavior."[4]

In Sheingate's discussion of political entrepreneurship, as in others that deploy this economic terminology, citizens remain in the background. Their preferences are assumed to be knowable, while their values are not of great relevance. But politics is as much about values as about material interests, and the appeal to and alteration of values is central to the processes of political change. As I will suggest in a moment, the infusion or transformation of values is precisely the province of political leadership.

THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRACY

Before turning to a discussion of leadership and values, at least brief mention should be made of the normative issue in adopting the language of entrepreneurship for politics: the problem of democracy. I am hardly the first to raise this problem. No sooner had Robert Dahl borrowed the concept of entrepreneurship from Joseph Schumpeter than critics within political science began to raise a warning flag against "democratic elitism." Rejecting neo-Schumpeterian theories, Jack Walker and Peter Bachrach assailed the minimalist theory of democracy for its complacent portrait of creative elites and passive citizens.[5] A prime case in point was Dahl's chapter in *Who Governs?* on "Citizenship without Politics," which insisted that for most citizens "politics is a remote, alien, and unrewarding activity."[6]

The critique of democratic elitism sparked a resurgence among some political scientists of an interest in democratic theory, but it hardly stemmed the tide among others of turning to economics for theoretical concepts, including entrepreneurship. I do not seek to label all political scientists who write about political entrepreneurship as elitists or to ascribe to them a full-blown neo-Schumpeterian theory of democracy. Yet it is striking how many concerns about democracy are elided in the language of entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship as political concept has nothing to say about representation, legitimacy, or accountability. Through its market vocabulary of political consumption, it treats citizens in a purely instrumental fashion. Through its guiding assumption about motivation – the pursuit of monopoly profits – it highlights the self-interest of political entrepreneurs and

4. Albert Hirschman, *Rival Views of Market Society* (New York: Viking Press, 1986), 146. I have also benefitted from reading Peter Breiner, "Dilemmas of Neo-Schumpeterian Theories of Democracy," paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association, April 2002.

5. Jack L. Walker, "A Critique of the Elitist Theory of Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 60 (1966): 285–95; Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967).

6. Dahl, *Who Governs?,* 279.

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leaves murky the relationship between their successes and larger public ends.[7]

LEADERSHIP, VALUES, AND PUBLIC MEANING

The enduring advantage of the language of leadership over that of entrepreneurship lies in its inherently interactive connotations. Entrepreneurs act in the political world by exploiting opportunities and imposing themselves on others; political leaders interact with followers. I have already noted that the strategic activities that entrepreneurship prioritizes are germane to leadership as well, but successful leadership also relies on the construction of public meanings and the appeal to political values. These public meanings and political values are indispensable for winning the support of other political elites, and they are equally critical for informing and mobilizing support from the citizenry. Particularly when our interest is not in the accomplishment of short-term political advantage but in the achievement of durable, large-scale institutional or policy changes, it is through transformations in public meanings and alterations of political values that we can study how political actors make their historical marks.

Classic works on political leadership emphasize that values lie at the center of the interactions between leaders and followers, especially when significant political change is produced. In the work of Philip Selznick, for example, the essence of organizational leadership is the definition of "mission" and the infusion of new values. As Selznick writes: "The art of the creative leader is the art of institution-building, the reworking of human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values."[8] He makes clear that the best way to inscribe new values is through "the collaborative development of plans and policies by as many levels of the organization as possible."[9] To be sure, analysts who write of bureaucratic entrepreneurs might depict many of the same processes that Selznick discusses; a case in point is Daniel Carpenter in *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*. But it is not through the concept of entrepreneurship that insight into these processes is obtained: Carpenter cites earlier literature on bureaucratic leadership, including Selznick's book, as his sources in this area.[10]

Where leadership theory most fully departs from the concept of entrepreneurship – and where it has the greater potential in democratic terms – is where it emphasizes the mutuality between leaders and citizens. In James MacGregor Burns's well-known formulation, leadership involves "leaders inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and motivations – the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations – *of both leaders and followers*."[11] To Burns, the most creative and history-making political leadership, which he labels "transformative leadership," elevates the consciousness and moral commitment of followers while inspiring leaders themselves, through their engagement with followers, to move beyond their initial motives and purposes.

It is a common objection to such theories of leadership that they smack excessively of democratic idealism. However, if we prefer a more pessimistic portrait of American politics, the role of leadership in constructing public meanings and tapping into political values is still integral. Consider the analysis of political symbolism in Murray Edelman's *Constructing the Political Spectacle*. For Edelman, political leaders shape a symbolic universe that mystifies the underlying processes of power and fosters popular acquiescence in the status quo. The processes of leadership that are given causal force by Selznick or Burns are inverted in Edelman's work, turned into the manipulation of appearances: "The leader must be constructed as innovator, as accepting responsibility for government actions, as possessing qualities that followers lack, as successful in his or her strategies in contrast to the mistakes of earlier leaders."[12]

Scholarship in American political development that emphasizes the role of political leadership often speaks to the construction of public meanings. In discussing the presidency as a locus for political entrepreneurship, Sheingate frequently cites Stephen Skowronek's *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*. While he effectively draws on a number of Skowronek's insights, he neglects Skowronek's claim about the priority of authority over power for the presidency. In Skowronek's terms, the foundation of presidential leadership is discursive rather than strategic action:

> Before a president can formulate a strategy for action, he needs to construe his place in history and stake claim to certain warrants for the exercise of power within it. . . . The first thing a leader does is to situate himself in a public discourse, and construct a narrative relating what has been done previously to what he proposes to do in the moment at hand."[13]

7. Eugene Lewis, one of the first to write about "bureaucratic entrepreneurs," observed that his examples – J. Edgar Hoover, Hyman Rickover, and Robert Moses – "present a gloomy picture" for "the ideals of representative democracy" (*Public Entrepreneurship*, 241).

8. Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration: A Sociological Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 152–53.

9. Selznick, *Leadership in Administration,* 114.

10. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy,* 377.

11. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 19.

12. Murray Edelman, *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 40.

13. Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 24. Other works on presidential leadership in American political development that also highlight the construc-

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Unlike leadership theory, the concept of entrepreneurship in political science offers little in the way of understanding the construction of authority through a discourse between leaders and followers.

Political scientists who write about entrepreneurs may attribute to them the discursive strategies and appeals to public values that I have associated with the concept of political leadership. Sheingate follows this course in discussing Thomas Jefferson and Franklin D. Roosevelt (?). Yet these dimensions of public action are not really a part of the concept of entrepreneurship in politics, as is evident when we consider how the term is used in other contexts (e.g., economic entrepreneurs or academic entrepreneurs). On the contrary, they are imports from leadership theory. And while such imports make the use of the concept of entrepreneurship seem more comprehensive, it is only by obscuring what is distinctive about it.

EXPLAINING POLITICAL CHANGE

To this point, I have been quarreling with political entrepreneurship on a normative and conceptual level. But Sheingate's article aims at more than conceptual clarification and elaboration; it seeks to show "the broad applicability of entrepreneurial innovation to American political development." American political development is thus, for Sheingate, the empirical field upon which the concept of political entrepreneurship will demonstrate its worth. The most important test it faces is its ability to explain political change over time.

What is Sheingate's fundamental claim about entrepreneurship and political development? I take this claim to be the following:

> [A]ttention to entrepreneurship makes possible an endogenous account of change, one that does not depend on the occurrence of some critical juncture or exogenous shock that disturbs an institution in equilibrium. Instead, the process of entrepreneurship focuses our attention on those characteristics of institutions themselves that make innovation and change possible. Entrepreneurship prompts us to ask questions about the sources of speculative opportunities in politics, the nature of political innovation, and the way entrepreneurs try to consolidate their innovations in lasting institutional change. (186)

Clearly, the individualistic thrust of political entrepreneurship makes it an endogenous causal force. As prime examples, Sheingate cites recent works by Daniel Carpenter and Eric Schickler that explain significant episodes in American political development through the endogenous initiatives of bureaucratic and congressional entrepreneurs.[14] These are impressive works that demonstrate the applicability of entrepreneurship in explaining some kinds of political change; however, it is questionable whether they demonstrate the "broad applicability" that Sheingate claims for the concept of political entrepreneurship. Carpenter's work shows entrepreneurs successfully carving out bureau autonomy in several "pockets" of the American state, but it does not claim that autonomy was achieved in most federal departments.[15] Shickler places entrepreneurs at the center of reforms and rules changes in Congress, internal processes that largely exclude actors external to the institution.[16] What has not yet been demonstrated is that political entrepreneurship can provide an endogenous account of large-scale transformations in the American polity.

In studying large-scale transformations – the kind of transformations that we associate with the administrative state, the welfare state, the New Deal labor regime, the civil rights revolution, the conservative counterrevolution – the search Sheingate proposes for an endogenous alternative to exogenous forces seems artificial and confining. We do not find entrepreneurs creating and driving the most profound political changes. We do, however, find leaders playing a vital role in these transformations, because in its interactive quality, leadership, unlike entrepreneurship, can bridge the endogenous and the exogenous.

The presidency is often associated with large-scale transformations, so it is important for Sheingate, in making a claim for an expanded reach of the concept of political entrepreneurship, to turn the presidency into a locus for entrepreneurship. At first glance, this seems an attractive prospect, since the president is an individual actor whose constitutional position is unusually ambiguous and whose political situation is uniquely complex. Yet compared to entrepreneurs within Congress or in bureaucratic agencies, presidents are far more visible to the public and function in the American political system as the focal point for the political demands and aspirations of numerous economic and social groups. And, as the expectations they must meet have multiplied, they have become dependent upon the services of thousands in an institutionalized presidency, further reducing the sway of their individuality. Amid the constant and daunting external pressures that confront a president, entrepreneurship is a luxury that can seldom be indulged. When presidents do participate in large-

tion of public meanings are Jeffey K. Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987) and Sidney M. Milkis, *The President and the Parties: The Transformation of the Party System Since the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

14. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy;* Eric Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

15. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy,* 6, 13.

16. For some examples in Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism,* see 43, 68, 161, 173.

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scale political transformations, their role is best understood through the interactive terminology of leadership.

Focusing on the same terrain of presidential history that Sheingate chooses to illustrate political entrepreneurship, it can be shown that many signal episodes of political innovation are marked by the interplay between inside and outside, presidents and their followers (or competitors). In these episodes, it is not the presidential entrepreneur as prime mover and consistent driver who engenders change. On the contrary, change is marked by an ebb and flow between forces, with presidents sometimes initiating, sometimes responding, and sometimes even battered and beleaguered by the very forces that they have helped to mobilize. For brief illustrations of this process in presidential history, let me quickly sketch three seminal cases of political change: Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Wagner Act, John F. Kennedy and the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Ronald Reagan's 1981 tax cut and military buildup.

A recent debate within the field of American political development over the genesis of the Wagner Act initially pitted an exogenous explanation (Michael Goldfield's case for the causal primacy of "worker insurgency and radical organization") versus an endogenous one (the rejoinder to Goldfield by Theda Skocpol and Kenneth Finegold that shifts in electoral politics and the initiative of state-based actors produced the Wagner Act).[17] Subsequently, analyses of the Wagner Act began to bridge this divide, showing that it was a network of actors inside *and* outside of the state who were responsible for this landmark in labor law. While Steven Fraser's account gave greater emphasis to labor leaders, David Plotke's awarded primacy to New Dealers.[18] Both Fraser's and Plotke's analyses looked to the interplay between state and society; as Plotke put it, passage of the Wagner Act "was due primarily to the efforts of progressive liberals inside and outside the government, allied with a mass labor movement."[19]

The sequence of events that led to the Wagner Act features multiple leaders, collective action, and shifting political contexts. In overly simplified fashion, it can be depicted as follows:

> (1) Section 7(a) of Roosevelt's National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 sets out the right of workers to join organizations of their own choosing.
> (2) Labor leaders, especially John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers, seize upon Section 7(a) to begin a campaign of union organizing.
> (3) Lacking enforcement provisions, Section 7(a) is resisted by employers, and by 1934 an increasingly militant labor movement turns to massive strikes to press the issue of labor rights.
> (4) Working with labor leaders such as Sidney Hillman, progressive business and professional elites, and New Dealers, Senator Robert Wagner of New York frames legislation that will put teeth into a new labor regime of collective bargaining, but it is defeated in Congress in 1934.
> (5) Amid mounting political polarization, with the business community turning against the New Deal and labor activists pressing it from the left, Democratic liberals win a smashing victory in the congressional elections of 1934.
> (6) In this favorable climate, Wagner presses the legislation in early 1935, and FDR finally puts his political weight behind it, ensuring its passage.

Senator Wagner might be considered a political entrepreneur in this sequence; however, to prioritize his creative action for "an endogenous account of change" would be to miss the interplay of endogenous and exogenous forces and the network of progressive liberals in which Wagner was situated.

The genesis of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 includes a larger place for presidential leadership, but, like the Wagner Act, it is the interaction of state actors and social forces that generates political innovation. The sequence here appears as follows:

> (1) With the lunch-counter sit-ins by student activists in early 1960, the civil rights movement enters a new phase of militant direct action.
> (2) Competing for black votes in 1960, Democratic presidential candidate John F. Kennedy raises the hopes of activists even further by pledging an administration that will stand behind their struggle for equal rights.
> (3) Concerned to protect his southern base after his narrow electoral win, Kennedy enters the White House with a message of caution directed at civil rights forces.
> (4) Disappointed by the retreat from campaign promises, the civil rights movement pressures the Kennedy Administration for more forceful action, beginning with the Freedom Rides of 1961.
> (5) Movement pressure tactics reach their culmination with the 1963 Birmingham campaign launched by Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.
> (6) As media pictures from Birmingham spark a nationwide storm of civil rights protest, the Kennedy Administration finally reacts vigor-

17. Michael Goldfield, "Worker Insurgency, Radical Organization, and New Deal Labor Legislation," *American Political Science Review* 83 (1989): 1257–82; Theda Skocpol and Kenneth Finegold, "Explaining New Deal Labor Policy," *American Political Science Review* 84 (1990): 1297–1304.

18. Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 324–33; David Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order: Reshaping American Liberalism in the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 92–127.

19. Plotke, *Building a Democratic Political Order,* 92.

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ously, with the president employing the moral vocabulary the movement has long urged and sponsoring landmark civil rights legislation.
(7) The provisions of Kennedy's bill become even more pathbreaking through the efforts of congressional liberals and the continuing mobilization of the movement, dramatized in the March on Washington.
(8) After Kennedy's death, Lyndon Johnson deploys his extraordinary political talents to move the legislation through Congress and into law.

Kennedy can be credited with effective leadership in reacting forcefully to the civil rights crisis of 1963. Yet he was hardly an entrepreneur when it came to civil rights. Neither initiating nor guiding the process of change, his most important moment of leadership came when the external pressures for action made it imperative that he no longer temporize with the issue of civil rights.[20]

Because President Reagan's tax policy and military buildup were both successfully promulgated in his first year in office, it is not necessary to set out a complicated sequence of events to account for their genesis. As with the above cases of innovations associated with FDR and JFK, a concentration on the presidential entrepreneur's "creative acts" would be misplaced. Reagan's 1981 tax cut was developed in its essentials by the supply side network that emerged in the 1970s, including the eccentric economist Arthur Laffer, the publicists of the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page (such as Jude Wanniski), and the congressional team of Jack Kemp and William Roth. Reagan's 1981 defense buildup was originally promoted in the mid-1970s by the Committee on the Present Danger, a hawkish band of neoconservatives from both parties who were united by their dislike of Nixon-Ford detente. The economic and Iranian hostage crises under Jimmy Carter provided the newly elected Reagan with the electoral mandate to rush the tax cut and military buildup through Congress in 1981. At this peak of accomplishment, Reagan was the leader of a formidable team (and its essential salesman), but the process was directed by his subordinates: James Baker for legislative strategy, David Stockman for fiscal policy, Casper Weinberger for the defense budget. In the legislative triumphs of the conservative counterrevolution, as in the Wagner Act and the Civil Rights Act, the president's principal leadership role came in the final act of the drama of innovation.

Although Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Reagan were not entrepreneurs whose "creative acts" were the endogenous source of the transformations I have considered, their leadership made immensely important contributions to these transformations. In each case, the president's words and actions served to legitimate a new set of political values that had been long gestating in the polity. In each case, the presidency interacted with others to turn a policy innovation into the benchmark of a whole new way of thinking about the role of government in America, which is to say that leaders and followers produced a transformation that was all the more durable and potent for its mutual exchange of values. Of the three, FDR's role was arguably the smallest, but the Wagner Act took shape within the dynamics of his New Deal, and his eleventh-hour endorsement of it cemented a historic alliance between the unions and the Democratic party. Kennedy's commitment to civil rights was belated but decisive; he placed the moral imprimatur of the presidency behind the justice of the civil rights cause and pursued landmark legislation that aimed to dismantle the segregationist order in the South. Reagan's role was perhaps the most central: coming to power as the linchpin of the conservative movement, its spokesperson and symbol, his 1981 tax cut and military buildup shifted the American state in a direction that is still dominant today.

In Reagan's presidency, even in an important instance when institutional change appeared to be generated in an endogenous fashion, the concept of political entrepreneurship is less useful than the concept of leadership. Through its administrative strategy, the Reagan presidency made substantial headway in fulfilling the conservative goal of deregulation. Manipulation of tight budgets and overhead regulatory review were employed to bring agency regulators to heel; however, the most important component of the administrative strategy lay in personnel selection: Centralizing the personnel process, the White House chose political appointees to the bureaucracy who had been vetted for loyalty to Reagan's ideological agenda. While Reagan's own involvement in this administrative strategy does not appear to have been great, his ideological leadership was the touchstone upon which the personnel process rested. The loyalists who carried out his values throughout the bureaucracy acted as subleaders in advancing the Reagan revolution.[21]

I have introduced these examples to suggest that political entrepreneurship is a more limited concept than political leadership and cannot be stretched successfully to become a prime endogenous variable in American political development. The most important transformations in American politics involve too many actors, too many interests, and too many values to be explained by the creative acts of individual entrepreneurs. Encompassing policies and institutional arrangements and changing the ways Americans un-

20. My account of Kennedy and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 draws from my earlier work in *Pragmatic Illusions: The Presidential Politics of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Longman, 1976), 223–70 and *Icons of Democracy: American Leaders as Heroes, Aristocrats, Dissenters, and Democrats* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 300–05.

21. Richard P. Nathan, *The Administrative Presidency* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983).

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derstand the political world, such transformations are not reducible to, but involve a crucial role for, political leadership.

BACK TO RICHARD NEUSTADT?

Sheingate argues that its ambiguous constitutional status, multiplicity of roles, and individual singularity make the presidency an especially valuable place to apply the concept of political entrepreneurship. In citing previous work on political entrepreneurship, he does not adduce any examples from the literature on the presidency (fn. 12, 187–8). So his discussion seeks to break new ground in reconceptualizing the presidency in entrepreneurial terms. Yet the search for an entrepreneurial president circles back, in an odd way, to an old starting place for presidency scholarship.

In tracing the usage of the term "political entrepreneur" in political science, Sheingate gives pride of place to Robert Dahl in *Who Governs?* (?). Thus it is worth pointing out that Dahl's empirical elaboration of the concept of entrepreneurship appears to draw from the literature on the presidency. Anyone familiar with Richard E. Neustadt's classic, *Presidential Power,* will recognize the echo of his argument (and vocabulary) in Dahl's portrait of Mayor Lee: "Because the mayor could not command, he had to bargain."[22] Just as Neustadt presents a pluralistic national polity that can only be given direction and energy by an exceptional individual in the White House, so does Dahl present a pluralistic city in which only an exceptional mayor can deliver on fundamental change. The figures who stand out in their works – FDR for Neustadt, Mayor Lee for Dahl – are "great men."

My purpose in raising this issue is not to deny that some political actors can foster great innovations or to disparage the enduring insights of Neustadt into presidential character and skill. However, the limited analytical purchase of a concentration on individual qualities is what has chipped away at the Neustadtian paradigm in presidency studies. Analysts as different as Stephen Skowronek and Terry Moe have rejected the Neustadtian focus on the individual in favor of institutionalist perspectives on presidential politics. While retaining a concern for presidential leadership, they situate it in larger structures of action. To turn the president into an entrepreneur, as Sheingate suggests, is to return to a narrower focus on the creative talent of an individual. Without wanting to, Sheingate has resurrected the heroic presidency of Richard Neustadt.

22. Dahl, *Who Governs?,* 204.

CONCLUSION

The entrepreneurial type does exist in American politics. Some exceptional individuals do exploit unusual political conjunctures to initiate changes that cannot be accounted for on structural grounds alone. While Sheingate has done a service by clarifying the institutional conditions that facilitate or impede entrepreneurial activity, his evasion of the individualist core of entrepreneurship leaves its ultimate conceptual status blurry. More fundamentally, in its reliance on the initiative and creativity of the exceptional individual, the concept of political entrepreneurship is inherently limited in its capacity to explain large-scale political changes.

Used in a broad fashion, political entrepreneurship is a troubling category, problematic for democratic values and reductionist in explaining political change. The conceptual terminology of leadership can, of course, be developed in many directions, some of them also problematic for democratic values and for explaining political change. Yet the inherently interactive quality of leadership at least holds the promise of sustaining and furthering democratic values, and it is more easily deployed conceptually to produce a richer and more persuasive account of change. Scholars of American political development will no doubt continue to borrow concepts from economics, but they will pay a high price if they adopt a full-fledged economism and substitute political entrepreneurship for political leadership.

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