

MARKODEMOCRACY? A Reconnaissance

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Robert Dahl identifies a “democratic paradox” in which citizens have low faith in democratic institutions but high esteem for democratic principles and ideals. Dahl asserts that the paradox is resolved if citizens principally perceive democracy in terms of political rights (i.e., freedom of speech and assembly) and not political responsibilities (i.e., regular voting). Such an argument, however, excludes the economic realm from conceptions of democracy. Alternatively, we argue that some citizens may actively include market principles in their perceptions of democracy. These citizens may perceive market participation as a form of democratic participation, thus providing an additional explanation of why widespread distrust of political institutions does not detract from support for democratic values. In this article we provide some preliminary evidence from a targeted survey of college undergraduates, union workers, and churchgoers that illuminates these possibilities.

In a recent article one of America’s premier empirical democratic theorists, Robert Dahl, confronts a “democratic paradox.” According to Dahl the paradox is that “in many of the oldest and most stable democratic countries, citizens possess little confidence in some key democratic institutions. Yet most citizens continue to believe in the desirability of democracy” (2000, 35). Dahl’s proposed solution to this paradox divides public attitudes toward democracy into two dimensions. The first dimension “supposes the existence of an enforceable set of rights and opportunities that citizens may choose to exercise and act on.” As examples, Dahl mentions rights to free expression, to free association, and to elected representation. By contrast, the second dimension refers to “actual participation in political life,” not rights and opportunities (38).

Dahl argues that when people assert faith in democracy, they are thinking of the first dimension. Consequently, their lack of confidence in democratic institutions refers only to the second dimension. In short, citizens remain faithful to democracy as an ideal, if not to actual practices of democracy.

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Dahl concedes that his argument is speculative; he claims that there is surprisingly little survey data on what people actually mean when they espouse support for democracy. Nevertheless, the little pertinent evidence he introduces does support his resolution of the paradox. In thinking of democracy, people are more likely to mention rights and opportunities than actual participation or specific political institutions.

Dahl shares his description of the democratic paradox with other writers. For example, after reciting the well-known evidence of Americans' declining faith in their political institutions, Robert Lane writes, "Asked about the principles . . . of democracy, an overwhelming proportion of Americans endorse them . . ." (2000, 200). In a cross-national study of public support for democracy, Jacques Thomassen observes that "it is only natural that the level of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy will be lower than support for democracy as a form of government or for democratic values" (1995, 383). Like Dahl, Thomassen restricts democratic values to such obviously political phenomena as freedom of the press, having a say in political decisions, and individual freedom.

Although Dahl's explanation of the democratic paradox may be correct, it may also be incomplete. After all, his analysis only considers a view of democracy from the perspective of government and politics. People may indeed value the political rights Dahl identifies, but these political rights may not exhaust what citizens mean when they discuss democracy. Perhaps, some citizens have a different conception of democratic rights than that which Dahl—in company with many political scientists (e.g., Held 1996, 33, 61, 99, 116, 152, 197, 217, 261, 271, 324)—considers.¹ If so, this alternative conception may provide an additional explanation of the democratic paradox.

Consider the following. In 1951 the Gallup Organization interviewed 1,500 American adults and asked, "The Russian economic system is called communism. The British economic system is called socialism. Will you tell me what the American economic, or business, system is called?" In response 33 percent answered by identifying capitalism or free enterprise. Although 44 percent did not know or did not answer (a surprising enough result), 19 percent of the respondents claimed that the American economic system was "democracy." In 1957 Gallup again polled 1,500 American adults and asked, "The type of economic system that Russia has is called communism. How would you describe our economy?" This time only 18 percent answered by identifying capitalism or free enterprise; 47 percent did not know or did not answer; and 20 percent labeled the American economy as "democratic."

These polling results are over 40 years old, but there is surprisingly little survey data in recent years that asks questions in this format (a search of Gallup's question archives shows no such similar question in recent years)—demonstrating Dahl's point about the dearth of survey data on American conceptions of democracy. McCloskey and Zaller (1984) examine the relationship between capitalism and democracy in a manner most approximating our approach—and with respect to American politics. James Gibson's (1996) study of post-Soviet perceptions of democracy is also relevant. (For other survey studies of the former Soviet Union, see, e.g., Reisinger et al. 1994; Whitefield and Evans 1994; and Evans and Whitefield 1995.)

There are other studies that ask citizens to evaluate the success of democracy and the role of government in the economy (including how important economic equality is)—the ISSP "role of government" survey, for example, which is a cross-national study (with an American sample connected to the General Social Survey). Other survey studies

examine how perceptions of the economy (either pocketbook or sociotropic perceptions—MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson 1992—or retrospective or prospective economic perceptions—Lewis-Beck 1990) *influence* political attitudes or political behavior—the most common political behavior being vote choice (Alvarez and Nagler 1995). Despite these sources of data, however, survey data that *directly* ties the market to perceptions of democracy is rare.

In this article we provide some preliminary evidence that illuminates the possible definitional inclusion of market capitalism within democracy, an inclusion suggested by Gallup's data. We argue that some Americans probably do have a different conception of democratic rights than that which Dahl considers. We also believe this conception impedes certain aspects of democracy in the United States, a subject we consider further in the discussion section of this article.

“MARKODEMOCRACY”: A HEURISTIC

In order to pursue the possibility that some Americans conceptualize democracy in market as well as political terms, we introduce the heuristic idea of a *markodemocracy*. By using this “heuristic” we wish to emphasize the tentative and exploratory nature of our study. We use the term only to capture the possible role of market capitalism in public conceptions of democracy and not to demonstrate that a markodemocracy actually exists. We also use it to interpret the empirical data we report. We first define this heuristic and then operationalize its specific features.

We define a markodemocracy as a political system in which a consequential percentage of the population view democracy as having not only political rights but also economic rights—specifically, rights in a market—and in which these citizens are found throughout the American public, not just in specific settings.

Operationally, four specific features characterize a markodemocracy. First, a consequential percentage of people in a markodemocracy believes that the market system is a *sign* of democracy. People who satisfy this criterion have established a clear mental association between the market and democracy; they are “definitional markodemocrats.” Yet, this association is a weak criterion, for it may signify only an immediate, emotive, unreflective response rather than the priority of markets in a democracy vis-à-vis government and politics.

Those citizens who view the market as a *better* instrument of democracy than they do governments or politics are “instrumental markodemocrats.” These are citizens who when forced to choose consider their political institutions *less* democratic than they do the institutions of the market. Such an explicit comparison between political and market institutions requires people to go beyond spontaneous, emotional “definitional markodemocrats” and actually weigh the democratic weaknesses and strengths of market institutions against political institutions.

Instrumental markodemocrats also, in an effort to preserve democracy, prefer to trade away political rights in order to save the market. This “trade-off” or “give-up” criterion forces people to rule out elements of either the market or politics in a hypothetical scaled-down democracy. Here it is no longer just a question of comparison but of total elimination.

Fourth and finally, instrumental markodemocrats prefer market participation to political participation as a democratic alternative. Such people also consider protecting

the market as more promotive of democracy than accepting the decisions of a popularly elected government that temporarily restricts the market. In short, in the name of democracy, they choose to protect the market against the policies of a legitimate, popularly elected government subject to imminent reelection.

Having said this, we wish to distinguish between markodemocracy and markodemocratic attitudes. Markodemocracy is a systemic property that characterizes a political culture. Markodemocratic attitudes are patterns of beliefs consistent with markodemocracy *and are a necessary condition for its existence*. In this study we investigate markodemocratic attitudes and thus only implicitly examine a markodemocratic political culture. Nonetheless, if these attitudes are widespread and consequential, then the notion of a more extensive political culture is more easily supported (though not demonstrated here).

It should also be noted that our conception of a market system includes, but is not limited to, the concept of property rights for private individuals. As Robert Lane points out (1991, 11–12), a market system is primarily a network of transactions in which exchange, buying, selling, profit, and competition as well as labor, land, and resource mobility are central components. Accordingly, our measures of the market component of markodemocracy include consumer choice, private competition, unimpeded sale of products, and the free exchange of goods, along with private property.

Although the term “*markodemocracy*” is our own, the idea of a markodemocracy is not original to us. A few writers—most notably, Frederich Hayek—do include the market in their definition of democracy (Held 1996, 256–260). They are “definitional markodemocrats.” They are, however, in the minority within social science. Jacques Attali exemplifies this minority position. Attali states that the market economy and democracy are “mutually reinforcing”; also—and significantly—he states, “Democracy *means* that people can choose where to live, what to buy and sell, and how to work, save, and accumulate wealth . . .” (1997, 56; emphasis added). By contrast, even one of the most influential proponents of free markets—Milton Friedman—actually stops short of incorporating markets into his very definition of democracy. Friedman merely asserts an “inherent *affinity* between democratic government and market-oriented rights” (1962, 16; emphasis added).

It is also important to distinguish between the concept of markodemocracy and *causal* propositions about markets and democracy. A vast literature asserts that markets contribute to the establishment and viability of democracy (e.g., Marks and Diamond 1992; but see Dahl 1993, 259–283), and other studies argue that economic growth or industrialization—usually market driven—are causally related to democracy (e.g., Lipset 1960; Muller 1997, 133–156; but see Lindblom 2001, 230). This literature should not be confused with “instrumental markodemocracy.” Where any causal relationship between markets and democracy is an empirical question, instrumental markodemocracy prefers markets to politics in the pursuit of already-existent democracy. In a sense, instrumental markodemocracy simply assumes the causal relationship.

The governing hypothesis we wish to investigate may now be formally stated. We hypothesize that attitudes exist favorable to markodemocracy in some citizens’ conceptions of American democracy. Specifically, we believe consequential proportions of Americans (1) consider the market a sign of American democracy (that is, are definitional markodemocrats); (2) consider that some of the processes and institutions of a market are more democratic than are political institutions (that is, are instrumental markodem-

ocrats); (3) are willing in the name of democracy to trade political rights for market rights (instrumental markodemocrats); and (4) consider market participation not only a form of democratic participation but also more democratic than antimarket decisions taken by legitimately elected political authorities (instrumental markodemocrats).

We develop these four hypotheses from a political culture perspective on markodemocracy. In our view a political culture consists of historically embedded, broadly diffused patterns of values in a society. We agree with Reisinger and colleagues that “distinctive features of a society’s history give its citizens a unique pattern of political values” (1994, 184) which they call a political culture. In the present case we argue that the historical coincidence of democratic development with the expansion of market capitalism in the United States may have created markodemocratic attitudes in our political culture. To be truly a political culture phenomenon, evidence of markodemocracy must be found not only in specific subgroups but also among the public as a whole. Therefore, we propose a fifth hypothesis, namely the political culture hypothesis: markodemocratic attitudes should exhibit little variation across distinctively different groups in the United States.

Were it to exist, markodemocracy would have both cultural and political significance. Markodemocracy obviously elevates the market to a position of cultural and political privilege. In 1977 Charles Lindblom famously argued that among all private groups businessmen held a position of unique power in America. Why? Because politicians depend upon private business to carry out the essentially public function of allocating productive resources (1977, 170). Markodemocratic attitudes add a cultural dimension to Lindblom’s essentially political argument. In a markodemocracy many citizens *legitimize* the public function of business, seeing it as an integral component of democracy.

But this is a double-edged sword for large businesses, which may be forced occasionally to play by the political rules enforced by government actors, legitimized by appeals to democracy. For example, the federal investigations into large corporate scandals such as those of Enron and Arthur Andersen drew force from the argument that these large private interests had abused many small investors, who in turn deserved protection as vulnerable citizens of a democracy. Private entities other than businesses can experience similar political pressures on democratic grounds. Examples include the argument that religious institutions receiving government money should hire in a nonsectarian fashion. Even the sports world is not immune, as the Augusta National Golf Club discovered when it was pressured to open its membership to women on grounds of democratic inclusion. Thus, markodemocracy may tilt the playing field toward business but not immunize business from government incursions.

FACTORS THAT PROMOTE MARKODEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES IN THE UNITED STATES

Although the writings of social scientists undoubtedly contribute to popular conceptions of democracy, the primary stimulants of a markodemocracy undoubtedly are history and popular culture, not academic arguments. Consider, for example, the apparent *absence* of markodemocracy in newly developing democracies with little historical or cultural experience of American-style free markets.

One example emerges in Rohrschneider’s comparison of economic values in the former East and West Germany (1996, 78–104). The former West Germany has a long history of market-based private enterprise; unsurprisingly, political elites in former West

German areas overwhelmingly see only systemic advantages in a market economy. By contrast, political elites in the former East Germany—who have only recently emerged from a socialist command economy—are almost as likely to see systemic disadvantages as advantages in a free market. Clearly, long experience with socialism diminishes the possibility of markodemocratic attitudes in the former East Germany; by contrast, post-war market-based prosperity makes more probable the existence of such attitudes in the former West Germany (for other cases see Stokes 2001).

Rohrschneider does not empirically connect popular attitudes toward democracy to economic attitudes, but James Gibson does explore the possibility of such a connection in his study of Russia and the Ukraine. Gibson finds in these two ex-Communist regimes that as of 1992 there was, in fact, no such connection. Attitudes favorable to a market economy were independent of favorable attitudes toward democracy. As he puts it, “This research demonstrates that economic values are not primary, that democratic institutions and processes were probably valued for their intrinsic (not instrumental) benefits . . .” (1996, 954). Why so few markodemocratic attitudes in Russia and Ukraine? Probably, because in neither country was there a recent history of free markets nor a popular culture that disseminated free market ideology. Therefore, by 1992 positive attitudes toward free markets had not become connected to positive attitudes toward democracy (see also Evans and Whitfield 1995, 485–514).

It should be noted, however, that the apparent absence of markodemocracy in these cases does not discount that citizens in these countries would have likely associated democracy with economic prosperity. They were familiar, for example, with Western consumerism and the economic prosperity of the United States, which might have instilled the belief that with democracy comes the opportunity for economic prosperity. But, with the absence of a popular culture that fused the two, these citizens were potentially in the unique position of being able to correctly dissociate political democracy from market capitalism.

In sharp contrast to these formerly socialist countries, the United States provides fertile ground for markodemocratic attitudes. As proponents of the American Exceptionalism thesis regularly point out (Shafer 1991), the United States has never produced a serious socialist challenge to the market system. True, both the New Deal and the Great Society mobilized class cleavages and made public policies that both regulated the market and provided public benefit for people. But neither took most private enterprise into public ownership or direct control, as does socialism. Therefore, Americans have experienced *only* the market system. This may deter them from considering that other economic arrangements might be consistent with American democracy.

Moreover, classic studies have asserted the centrality of the market in American political culture. Consider the Constitution’s guarantee of the “pursuit of happiness,” which extends to market entrepreneurship. Louis Hartz detects a pattern of “acquisitive democracy” as early as Jackson’s presidency; Jackson, he argues, attempted to make property acquisition available to ordinary Americans through market expansion (1955, 138). David Potter (1954) argues that “American individualism” (which includes “free enterprise”) established itself early in American history as the principal means of achieving abundance, Americans’ primary goal. Bellah and colleagues (1985, 35–36ff) include the market in their review of early interpretations of American political culture and find contemporaneous evidence of its centrality. Finally, De Tocqueville asserts that in America, “as everyone has property of his own to defend, everyone recognizes the

principal upon which he holds it” (1990, 1, 245), meaning, presumably, the rights afforded by a market.

Some empirical research reveals the high levels of support Americans have given to the market. For example, Devine (1972, 189) reports that market freedoms such as property holding, earning a living, and competition never received less than 70 percent approval from Americans throughout the 1940s. In a study that foreshadows our own, McClosky and Zaller report that in the 1970s approximately 80 percent of those sampled asserted that the free enterprise system was necessary for a free government in the United States (1984, 133). They also write, “Capitalism and democracy . . . share similar historical origins. Each . . . represented an effort to break out of the confines of the mercantilist order . . .” (163).

Our study advances this earlier research. First, we begin by empirically investigating the place and priorities of markets and politics in people’s conceptions of democracy. Second, we advance the concept of markodemocracy itself, which foregrounds the market, as canonical empirical studies of American political culture have not (e.g., Almond and Verba 1965; Ladd 1972).

Other factors also favor markodemocratic attitudes in the United States. As Robert Lane points out, the failures of a market economy are off-loaded onto democratic political institutions. Lane argues that in all liberal democracies the government undertakes the responsibility to correct market failures; therefore, the market escapes much of the blame for the prolonged economic downturns it generates. Meanwhile, according to Lane government receives little praise for the market system’s successes. When there is a prolonged period of economic growth, for example, as was the case in the United States for the 1990s, the market, not the government, usually gets most of the credit despite the fact that government policy has usually facilitated growth. In short, people believe economic growth to be exclusively market led and economic decline to be largely governmental (2000, esp. chap. 12).

Also, several post–World War II developments favor markodemocratic attitudes in the United States. The most important of these is the Cold War, which associated market capitalism with American democracy and a socialist economy with Soviet “totalitarianism.” Not only did the eventual collapse of socialist economic systems favor the spread of market economies, but this collapse has also created a wave of market triumphalism (e.g., Fukuyama 1992). In the United States media and academia alike trumpet the many virtues of the market as compared to socialism.

In addition, the recent privatization of government functions in the United States encourages markodemocratic attitudes. Privatization conveys a clear message, i.e., the market performs many government functions better than do political institutions. Indeed, the cultural message of privatization is that a democratic government itself depends on markets to perform public functions.

A further development that stimulates markodemocratic attitudes is the increasing commercialization of American popular culture. Commercialization takes many forms, some obvious, others less so. For example, it is apparent to any viewer of television that the amount of network airtime devoted to commercial advertising has increased significantly in recent years; indeed, marketers themselves complain that advertising has reached a saturation point. Even though Americans hold quite negative views of advertising (Manso-Pinto and Diaz 1997, 267–268), Americans still absorb more advertising than do any other people. Less obviously, commercialization has expanded to the corporate

purchase of the naming rights to sporting events and even the naming rights to fully public institutions such as public libraries. Commercialization on so massive a scale inserts the market into every phase of American life; one need not be a Marxist to wonder if, over time, this penetration hasn't influenced many citizens' conceptions of democracy.

In this regard, we observe how natural it seemed in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that American patriotism was defined partly in market terms. Repeatedly, politicians and business leaders argued that to be good citizens the public should as quickly as possible resume its usual market habits. Indeed, New York City launched a series of television appeals for viewers to visit the city as tourists and consumers in order to demonstrate their patriotism. These messages in popular culture encourage markodemocratic attitudes.

Lastly, the unprecedented strength of the American economy in the 1990s favors markodemocratic attitudes. For example, in a landmark development half of Americans are now stockholders (*New York Times* 2001); the 2000 National Election Study also shows that 55.6 percent of respondents have money invested in the stock market.² As more citizens rely upon their holdings in market securities, many might well associate shareholding with democratic citizenship. Indeed, shareholding may have become part of being a "normal" American. Thus, to many citizens the right to own stock may symbolize democracy at least as well as does the right to vote.

FACTORS THAT INHIBIT MARKODEMOCRATIC ATTITUDES IN THE UNITED STATES

So powerful and familiar are the forces promoting markodemocratic attitudes in the United States that some readers might believe markodemocratic attitudes are a foregone conclusion in the data we present. Such a conclusion would be premature. For one thing, it would ignore the many incompatibilities between market capitalism and political democracy. It would also dismiss the many political movements in America that have attacked market capitalism in the name of American democracy. These phenomena must not be overlooked.

The incompatibilities between markets and political democracy stem from the fact that political democracy requires political equality among individual citizens, whereas markets reward economic inequalities achieved through market forces. These economic inequalities limit political equality among citizens. Capitalist enterprises then multiply these inequalities in manifold ways (see Dahl 1985). As Lindblom puts it, ". . . entrepreneurs and enterprises, especially corporations, exercise political power beyond the capacity of ordinary citizens. Their power in government not only broadly distorts democracy; it also enables them to extract from the state a variety of benefits, often at great cost to everyone else . . ." (2001, 63). Further, large capitalist enterprises are internally authoritarian rather than democratic. They are governed in a hierarchical fashion by managers and a few major stockholders, rather than by workers, the general public, or, most of the time, average stockholders.

Indeed, McClosky and Zaller found that scores on their index of support for democratic values and scores on their index of support for the values of capitalism were inversely related (1984, 163). However, they did not consider the possibility that some Americans may be markodemocrats who despite their misgivings nevertheless include markets within the very concept of democracy.

The tensions between market-based economic inequalities and political democracy have spawned political movements that have attacked the market. In the late nineteenth century Populism became a powerful third-party movement directed against Wall Street and large corporate conglomerates such as Standard Oil. For its part Progressivism attacked market monopolies as inefficient and exploitative as well as insensitive to corporate-spawned social ills and to a larger public interest. In addition, socialism manifested itself in a direct attack on corporate capitalism from the late nineteenth century until World War I. Finally, the New Deal protected workers and the middle class against both the authoritarian power of corporations at the workplace and also the boom and bust cycles of market capitalism.

To be sure, most of these movements had limited aims and limited achievements. Nevertheless, they do provide a counter tradition in American political culture to the forces that favor markodemocratic attitudes. Americans today have good historical reasons not to conflate the free market with political democracy. In short, markodemocratic attitudes are not a foregone conclusion in the United States.

SEARCHING FOR MARKODEMOCRACY

In this section, we report the results of a targeted survey administered to 230 undergraduate students (mostly juniors and seniors) at a midwestern research university, 160 Protestant churchgoers in this community, and 130 union members in this community. At the outset it is important to acknowledge that our empirical findings do not represent a probability sample of the larger population and therefore do not conform to the standards of representative survey sampling. Indeed, we are mindful of the particular problematic nature of student samples (Sears 1986). Nonetheless, our pool of respondents does permit a *reconnaissance* into markodemocratic thinking in the American public. It also allows us a preliminary investigation of our five major hypotheses. We gain insights by comparing aggregate responses across three subgroups. If a clear pattern of responses holds across all three groups, we may infer that the results have some internal validity (and some promising, but limited external validity).

We administered the survey over the course of about 12 months. These groups included college students (November 2000), Lutheran and Evangelical churchgoers (August, September, and October 2001), union organizers (October 2001), unionized mechanics (October and November 2001), unionized nurses (November 2001), and unionized communication workers (November 2001). All three groups (students, churchgoers, and workers) received and completed the same survey.

The timing of our survey deserves some discussion. We administered the undergraduate survey in the days and weeks immediately following the disputed 2000 Presidential elections. At this time media coverage of the Florida recount emphasized the value and importance of political rights in a democracy, especially voting. Thus, the political context of the survey works *against* markodemocratic attitudes. By contrast, some of our union and Protestant respondents filled out the survey in the weeks following the September 11 attacks. This plausibly biased the results in *favor* of our expectations, given the World Trade Center was seen as a center of American and global capitalism. Consequently, both contextual biases represent extreme conditions under which to investigate markodemocracy; if the results across groups are similar, we take this as evidence for the robustness of the findings.

By administering the survey to advanced, mainly political science undergraduate students at an activist, midwestern campus, we further biased our pool of respondents toward more political understandings of democracy. These students' presence in political science and sociology courses (the setting for the survey) exposed them to mainly political conceptions of democracy. To offset this sampling bias, we investigated two other groups—Protestant churchgoers and unionized workers—to increase the likely variation in markodemocratic attitudes. Unionized workers in this university town, known as a liberal—even progressivist—bastion, would appear to be a group strongly predisposed against markodemocracy. By contrast, Protestant churchgoers are generally a conservative force in the United States. Churchgoing itself has been found to encourage conservatism (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988, 531–548). Overall, a combination of purposive sampling and fortuitous political events maximizes the possible markodemocratic variation among groups in our study.

We expected the three groups to have different ideological orientations; indeed, we chose the groups with this in mind. As foreseen, the Protestants were somewhat conservative (about 40 percent self-identifying as slightly conservative or conservative); union workers were predominately liberal (with over 50 percent identifying as liberal or slightly liberal); and students were even more liberal (with 60 percent identifying as liberal or slightly liberal). This variation allows us to investigate our political culture hypothesis.

We now explore our five hypotheses in turn. Table 1 reports the responses to our weakest indicator of markodemocratic attitudes—that is, whether or not respondents perceived market rights to be a sign of democracy, what we call “definitional markodemocracy.” The results provide strong evidence that supports our hypothesis. Indeed, for each question a majority of the respondents in all three groups believed that market rights are a sign of American democracy. Most telling is the fact that 70 percent of our student and union respondents and 85 percent of the churchgoers viewed “a strong system of private enterprise” as democratic. This item directly identifies free market capitalism with democracy.

Nonetheless, this test is weak. For one thing, the simplicity of our questions invited the responses we received. Moreover, we asked respondents only *whether* they associated market practices with democracy, not *how* they conceptualized this association. Still, simple psychological association is a meaningful first step, for it supports our claim that many people spontaneously assume market rights to be democratic.

To explore our more demanding second hypothesis (and the claim of “instrumental markodemocracy”), we asked respondents to choose between government and business as the better institution to achieve certain democratic goals. The results appear in Table 2. In this more stringent case respondents proved more reluctant to be markodemocratic; in other words, most respondents picked the government over the market as the better institution to pursue democratic goals.

Nonetheless, there remains an interesting markodemocratic story in these data. As already stated, the previous set of questions did not force people to choose between the market and the political realm. Thus, people were free to express markodemocratic attitudes without penalty, so it is expectable that markodemocratic attitudes would be prevalent in the first set of questions. In the present set, however, respondents were required to choose between the market and government. It is therefore noteworthy that substantial minorities, and in some cases majorities, still continued to choose the markodemocratic response.

TABLE 1. ECONOMIC RIGHTS AS SIGNS OF DEMOCRACY

	No, Not a Sign % (n)	Yes, a Sign % (n)
Is having the right to buy stock in a company a sign that we live in a democracy?		
Students	44.2 (99)	55.4 (124)
Union workers	34.6 (44)	65.4 (83)
Churchgoers	20.7 (34)	78.7 (129)
Is having the right to start a business a sign of our democracy?		
Students	19.2 (43)	80.4 (180)
Union workers	21.3 (27)	78 (99)
Churchgoers	11 (18)	89 (146)
Is having the right to purchase any car you want a sign of our democracy?		
Students	44.2 (99)	55.4 (124)
Union workers	34.6 (44)	65.4 (83)
Churchgoers	27 (44)	73 (120)
Is a strong system of private enterprise a sign of our democracy?		
Students	29.9 (67)	69.6 (156)
Union workers	28.3 (36)	70.1 (89)
Churchgoers	13 (21)	85 (140)
Is having the right to change jobs a sign of our democracy?		
Students	21 (47)	78.6 (176)
Union workers	17.3 (22)	82.7 (105)
Churchgoers	15 (25)	84 (138)
Is having the right to save money from your work a sign of our democracy?		
Students	28.6 (64)	71 (159)
Union workers	32.3 (41)	66.9 (85)
Churchgoers	20.7 (34)	78.7 (129)
Is having the right to compete against others for a job a sign of our democracy?		
Students	27.2 (61)	71.9 (161)
Union workers	29 (37)	69.3 (88)
Churchgoers	20.7 (34)	79.3 (130)

As Table 2 demonstrates markodemocratic attitudes are in fact alive and well. For example, 76 percent of the students, 72 percent of the churchgoers, and 44 percent of the unionized workers believed that business is better than government at responding to what people want. A substantial 43 percent of the students, 47 percent of churchgoers, and 29 percent of workers felt that business is better than government at giving average people power. About a third of the students, 52 percent of the churchgoers, and 30 percent of unionized workers chose business as the better institution to give people important choices. Finally, about a third of the students and churchgoers believed business does a better job than government in representing a majority of Americans, meeting the basic needs of people, and providing equal opportunity. Indeed, a full 31 percent of unionized workers felt that business does a better job than government in providing people with important choices. Thus, when respondents were allowed to choose government

TABLE 2. INSTITUTION BEST ABLE TO DELIVER DEMOCRATIC GOALS

Democratic Goal	Government % (n)	Business % (n)
Treats people fairly		
Students	67.9 (152)	26.3 (59)
Union workers	74.8 (95)	19.7 (25)
Churchgoers	72.6 (119)	23.2 (38)
Gives average people power		
Students	53.6 (120)	42.9 (96)
Union workers	66.9 (85)	29.1 (37)
Churchgoers	50 (82)	47 (77)
Represents a majority of Americans		
Students	56.3 (126)	39.7 (89)
Union workers	79.5 (101)	17.3 (22)
Churchgoers	61 (100)	36.6 (60)
Protects individual rights		
Students	89.7 (201)	6.3 (14)
Union workers	92.9 (118)	4.7 (6)
Churchgoers	90.2 (148)	6.7 (11)
Responds to what people want		
Students	21.4 (48)	76.3 (171)
Union workers	51.2 (65)	44.1 (56)
Churchgoers	25 (41)	72 (118)
Provides equal opportunity to people		
Students	65.2 (146)	30.4 (68)
Union workers	77.25 (98)	20.5 (26)
Churchgoers	64 (105)	32.9 (54)
Meets the basic needs of people		
Students	64.3 (144)	31.3 (70)
Union workers	70.9 (90)	26.8 (34)
Churchgoers	54 (105)	33.5 (55)
Respects ethnic, racial, and religious minorities		
Students	79 (177)	15.2 (34)
Union workers	84.3 (107)	11.8 (15)
Churchgoers	79.9 (131)	16.5 (27)
Treats people as equals		
Students	71 (159)	23.7 (53)
Union workers	79.5 (101)	17.3 (22)
Churchgoers	70.1 (115)	23.8 (39)
Prevents people from being oppressed		
Students	85.3 (191)	8.9 (20)
Union workers	81.9 (104)	13.4 (17)
Churchgoers	82.3 (135)	13.4 (22)
Gives people important choices		
Students	57.1 (128)	37.9 (85)
Union workers	63 (80)	30.7 (39)
Churchgoers	43.9 (72)	51.8 (85)
Promotes individual freedom		
Students	66.1 (148)	29 (65)
Union workers	78 (99)	17.3 (22)
Churchgoers	66.5 (109)	29.3 (48)
Reduces conflict between groups		
Students	76.3 (171)	18.8 (42)
Union workers	82.7 (105)	13.4 (17)
Churchgoers	64 (105)	31.1 (51)

over the market, markodemocratic attitudes remained in consequential amounts throughout all three groups.

An interesting conceptual question is worth addressing briefly at this point. What are “consequential amounts” of markodemocratic sentiment? Evidence in favor of our hypotheses does not require that a *majority* of respondents prime business or the market over government and politics. At the same time if only a handful of respondents hold markodemocratic attitudes, then this amount is inconsequential. Ultimately, a “consequential amount” of markodemocratic sentiment is a matter of substantive judgment. That is, imagine a variety of policy concerns facing a democratically elected government—questions of environmental regulation, antipoverty programs, tax issues, and so on. Inherent in these issues is the appropriate place of the market and the government in determining policies. “Consequential amounts” of markodemocratic sentiment tilt these policies toward market alternatives. No doubt we should expect fewer markodemocratic sentiments as our items become more challenging. To be sure, there may be many reasons why people may choose a markodemocratic response. The more such reasons, the weaker the advantage market alternatives enjoy. The tilt becomes less consequential, though still real.

With these thoughts in mind, we turn to our third set of questions, which investigates our most demanding hypothesis about markodemocratic attitudes. In this set we asked respondents to completely trade a market or a political right in order to preserve democracy. Table 3 provides the responses to these questions.

Again, markodemocratic attitudes were common. To preserve democracy consequential proportions of respondents chose to discard political rights entirely in favor of market rights. For example, nearly one-half of respondents in all three groups chose to save the right to own a home and jettisoned the right to hear political debates. Over 40 percent of our student respondents, 36 percent of union workers, and 29 percent of churchgoers would protect the right to start a business and would sacrifice the right to run for political office. Indeed, a surprising 33 percent of union workers would trade the right to compete for political office for the right to compete for jobs.

Consequential markodemocratic sentiments also appeared in the other trade-offs. Over a quarter of student respondents and 20 percent of churchgoers preferred to save the market right of competing for jobs over the right to compete for political office. Furthermore, a quarter of the students and workers would save the right to purchase what they want over the right to join a political party.

To explore our fourth hypothesis, we composed two hypothetical scenarios that allowed us to compare political and economic understandings of democratic politics. Table 4 provides the text of both scenarios and the distribution of responses. In each case majorities of all three groups asserted that aggressive support for the free exchange of goods, rather than other alternatives, was the appropriate response to the hypothetical situation.

There may be some concern with our comparison of different forms of market and political participation, specifically, salience differences in each set of attitudes and behaviors and whether the items are realistically comparable. There is legitimacy to this concern, but we maintain that potential salience differences are not terribly problematic. Indeed, though one might argue that market participation is an everyday occurrence and that political participation is not, we respond by noting that market participation can be overstated. Most Americans cannot “earn as much as they want;” large numbers of

TABLE 3. TRADE-OFF OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS

People have the right to . . .	Students % (n)	Union Workers % (n)	Churchgoers % (n)
Purchase what they prefer, but not to join the political party they like <i>Or,</i> Join the political party they prefer, but not to purchase the products they like.	27.7 (62)	23.6 (30)	19.5 (32)
Earn as much money as they can, but not to vote. <i>Or,</i> Vote, but not to earn as much money as they can.	66.5 (149)	72.4 (92)	76.2 (125)
Start a business, but not to run for political office. <i>Or,</i> Run for political office, but not to start a business.	10.3 (23)	9.4 (12)	7.9 (13)
Purchase stock, but not to criticize politicians. <i>Or,</i> Criticize politicians, but not to purchase stock.	84.4 (189)	85 (108)	87.8 (144)
Own their own homes, but not to hear political debates. <i>Or,</i> Hear political debates, but not to own their homes.	43.3 (97)	36.2 (46)	28.7 (47)
Market whatever products people want, but not to publish articles attacking democracy. <i>Or,</i> Publish articles attacking democracy, but not to market the products people want.	49.6 (111)	58.3 (74)	67.1 (110)
Compete against each other for jobs, but not to compete against each other for political office. <i>Or,</i> Compete against each other for political office, but not to compete against each other for jobs.	18.8 (42)	19.7 (25)	18.3 (30)
	75 (168)	72.4 (92)	77.4 (127)
	49.6 (111)	43.3 (55)	43.9 (72)
	42.9 (96)	50.4 (64)	50.6 (83)
	19.2 (43)	18.9 (24)	17.7 (29)
	74.1 (166)	75.6 (96)	76.8 (126)
	28.6 (64)	33.1 (42)	20.1 (33)
	63.4 (142)	59.1 (75)	73.2 (120)

Americans do not own their own home; comparatively few Americans actually start their own business; and most Americans most of the time do not compete against others for jobs. At the same time the salience of political participation may be underestimated. Americans can vote in more elections than can citizens in any other democracy. The media and public schools are saturated with discussions of elections and candidates. The level of constituent work done by state legislators and congresspersons underscores the point that citizens expect results from their political participation—that indeed, many Americans expect their participation to directly benefit themselves. Finally, people interact with government everyday as beneficiaries of programs (i.e., Medicare), users of services (i.e., roads and postal services), and as taxpayers.

In the data explored so far, similar patterns of responses across the three different groups represent some evidence for our political culture hypothesis. Indeed, given the age differences between the three groups, we might expect more variation than we discover, even if this variation is operationally related to churchgoing, union membership,

TABLE 4. SCENARIOS

Imagine that you start a business selling widgets, but a rival company across the street is also selling widgets. After a year, the other company goes out of business because you sold widgets at a slightly lower price, and they refused to lower their price to compete with you. Which of the two following statements do you agree with most concerning the relationship between this event and democracy:

1. Going out of business has absolutely nothing to do with democracy; so there is no relationship between these things.

Students	23.2% (52)
Union workers	36.1% (46)
Churchgoers	25% (41)
2. Democracy is about the free exchange of goods. Some people win and lose in this process, and that's OK.

Students	74.1% (166)
Union workers	63% (80)
Churchgoers	73.8% (121)

You work really hard one summer and save up some money for a car. Later in the fall, you go to a car dealership to find the vehicle that you want, but the dealer says that you can't buy a car. Apparently, your elected town government decided that because so many people had cars, there was a risk to the environment; so they concluded that the best thing to do was prevent the sale of automobiles for one year. Which of the following statements best approximates your reaction to this news?

1. Because the town government is elected, the action is legitimate. Even if I disagree with their decision, I can express my anger at the next election in 2 years.

Students	41.5% (93)
Union workers	42.5% (54)
Churchgoers	40.9% (67)
 2. They have no right to do this in a democracy. Democracy is about the free exchange of goods. Any infringement on those rights is a sign that democracy could be in jeopardy.

Students	54.9% (123)
Union workers	55.1% (70)
Churchgoers	57.9% (95)
-

or student status. The absence of such variation further fortifies the political culture hypothesis. But our results may actually be driven by ideological conservatism within each group. If so, we have not really identified a political culture phenomenon but simply tapped into the impact of conservative ideology. To examine this claim, we relate respondents' ideology to specific items where markodemocratic attitudes abound. We also report chi-square statistics that test for independence between ideology and the markodemocratic items.

We explore two expectations. First, there *should* be a high number of conservatives supporting markodemocratic attitudes (we do not argue that ideology has *no* explanatory power). Second, liberals should also be represented in high amounts. Put differently, a significant chi-square is not evidence against our political culture hypothesis so long as liberals exhibit markodemocratic attitudes in large numbers.

In the analysis below, ideology is measured by self-reports as either conservative or liberal; we collapsed a more detailed ideology question into these two categories and excluded moderates. And we put all three groups (students, churchgoers, and union

TABLE 5. RESPONSES BY RESPONDENTS' IDEOLOGY

A Ideology and Economic Rights as Signs of Democracy

Is having the right to start a business a sign of our democracy? (From Table 1)

	No n (%)	Yes n (%)	Total
Liberal	52 (19.3)	218 (80.7)	270
Conservative	19 (13.7)	120 (86.3)	139
Total	71	338	

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 1.99$ Pr = 0.157.**B Ideology and the Institution Best Able to Deliver Democratic Goals**

Democratic goal: responds to what people want (From Table 2)

	Government n (%)	Business n (%)	Total
Liberal	97 (36.3)	170 (63.7)	267
Conservative	34 (24.5)	105 (75.5)	139
Total	131	275	

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 5.89$ Pr = 0.015.**C Ideology and the Trade-off of Political and Economic Rights**

Trade-off: Own homes vs. hear political debates (From Table 3)

	Home n (%)	Political Debate n (%)	Total
Liberal	130 (49.8)	131 (50.2)	261
Conservative	76 (55.9)	60 (44.1)	136
Total	206	191	

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 1.32$ Pr = 0.250.**D Ideology and Democratic Scenarios**

Scenario: Selling widgets (From Table 4)

	Non-Markodemocratic Response n (%)	Markodemocratic Response n (%)	Total
Liberal	77 (28.8)	190 (71.2)	267
Conservative	36 (25.9)	103 (74.1)	139
Total	113	293	

Pearson $\chi^2(1) = 0.3933$ Pr = 0.531.

members) together in one analysis. Table 5 reports results on the strongest markodemocratic items for each of the previous four hypotheses.

As can be seen, in three of the tests there is no relationship between markodemocratic responses and ideology, indicating that conservatism is not driving these results. And in the one case where the test statistic is significant, an overwhelming proportion of liberals still supported the markodemocratic response. Finally, when examining the “second-strongest” markodemocratic response for each hypothesis, the same pattern holds—either insignificant chi-square tests or significance with large numbers of liberals still supporting markodemocracy. Thus, although conservative ideology does promote markodemocratic sentiments, it is not the driving force behind such attitudes.

DISCUSSION

Our reconnaissance into markodemocratic attitudes has borne fruit. Our data suggest that such attitudes may well be a consequential component of American political culture. This finding enables us to offer a novel perspective on Dahl’s paradox. We propose that markodemocratic attitudes may help to explain why widespread distrust of American political institutions does not detract from support for democratic values. For those holding markodemocratic attitudes, so long as markets are safe so is democracy—at least as these people understand democracy.

This preliminary investigation justifies a call for further research. Several questions immediately suggest themselves. How broadly diffused are markodemocratic attitudes in the American public? How coherent ideologically is markodemocracy? Are there better measures of markodemocracy than we have employed? How are markodemocratic attitudes learned? Do they persist in individuals over time? Do those holding such attitudes have different views on public policy—especially economic and fiscal policy—than do other Americans? Finally, what effects does markodemocracy have on political participation in the United States? After all, if consequential numbers of people consider political institutions less important than the market, what motivation do they have to engage in political action?

To investigate these claims more systematically, we first need more data in varying forms. Our purposive sample investigates the existence of markodemocratic sentiments, and therefore, a national probability sample that explores citizen conceptions of democracy seems relevant. Indeed, the relative lack of such data with respect to American perceptions of democracy is one of the puzzles noted by Dahl in the piece that inspires this analysis. Such a national probability sample should have extensive questions on citizen attitudes, starting perhaps with a simple question asking citizens what democracy means.

At the same time the complexity that we propose underlies American conceptions of democracy demands even finer analyses of citizen responses. Other work has explored through in-depth group interviews the tendency for political attitudes to be multilayered, ill formed, and contradictory (Chong 1993). Leveraging this technique with respect to discussions of democracy may also highlight the existence of markodemocratic attitudes.

What are the likely political consequences of markodemocracy? For one thing, markodemocracy would place limitations on economic policymaking. To many people economic policies—from wage and price controls to regulation and public ownership—would become immediately suspect as possibly undemocratic because they infringe upon the free operations of the market. Therefore, politicians who propose such eco-

conomic programs would be at a disadvantage; they would have to overcome the suspicion that they are—in effect—subverting democracy. Perhaps, this is one reason that the American welfare state has lagged behind those of other Western democracies distributionally, (Wilson 1998) and why American reliance on market regulation is so bitterly contested, widely resented, and subject to reversal.

At a more abstract level markodemocracy would raise questions about legitimacy, equality, and political language in the United States. As to legitimacy, people holding markodemocratic attitudes may well utilize the state of market freedoms in order to evaluate American political institutions. It follows, therefore, that in order to solidify their rule institutional authorities would have to protect the market. In so doing, of course, they further promote the market. Such market norms as efficiency, competition, productivity, and profit would thus become principal political aims, taking their place alongside of—and occasionally in competition with—more familiar political goals such as majority rule, individual freedom, and democratic representation. Markodemocracy, therefore, would broaden and complicate the normative ground upon which political elites in America attempt to legitimate their rule.

Markodemocracy would be especially consequential for political equality as a democratic value. Democratic theory stipulates that, insofar as possible, citizens should be equal to each other politically. Markets, of course, employ unequal incomes to motivate and reward productive effort. Moreover, because they respond only to the differential ability to pay, markets distribute goods and services unequally (Okun 1975). Markodemocracy therefore would compromise political equality; after all, unequal incomes and unequal resources inevitably create unequal political power (Walzer 1983). Therefore, the more prevalent markodemocratic attitudes are, the lower the likelihood of realizing the democratic goal of political equality.

Finally, markodemocratic attitudes contain an important lesson about political language. Terms such as *democracy* may have multiple meanings, some quite different from the understandings shared by academics and intellectuals (Edelman 1988). Our data suggest that among the general public key political terms like *democracy* may resemble a kind of Wittgensteinian language game (Barry 1996, 89). Important political terms may not only possess plastic borders but also lack stable core concepts (Chong 1993, 867–899). Indeed, political language may be as fluid as the political system in which it is embedded. If so, perhaps our study is simply the first step in a longer journey toward reconceptualizing the political culture of American democracy.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that Dahl's conceptualization of democracy, specifically his assertion of two dimensions to democracy, is not the only manner in which democratic theorists have approached this question. Schaffer's (1998) discussion of democracy in Senegal highlights specifically the varying ways in which citizens can perceive the concept of democracy. Schaffer offers a very careful critique of Dahl's work on these grounds, although he too bounds the discussion of democracy to its meaning in the political realm.

2. In addition, other surveys of adult Americans show consistently that about half of respondents have some money invested in the stock market. We examined a number of poll results through Lexis-Nexis (which archives polling questions from a number of sources, including Roper and CBS News).

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