

Gordon Tullock as a political scientist

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Abstract We consider Gordon Tullock’s impact in political science, focusing on his influence as a scholar and as an academic entrepreneur. It is common to think of Tullock as a “natural economist,” but his formal training at Chicago encompassed considerable coursework related to political science. We consider three sources of information to draw conclusions about Tullock’s contributions in political science: (1) Course syllabi; (2) Citations in academic political science journals; and (3) Impact on the careers of important political scientists, and shaping the intellectual agenda. Our conclusion is that, while Tullock’s work is clearly significant for central questions in political science, and has received some attention, his primary legacy lies in the impact he had on launching and shaping the careers of prominent political scientists, and thus the development of political science scholarship.

Keywords Public choice · Gordon Tullock · Political science

JEL Classification B2 · B3 · H00

1 Introduction

In the *Odyssey*, Phemius the Poet famously claims that he is original, and therefore should be spared the sword:

I am self-taught and the god has inspired me with all kinds of songs.
It is fitting for me to sing for you as for a god.
For these reasons, do not be eager to kill me.

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As an economist, Gordon Tullock was also “self-taught” (and openly proud of it), having taken only one class in economics during his education at the University of Chicago. Of course, many believed that Tullock was a “natural economist” (Buchanan 1987), so being self-taught likely came easily to him. It may also have been critical to the originality of his work. As Charles Rowley put it in his “Introduction” to Tullock’s *Selected Works* (Rowley 2004; xii):

Gordon Tullock is an economist by nature rather than by training. He attended a one-semester course in economics for law students given by Henry Simons at the University of Chicago, but is otherwise self-taught. For most budding economists, such a background would be a handicap. In Tullock’s case, arguably it has proved to be an enormous advantage, enabling him to deploy his formidable intellect in a truly entrepreneurial manner.

In writing this essay, we have been asked to consider Tullock’s contributions not as an economist, but as a *political scientist*.¹ Gordon never earned a formal degree in this discipline, either. While he appeared “self-taught” in this sense, in contrast to economics, he completed considerable undergraduate coursework in politics and history, and had extensive exposure to politics in his early professional career. When he arrived at the University of Chicago in 1940 (at the age of eighteen), he enrolled in a program that combined a 2-year undergraduate degree with a 4-year law degree. After interrupting his studies for military service during WWII (which included landing in Normandy a week after D-Day, and crossing the Rhine while asleep in the back of a truck), Tullock completed his J.D. in 1947, the only degree he ever formally received. His coursework at Chicago included civics and history, and prepared him to take the Foreign Service Exam. By late 1947, Tullock had been posted as vice consul to China, where he observed the Communist take-over first hand. Upon returning home, the State Department provided for 3 years of further Chinese language training at Yale and Cornell. By 1952, Tullock had been sent to the Consulate General in Hong Kong, followed by a posting to the political section of the US Embassy in Korea. In 1955, he returned to Washington to work for the State Department’s Office of Intelligence and Research. After 18 months in this

¹ The biographical details laid out in the following paragraph are documented in Charles Rowley’s “Biographical Note,” which appears as part of his edition of Tullock’s selected works (Tullock 2004), as well as Brady and Tollison (1994) and Brady (2000). Brady (2000, p. 152) probably describes Tullock’s background best:

The University of Chicago...allowed two years of undergraduate courses to be combined with four years of formal law. Tullock in fact completed this program in five years because, upon completion of specific courses, he was allowed to enter the law school after one year. The baccalaureate degree which required payment of a five-dollar fee would have been awarded after two years at the law school, but Tullock’s decision not to pay this small sum created the basis for endless speculation regarding his credentials as well as fueling the myth of the self-taught economist.

It is our opinion that the “independent, self-taught” moniker was one Tullock actually cultivated, because it delighted him to see how upsetting this was for traditionalists who valued credentials more than accomplishment. The truth is in fact more mundane: Tullock was one of the best-educated scholars of his generation.

position—and a full 9 years in the Foreign Service—Tullock resigned from government service to begin his academic career.

This biographical sketch makes clear that, compared to his training in economics, Tullock had a deep grounding in political science—or at least its subject matter—combining coursework in politics and history with extensive language training. His career in the diplomatic service had also provided him with exposure to international affairs, and experience in the politics of bureaucracy. However, while Tullock was thoroughly familiar with the “stuff” of political science (and continued to read voraciously throughout his life), he had no formal training in the field as an academic discipline (training usually obtained through graduate course work). As a result, he had little exposure to the professional norms and conventions of the discipline. Perhaps as a result, when he burst onto the scene, he elected to “do” political science his own way. Not everyone was impressed, to say the least. As Herbert Kaufman, the famous Yale public administration scholar, put it in a review of Tullock’s 1965 book, *The Politics of Bureaucracy*:

It may be theoretically possible for a man to produce an original, insightful book on a subject whose voluminous literature he gives no indication of having read. And it may be theoretically possible for a man to write a brilliant treatise on a complicated social phenomenon largely by introspecting. But the odds seem discouragingly low.

Nevertheless, this is precisely what Gordon Tullock, whose previous work includes co-authorship of *The Calculus of Consent*, undertook to do in this book [with] no sign that he has looked at all at the substantial body of writing on bureaucracy. And he explicitly commits himself to the doctrine that “we understand how others feel or act because we know how we would act or feel under similar circumstances.” Unfortunately, his product is of the kind the odds lead us to expect rather than the rare exhilarating exception. (Kaufman 1966; p. 488)

While Kaufman is openly disdainful of Tullock’s approach—an approach rooted in introspection coupled with an (admitted) innocence of knowledge of most of the classical literature in public administration and political science—it is worth pointing out that this method has a proud lineage in our discipline. As one of the founders of “modern” political science, Thomas Hobbes, observed in the introduction to *Leviathan*:

But there is another saying not of late understood, by which they might learn truly to read one another, if they would take the pains; and that is, *Nosce Teipsum*,² Read Thy Self: which was not meant, as it is now used, to countenance, either the barbarous state of men in power, towards their inferiors; or to encourage men of low degree, to a sawcie behaviour towards their betters; But to teach us, that for the similitude of the thoughts, and Passions of one man, to the thoughts, and Passions of another, *whosoever looketh into himselfe, and considereth what he doth, when he does Think,*

² This phrase is usually “nosce te ipsum,” but we quote it the way Hobbes spelled it.

Opine, Reason, Hope, Feare, &c, and upon what grounds; he shall thereby read and know, what are the thoughts, and Passions of all other men, upon the like occasions. (Hobbes 1982; p. 3; emphasis added)

If the italicized portion sounds quite a bit like Tullock's "we understand how others feel or act because we know how we would act or feel under similar circumstances," it's likely not because he was quoting it from memory. Characteristically, there is no reference to *Leviathan* in Tullock's *Politics of Bureaucracy*.

1.1 Tullock as a political scientist

By any standard, Tullock was recognized by the discipline of political science as a member. He had formal appointments in Departments of Political Science at Rice (1967–1968) and Arizona (1987–1999). He was elected to the ruling Council of the American Political Science Association in 1970 for a 2-year term.³ And he was named as a "member" of the "American Political Science Review Hall of Fame" (Miller et al. 1996), based on the fact that two of his papers in the *APSR* (Tullock 1966a, 1975a) had received a total of more than 5500 citations in the professional literature. So it is tempting to say—and have done with it—that for one who was "self-taught," with no graduate training and no real training of any kind, Tullock was quite successful at being seen as a political scientist, by political scientists.

We are not going to do that. Instead, we will explore two ways in which we might think about the influence of Gordon Tullock in political science. One relates to Gordon's intellectual contribution, that is, the traction that his ideas have had, and continue to have, in political science. The second is to think about Gordon's *indirect* influence through the contributions he made—primarily in launching and editing the journal *Public Choice*—on the careers of other political scientists who have gone on to be highly influential in their own right. To do this, we consider three (admittedly suggestive) data sources that can help us (at least in principle) to gauge Tullock's impact (or lack thereof) on political science as a discipline. These arenas are: A. course syllabi; B. citations in political science journals; and C. careers of (now) famous political scientists launched by Tullock's journal, *Public Choice*.

2 Tullock's intellectual contributions

2.1 Course syllabi

Perhaps one of the most important avenues for scholarly influence works through socialization—specifically, the extent to which graduate students (and thus the next generation of scholars) are exposed to the work of a particular scholar. One way this often happens is through readings that graduate students complete in course work. Scholars whose work is regularly taught are far more likely to shape the views of a new

³ Yes, let's savor that. Gordon Tullock held elected office. However, he only served one term. Presumably he voted for himself, as he admonished others to do also (Tullock 1975b).

generation than those whose work rarely makes an appearance on course reading lists. Put differently, we suspect that the set of authors that scholars are exposed to as graduate students has a significant impact on how they view their fields, whose work they are likely to cite, etc. (We realize, of course, that there is a bit of a “chicken and egg” problem here: The work of influential scholars is much more likely to appear on course syllabi than the work of scholars who are not influential, because that’s one of the things that “influential” means in the first place.)

We were not optimistic about the penetration of the “public choice” approach generally on political science syllabi, partly because of the findings of a survey of graduate syllabi in American politics completed by one of the authors 25 years ago (Dow and Munger 1990). A recent paper (Simmons and Yonk 2015) suggests that little has changed since then: there are few textbooks that contain significant page counts devoted to public choice, and undergraduate courses in political science rarely spend class time on the public choice critique of standard political science.

Nevertheless, it might still be true that Tullock’s work does get some attention, even if public choice generally is given short shrift. To get a sense of the extent to which Tullock is included on syllabi for courses in political science, we used Google to search for syllabi for courses in political science that are available online, and include assigned readings by Tullock. Of course, this procedure has severe limits, and is likely to underestimate the prevalence of his works on assigned reading lists—many faculty do not publicly post their syllabi on the web. But it does provide at least an impression of the extent to which faculty are paying attention to Tullock. Moreover, there is no (apparent) reason to expect that the public availability of a syllabus should introduce selection bias. So while our survey is likely to underestimate the number of courses in which Tullock is taught, as well as the faculty members who teach him, we are likely to get a reasonably accurate picture of *which* of Tullock’s works are usually assigned in political science.

The finding of this exercise are revealing. Going back to 1999, we found syllabi for 63 courses by 57 faculty members who assign at least one work by Tullock. These syllabi include many from some of the most highly regarded political science departments in the country, including Yale, Washington University in St. Louis, Rochester, Michigan, UCLA, UC San Diego, Princeton, Harvard, Columbia, and Duke. Some of the faculty who include Tullock among their readings are highly visible in the discipline: Carles Boix, Christian Davenport, Robert Franzese, William Mishler, Scott Morgenstern, Pippa Norris, Elinor Ostrom, Melissa Schwartzberg, Ian Shapiro, Kaare Strom, and Keith Whittington. Perhaps more interesting is the nature of the courses in which Tullock is assigned. Not surprisingly, quite a few are courses in public choice or formal theory. However, graduate field seminars in comparative politics and American politics feature prominently, as do seminars in political institutions and legislative politics, and courses on civil conflict and revolution.

In Table 1, we detail *which* of Tullock’s works are assigned in these courses. What the table reveals is not—in some sense—surprising: By far the most common work by Tullock that is assigned in political science is *The Calculus of Consent*. But interestingly, his work on autocracy and revolution also gets some attention (including by highly prominent scholars teaching in these areas, including Carles

Table 1 Prevalence of Tullock works on political science syllabi

Title	Number of courses in which assigned
An economic theory of military tactics (1982)	1
Autocracy (1987)	4
Democracy as it really is (1994)	1
Government failure: A primer in public choice (2002)	2
On the trail of homo economicus (1994)	1
On voting: A public choice approach (1997)	1
Political ignorance (1967)	1
Public decisions as public goods (1971)	1
Social cost and government action (1969)	1
Some further thoughts on voting (2000)	1
The calculus of consent (1962)	41
The costs of special privilege (1990)	5
The edge of the jungle (1972)	1
The origin of the rent-seeking concept (2003)	1
The paradox of revolution (1971)	5
The political economy of rent-seeking (1988)	1
The politics of bureaucracy (1965)	1
The politics of persuasion (1967)	1
The social dilemma (1974)	1
The welfare costs of tariffs, monopoly, and theft (1967)	4
Toward a mathematics of politics (1967)	2
Toward a theory of the rent-seeking society (1980)	1
Trials on trial (1980)	1
Why so much stability (1981)	3

Alphabetical order by title; publication year in parentheses

Boix, Christian Davenport, and Kaare Strom). Finally, the last set of papers that appears to have some traction are central papers on rent-seeking. While a few other contributions make it onto the list, they are typically only assigned in one course. These results are, in some sense, sobering: Judging by these syllabi, the contributions by Tullock that students in political science are typically exposed to appear to be largely confined to three areas: his foundational work with James Buchanan in the *Calculus of Consent*, his work on autocracy and revolution, and his work on rent-seeking. Other contributions—including some that are highly relevant to political scientists are missing, such as his work on the vote motive, or his contributions to law and economics.

2.2 Citations in political science journals

Of course another dimension of a scholar's influence—and arguably the more important one—is the extent to which other scholars pay attention to the work in their own scholarship, and the extent to which the work shapes scholarly debates

Table 2 Citations of selected Tullock works in the *APSR*, *AJPS*, and *JOP*

Title	Number of citations
Autocracy (1987)	35
On voting: a public choice approach (1997)	2
Political Ignorance (1967)	0
The calculus of consent (1962)	148
The costs of special privilege (1990)	0
The paradox of revolution (1971)	14
The vote motive	1
The politics of bureaucracy (1965)	21
The welfare costs of tariffs, monopolies, and theft (1967)	12
Why so much stability (1981)	22

within its field. Citations are one indication of such influence. By any standards, Tullock counts as a giant in this regard. According to Google Scholar (which has broad coverage, since it also includes unpublished working papers), Tullock's work has garnered more than 36,000 citations to date—including over 9000 to *The Calculus of Consent* and more than 3500 to “The Welfare Costs of Tariffs, Monopolies, and Theft.” But of course we are not so much interested in the general influence of Tullock's work, but the extent to which his work has shaped discourse in political science. To explore this aspect, we focused our attention on getting a sense to which Tullock's work is cited in political science. Doing so in a comprehensive fashion isn't straightforward, so we adopted the approach of tracking citations to Tullock's work in the three most prominent journals in the discipline: *The American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and the *Journal of Politics*. Moreover, we focused attention on some of Tullock's publications that are most prominent on the syllabi reviewed above, and that should be of most relevance to political scientists.⁴ The results, displayed in Table 2, are, we would argue, shocking.

The single most cited work—by a long shot—is (unsurprisingly) *The Calculus of Consent*. Other works, including those that are of direct relevance to central questions in political science have garnered very few citations in the top political science journals. To provide some context for these numbers, in Table 3 we provide citations to some other prominent works (including in the public choice tradition) in the same three journals.

The message that emerges from the comparison of the two tables could not be clearer: Tullock's work has received short shrift in much of the work published in the most prestigious outlets in political science—especially compared to other work

⁴ Conducting such a search is not straightforward. We used Google Scholar's advanced search feature, searching for “Tullock” as well as the name of the publication, restricting the search to each of the three journals. The results are likely to be overinclusive: For example, searching for Tullock and *Autocracy* produces some search results to papers that are not actually citing the *Autocracy* book. Nevertheless, this procedure gives a ball park figure.

Table 3 Citations of selected other works in the *APSR*, *AJPS*, and *JOP*

Title	Number of citations
Mancur Olson, <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i> (1965)	466
William Riker, <i>The Theory of Political Coalitions</i> (1965)	175
Anthony Downs, <i>The Economic Theory of Democracy</i> (1957)	1000
Campbell, Converse, Miller, Stokes, <i>The American Voter</i> (1960)	737

in the same tradition. This is true despite the fact that Tullock took up core subjects of the discipline, and offered ideas that were often profound, and *should have* garnered the attention of political scientists. This is perhaps most disappointing in the literature on voter behavior, which appears to have largely missed Tullock's work on the incentives confronting voters with respect to the acquisition of accurate information, as well as the motivations underlying voter participation.

Why is so much of Tullock's work essentially ignored by political scientists? Surely one aspect are simple disciplinary boundaries: Although Tullock spent some time in political science departments, he was primarily an economist writing for other economists. It probably also did not help that Tullock returned the favor by largely ignoring the work of other scholars, as Kaufman so aptly pointed out with respect to Tullock's work on bureaucracy. Many of Tullock's papers are largely devoid of citations.

In noting this, we are not suggesting that Tullock's citation practices were either selfish or academically inadequate. He was perfectly willing to give credit to others, and often did so. But he was "out of step" with the norms of political science, which favor the inclusion of more extensive citations even in articles on narrow subjects. This is not the practice in economics, and never has been. As a result, while Tullock, given his prodigious reading and extensive library of political science literature, was well aware of the connections between his own work and related scholarship, these connections were often not apparent from reading his articles. Tullock followed the practice—common to scholars of economics and his generation—of citing only the work that was directly relevant or from which ideas were immediately borrowed. That style of writing, while appropriate for economics, made Tullock's work less likely to be accepted at political science journals, and less likely to be appreciated by political science scholars.

However, another aspect—perhaps more important—may be a function of Tullock's "method." In addition to a dearth of citations to others work, many of his papers are short in length as well as on details. Typically, papers were sparked by an intuition that provided Tullock with a deep and novel insight. But having sketched this insight, he often moved on without systematically developing his ideas. At least in part, this was almost certainly a consequence of the extraordinarily broad interests Tullock had. To illustrate, consider his 1972 paper on "The Edge of the Jungle."

In this paper, Tullock explores how the "discipline of continuous dealings" undergirds the fundamental institutions of social order—anticipating much of the work on repeated games that developed over the next twenty or so years. In the opening pages, Tullock lays out the problem of competition over scarce resources

with the example of a pride of lions. As Tullock observes, in this context, smaller lions often engage in threatening behavior towards larger lions in an attempt to secure food. As Tullock points out, such behavior can only successfully deter larger lions if the smaller lion is prepared to fight (at least on occasion) if the larger lion does not give way. But this is, of course, problematic: If the larger lion “calls the bluff,” engaging in the fight is likely to end badly for the smaller lion. So what leads smaller lions (sometimes) *not* to back down, and to fight? Tullock proposes an interesting solution:

The mechanism which makes this possible, I believe, is “loss of temper.” Individuals make threatening noises about things that they want for rational calculations. The actual serious fighting ... however, requires temporarily behaving in what is an irrational way. You threaten your opponent with irrational behavior on your part and the threat is indeed rational. Therefore, a built-in, hereditary reaction pattern such that you will, on occasion, behave irrationally may be quite rational in the long run (p. 311)

This passage anticipates, of course, one of the central insights of evolutionary psychology—“hard-wired” emotional responses can allow animals to engage in behavior that is evolutionarily advantageous but difficult to sustain if the behavior had to rely on “rational” decision-making in particular situations.

But after making an appearance in the opening pages of the paper in order to provide an explanation for the eruption of conflict among unequals, this insight is not developed further and disappears. Much later, other scholars hit upon the same insight, and developed it systematically—perhaps none more so than Robert Frank in his 1988 book *Passions within Reason: The Strategic Role of the Emotions*. Frank’s book has been cited close to 4300 times. Tullock’s original paper was cited 38 times (and is absent from Frank’s references).

Having opened with a pride of lions, Tullock then proceeds to a thought experiment built around a simple model of a society divided into a ruling group and a ruled group. Almost in passing, he observes that the fact that the ruling group exploits the labor of the ruled generates reasons for the ruling group to restrain its behavior towards the ruled—not because they are altruistically motivated, but because the discipline of continuous dealings implies that they can extract *more* over time if they regularize theft:

If the ruling group proposes the use of an efficient system of drawing funds from the ruled group, then it must set up some way of administering these transfers and of controlling individual members of the ruling group who might wish to exceed the standard...Note that the reasons that the ruling group has motives for preventing this individual depredation, or depredation at a level or according to a structure which is not optimal, is the discipline of continuous dealings. They are compelled, in motivating behavior on the part of the subjects which will eventually produce a maximum income to the rulers, to give themselves a pattern of behavior on which the subjects can depend (p. 318).

This insight—that even autocratic rulers have interests in the productivity of their citizens, and that this provides an endogenous (though limited) reason for

restraining the abuse of power—passes by quickly, and is not the central point of the paper.⁵ Once again, the intuition was eventually picked up by other scholars—for example, it became a central idea in Mancur Olson’s theory of the stationary bandit, which aims to explain the emergence of the state out of the transformation of roving bandits into stationary bandits. Olson systematically developed the idea already contained in Tullock’s essay—and in so doing, his argument became far more influential. Olson’s paper—published nearly 25 years later—has been cited more than 2800 times to date.

In other words, by bucking academic conventions regarding *how* to make a contribution, Tullock probably limited his influence. Because Gordon often did not systematically expand upon and develop his insights, he made it more difficult for others to find them, and to identify his work with them—which ultimately limited his impact. To be clear, we are not suggesting that Frank or Olson intentionally, or even negligently, failed to cite Tullock; we are quite confident that they would have been eager to do so. Rather, the point is that they were unaware of Tullock’s contribution. We should also note that we are not saying that there aren’t consistent themes in Gordon’s work—he obviously returned to particular issues and ideas throughout his career (most notably rent-seeking and the vote motive); rather, what we mean to highlight is that Gordon’s style of work—offering key insights in what we might call “hit and run” pieces on a breathtaking array of subjects—has, to some extent, limited the direct impact of the ideas.

There is at least one more explanation for the fact that Tullock’s work has had little citation impact in the main journals in political science, and this explanation is perhaps a bit darker. Several of Tullock’s early papers (certainly including, but not limited to, “The Charity of the Uncharitable” in 1971), contained a challenge to the prevailing ideological orthodoxy. One could say that this was true for much of the literature in public choice, of course, but Tullock’s work sometimes had an additional edge of overt confrontation.

In “The Charity of the Uncharitable,” Tullock claimed that virtually none of the redistribution observed in democratic systems could be described as “egalitarian,” and even went so far as to describe “urban renewal projects” and “subsidies to public education” as “scandalous.” For Tullock, the only way to understand programs of redistribution was as the transfer of resources from those with less political power to those with more political power. That kind of argument was consistent with the Olsonian interest group model, of course. But Tullock did more than describe the forces that led to this outcome. He accused those who used egalitarian arguments to justify actual patterns of redistribution of being (at best) dupes, and at worst overt and knowing beneficiaries of state-organized plundering operations. This opinion was (and is) rather far from the ideological orthodoxy in political science, and may have caused those who otherwise would have been interested in the work simply to dismiss it.⁶

⁵ Of course, this is also an argument that Tullock makes in *The Social Dilemma* (1974).

⁶ The authors thank participants at the Tullock Symposium for clarifying this point.

2.3 Careers launched

Public Choice was launched modestly, but also uniquely. The notion of self-publishing a journal would likely not occur to most people—especially in the days before personal computers and electronic publishing. But Tullock, being self-taught, had no idea how difficult it might prove, or what problems success would present.

The “Preface” to the first volume of *Papers in Non-Market Decision-Making* (the original title of the journal) provides insight into some of the reasons that founding a new journal seemed worthwhile. It was not because Tullock, or the other members of the nascent movement, had found it impossible to publish in mainstream journals. Looking at the publication record of the 1960s in fact shows that they had been both active and successful. Moreover, a number of books had been published, and had been influential in economics and political science. Tullock’s reasons seemed to have had more to do with two concerns. The first was a sense that there were at least some barriers to entry that were particular to work in this vein, and that disciplinary constraints would soon—though they had perhaps not to date—begin to bind progress. Second, and perhaps more importantly, Tullock recognized the distinct intellectual profile of the emerging public choice research program, and was concerned to provide an outlet that would collect significant contributions in a coherent and visible outlet. Doing so might make it easier for scholars to follow developments, and help to solidify a research community. In short, Tullock the intellectual visionary was at work. It is worth quoting at length from the beginning of the *Preface* (Tullock 1966b):

In recent years a number of people, mainly but not exclusively economists, have applied intellectual tools drawn from economics to noneconomic social phenomena. This movement has led to the publication of a number of books. It has also led to the production of articles and monographs. Unfortunately, it has been hard to get these shorter items published. The economic journals normally think that articles of political subjects are outside their field, and the editors of the political science journals tend to be opposed to the invasion of their discipline by outsiders with an exotic methodology. There have, of course, been exceptions. Articles applying essentially economic techniques to political problems have appeared in both political science and economic journals, but it is clear that they are much harder to get published than more traditional articles.

It is to remedy this situation that *Papers on Non-Market Decision Making* is being published. It would be hard to find a journal which would consider any of the articles printed here as directly in its field of concern. Editors do, of course, occasionally publish articles which are peripheral to the main interests of their journal, but the number of such articles they select is necessarily small. Further, the appearance of articles scattered through a large number of journals has meant that scholars interested in this new approach to politics frequently find it hard to keep abreast of new work, not because it is so voluminous, but because it is difficult to locate. It is hoped that *Papers on Non-Market Decision Making* will both provide an outlet for articles in this field of

research and make scholarship in the field easier by bringing articles on the subject together.

There are several remarkable aspects to this statement. First, there is a breathtaking arrogance and yet simultaneously a childlike naïveté in having the idea that enough people, and prominent people, would be willing to forego the kind of traditional publications that “count” in academia to send articles to a new journal that for all practical purposes is being edited out of a garage in Blacksburg, VA. The enterprise was clearly doomed.

Fortunately, Gordon was too arrogant, or naive, to recognize that the idea was doomed, and so of course it worked better than anyone could possibly have anticipated.⁷ Public choice, which “started as a revolutionary science...with time became a normal science” (Tullock 1993, p. 9), in large measure because it had a journal of record, a forum where ideas could be exposed to criticism and disputes aired before an increasingly well-informed intellectual community.

The original name, if Tullock (1991) can be believed at face value, was largely due to his desire to publish a paper called “Information without profit,” which was not economics but which (according to Tullock 1991; p. 121) was also “not what we now call ‘public choice.’” Tullock was frustrated that he could not get the paper accepted at a journal, even though he judged it to be “quite a superior” piece of work (Tullock 1991; p. 122). He had coffee at the Colonnade Club (at UVA) with the university printer, who quoted a price so low that Tullock resolved to pay it “out of my own pocket” (p. 122). A number of titles were apparently considered, including “Synergistics” and “Polenomics,” but were (thank goodness) rejected. As Tullock puts it, “The obvious title, ‘Political Economy,’ was barred partly by the fact that it was the old name of economics and partly by the fact that the Marxists were already beginning to claim that title as their own” (p. 122).

It turned out that the UVA economics department was able to foot the bill for the journal, but only because R.H. Coase, who had been lobbying hard for the entire support budget of the department to be given to him (Coase), was turned down by Buchanan. The details of this disagreement (described by Tullock 1991, as a consequence of Tullock’s own suggestion that economists seek grants from each other) are amusing, but would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that the departmental research money was distributed in an (uncharacteristic) egalitarian fashion, and Tullock was able to start the journal.

It was clearly difficult to manage the technical aspects of the journal, given the increasingly complex requirements of academic work and typesetting equations.⁸ A transition to Martinus Nijhoff was engineered in 1978, after “a man walked into my office” and said that they would like to take over the journal. Tullock said (p. 126),

⁷ The story of the origins and early days of the journal are told in a way that is amusing and self-deprecating in Tullock (1991).

⁸ Tullock tells this story on himself (Tullock 1991, p. 124): “an equation-rich article by James Coleman got printed without any of the pluses or minuses that were supposed to be there. Since Coleman was a former professional heavyweight boxer, I was, needless to say, disturbed by this but I’m happy to say that I was able to keep out of his way until his temper cooled. In any event, as those of you who know him are aware he is an equitable man and he did not get terribly angry. I, of course, distributed lengthy corrigenda immediately.”

“I naturally agreed,” though in retrospect he should have asked for considerably more money, or perhaps entertained a relationship with the Society rather than simply transferring the journal. Still, it was his journal, not the Society’s, and he had every right to play the hand as he saw fit.

In 1974 the journal had gone to four annual issues, and the editorial office (Tullock’s desk) was receiving a steady stream of papers. Tullock said, “I think I was getting more people promoted, but once again I do not think that there was any decline in the average quality of the journal even though there were more articles being printed. It was, however, becoming somewhat more routine as the field itself became more routine” (Tullock 1991; p. 128). More routine, perhaps, but also rather more prominent. To get a sense of the journal’s impact in this regard, we sought to identify some of the scholars in political science, economics, and elsewhere, who

Table 4 Prominent authors published in public choice, 1966–1985

John Aldrich*	Stuart Nagel*
James Alt*	Richard Niemi*
Ken Arrow***	William Niskanen
Nathaniel Beck*	Joseph Oppenheimer*
Peter Bernholz	Peter Ordeshook*
Duncan Black	Elinor Ostrom*,***
Mark Blaug	Vincent Ostrom*
Steven Brams*	Charles Plott
Randall Calvert*	Adam Przeworski*
Donald Campbell	Anatol Rapoport
James Coleman**	William Riker*
Robert Cooter**	Thomas Romer
Louis DeAlessi	Howard Rosenthal*
Allan Feldman	Daniel Rubinfeld
John Ferejohn*	Ariel Rubinstein
Bruno Frey	Paul Samuelson***
Bernard Grofman*	Mark Satterthwaite
Russell Hardin*	Norman Schofield*
Jack Hirshliefer	Thomas Schwartz*
Michael Intrilligator	Amartya Sen***
Gary Jacobson*	Kenneth Shepsle*
William Keech*	Martin Shubik
Finn Kydland***	George Stigler***
Mathew McCubbins*	Michael Taylor*
Daniel McFadden	David Weimer
Richard McKelvey*	Barry Weingast*
Gary Miller*	Herbert Weissberg*
Nicholas Miller*	W.P. Welch
James Mirlees	Aaron Wildavsky*
Herve Moulin	Oliver Williamson***
Dennis Mueller	

Alphabetical order

* Political Scientists

** Neither Economics/Political Science

*** Nobelists

may have been benefitted in the early phases of their careers from publications in *Public Choice*, and were also critical (in hindsight) in establishing the public choice research program. To do so, we did a qualitative survey of some of the important researchers who were published in the journal between the first issue in 1966 and (as an arbitrary cutoff) 1985.

The results are presented in Table 4. The list is impressive indeed—and contains virtually *all* the prominent names associated in political science with the public choice/rational choice tradition. Of course, many of these scholars were at the *outset* of their careers in the 1960's and 1970's, and their papers in *Public Choice* were among their first publications.⁹ Put differently, Tullock had a keen sense for talent—a sense also displayed in the first editorial board. The board included only seven names: William Riker, Mancur Olson, Anthony Downs, John Harsanyi, Duncan Black, James Coleman, and James Buchanan. No fluff there.

3 Conclusion

Gordon Tullock was one of the intellectual giants of the social sciences in the twentieth century. His flaw as a political scientist was also his virtue: He mostly “read himself.” This was often frustrating to “real” political scientists, who looked for signposts and markers in literature they recognized, answering questions that had been asked before. But that was not Tullock's approach, as this passage from one of his earlier books demonstrates:

Leaving aside the problem of the correctness of my answers, the fact remains that I have been unable to find any indications that scientists have asked the questions to which I address myself. The unwary might take this as proof that the problems are unimportant, but scientists, fully conscious of the importance of asking new questions, will not make this mistake. (Tullock 1966c; p. 3; cited in Congleton 2004)

It is tempting to read this passage as something like Rousseau's (1754; Part I) famously dismissive, “Let us begin then by laying facts aside, as they do not affect the question,” but that would be a mistake. Rousseau proposed a theory of a world that does not exist, based on claims about ideal theory; Tullock proposed an approach that asked fresh questions of the world *as it actually appeared*, taking self-interest and imperfection as givens.

Moreover, Tullock's impact extends beyond the direct influence of his ideas (which were formidable) to his legacy as an academic entrepreneur. His energy and vision in building institutions like the journal *Public Choice* as well as the Public Choice Society enabled and advanced the careers of a host of scholars whose joint impact in economics, political science, and law has been transformative.

That said, explicit recognition of Tullock in political science's mainstream (that is, beyond the narrow set of scholars who identify with the public choice tradition)

⁹ The appendix to this paper collects short recollections from a number of the political scientists on this list.

has been limited. This is particularly true given the fact that some of Tullock's central insights speak directly to the heart of core concerns in political science. The good news is that because Tullock's work was concerned with these overarching, fundamental issues—like the behavior of voters in democratic regimes, and the nature of constitutional systems—it continues to be of relevance. And because it is so wide-ranging, and contains so many nuggets that Tullock himself never fully explored and worked out, much remains to be discovered and mined by others. Perhaps then there is still hope that Tullock will—though belatedly—receive more explicit recognition in a discipline that ought to be eager to claim him as part of its pantheon.

In 1961, Tullock edited a version of *A Practical Guide for Ambitious Politicians*, a slender book (also called “Walsingham's Manual”) that was often printed, but whose author remained anonymous. In his introduction, Tullock noted that this anonymity (as well as discretion in admitting knowledge of the book by readers) was prudent precisely because of the accurate, and therefore unflattering, insights into courtly politics it provides:

A man trying to rise at court can most assuredly profit from reading it, but if he expresses approval or even intimates that he has read it, his rivals may use this fact to injure him. If courtiers follow our author's recommendations, they must conceal their real motives and methods.... The book is too faithful a portrait of the ambitious and unscrupulous courtier to bear inspection by his prince. If the name of the author had not been concealed, his career could have been ruined by any one of his rivals who took the trouble to read a few selected passages to the ruler. (P. vii)

Unlike the anonymous author of the *Guide*, Tullock never learned to conceal his motives or his methods. For those of us who admire his work all the more for this reason, it is nonetheless possible to understand why this fact has limited his impact. Tullock's work is “too faithful a portrait” of politics to be fully acceptable to political science.

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Appendix: Political scientists remember Gordon Tullock

Steve Brams

I always found Gordon a prickly but stimulating character. He and Jim Buchanan invited me to talk about a paper in Blacksburg in the early 1970s, which later appeared as an article with Bill Riker, “Models of Coalition Formation in Political Science.” This article was published in *Mathematical Applications in Political Science*, VI (1972), which was one of my early publications that we would have had

difficulty publishing elsewhere. The same holds for other articles of mine that appeared in *Public Choice*, beginning in 1974.

Gordon had an opinion on all sorts of things, which he was quite willing to express. My coauthors and I had two exchanges in print with him in the *APSR*, once after my article with Riker, “The Paradox of Vote Trading,” appeared in 1974, and another time after my article with Peter Fishburn, “Approval Voting,” appeared in 1978. In the first case, Gordon was not happy that vote trading, which he and Buchanan had championed in *The Calculus of Consent*, could give a Pareto-nonoptimal outcome. In the second case, his animus seems a little more obscure—perhaps against the moderates that approval voting might elect, perhaps because it went against the grain of making unanimous consent a property of good decisions.

Ironically, Gordon’s dissent from (or may outrage with) our findings drew attention to our articles that they might not otherwise have received. Others later chimed in, both pro and con, so we probably benefited from the attention the controversies that Gordon provoked caused.

Bernie Grofman

I do indeed have very special memories of Gordon’s profound influence on my early career. My first submitted paper was my MA thesis (on which Duncan Black was an external reader, while he was visiting at the University of Chicago). While still a graduate student at the University of Chicago, I submitted that to *Papers on Non-Market Decision-Making*, the original title of *Public Choice*, and it was eventually accepted by Gordon after the third round of revision. As you know, in those days, Gordon was not just the editor he was the sole reviewer. Knowing that I was still a graduate student he was incredibly encouraging, giving me feedback after my first submission and then after resubmission, and encouraging me to try yet again. But Gordon’s influence on my early career does not end there. In 1970 Tullock had been asked by the President of APSA to write an essay analyzing the APSA Presidential and Council elections, and his (co-authored) analysis of the 1970 election was published in *PS* in 1971. He was asked to do it a second time, but opted out; instead he asked me whether I would like to write such an essay on the next APSA election. I delightedly said yes. I was still not yet a Ph.D., but I had already accepted a position as an Instructor at SUNY Stony Brook—a job that having an already—published article in *Papers* certainly helped me get. APSA provided me with a computer tape that had the images of the actual election ballots on it (with all voter identification stripped away) in a readable format. I believe my 1972 essay in *PS* on “The 1971 APSA Election” was one of the first computer analyses of raw ballot data at the individual level for a real world relatively large-scale election. I was able to do what were, for the time, some very innovative things, such as looking at the number of unique ballot patterns and looking at conditional vote probabilities across candidates and offices. Without Gordon’s having nominated me, there is no way that I, an unknown graduate student just starting his political science career, could possibly have been chosen to do the analysis of an APSA election. At the time he nominated me to do the APSA analysis, we had still not ever met. He knew me only from correspondence. In short, while I later observed Gordon to be often gruff and

combative in person, and one who regularly emphasized the limited role that altruism played in the real world, I have direct evidence that he could also be one of the kindest people around.

Bill Keech

Gordon Tullock was an editor who felt that his judgment was better than that of anyone else. He may well have been right, and this stance worked in my favor. One wonders how he would have explained his practice in terms of the insights of public choice.

Mat McCubbins

I met Gordon Tullock at the Public Choice Meetings in 1983. He was outspoken, energetic, curious, and engaging. I felt honored to meet him as fresh-faced PhD. I used the *Calculus of Consent* and the *Politics of Bureaucracy* in my classes then, and I still do. We interacted at meetings, and I dealt with him often when he was editor of *Public Choice*. As editor, he encouraged the discipline to engage with the question of “why so much stability?” He was also a fine mentor, who helped me, and many others I knew, to bring out their best ideas in the pages of *Public Choice*. Few editors I have known have been so helpful and delightful to deal with. I had not spoken to him in years and I was sad to hear of his passing in 2014.

Gary Miller

Gordon had an enormous influence on the publication of my first political science paper—on bureaucracy and game theory. This was not exactly a “hot” topic back when Carter was president. Gordon’s encouragement meant a lot to me, and his professionalism as an editor gave me faith that the political science discipline was large enough and flexible enough to encompass my idiosyncratic interests.

Nicholas Miller

By 1972, when I first (unsuccessfully) submitted a paper to *Public Choice*, the journal had a secondary editor (first Peter Ordeshook and later Ken Shepsle) who handled more “mathematical” (essentially social choice related) submissions. Peter or Ken handled all of my various submissions in the 1970s, so I actually never dealt directly with Tullock as PC editor. Incidentally, Peter and Ken used a regular referee process, whereas of course Tullock typically made decisions on his own, and he usually did so within no more than 48 h. I recall that PCS folks would observe that Tullock didn’t necessarily disagree with the principle that journal editors should get reviews from the world’s foremost experts on the topic of a submission, but that 95 % of the time he determined that expert was himself.

I do remember a few other interactions with Tullock, however. First, when I visited VPI (as it was then generally known) as a job candidate (in the Political Science department) in March 1971, I asked to visit the Public Choice Center.

Gordon welcomed me, showed me around, and introduced me to Duncan Black (who was visiting at the time), with whom I was able to talk for 20 min or so. I also remember that Tullock was recruited to drive me from Blacksburg to the Roanoke airport. (I was heading from there to my job interview at UMBC.)

Second, in December 1973, I sent Tullock a copy of “Logrolling and the Arrow Paradox” (which would become my first publication) that I had just submitted to *Public Choice* through Ordeshook, as I thought it might interest him. I didn’t necessarily expect a reply, but I received quite long and detailed letter in reply, which he must have prepared (much like his editorial decisions) more or less instantaneously. (My letter was dated December 19 and his reply December 19.) As I recall, I sent him several other things (including a copy of my dissertation) as well in those early years and that he always responded promptly and in an encouraging way.

A final remembrance is more recent. In 2002, I sent written comments to Bob Erikson on a paper on “Voting on Many Issues, One at a Time” that he had presented at the *Public Choice* Meetings. I wrote: “It struck me that Gordon Tullock made an argument along the same lines many, many years ago. Yesterday, I checked some of his stuff and confirmed my recollection. In Chapter 2 of his book *Toward a Mathematics of Politics*, based on what he calls “pencil [and compass] exercises”, Tullock concludes that it is “obvious” that “if the number of dimensions is [equal to or] less than the number of individuals minus one,” the Pareto region will assume one form, which will change as the $N-1$ threshold is crossed. This chapter is vintage Tullock. He reaches insightful conclusions based on sheer intelligence undisciplined by formal analysis or (despite the title of this book) mathematics, doing this years or decades before the Ordeshooks, McKelveys, or Eriksons, etc., of the world pin them down rigorously (and show that Tullock got things more or less right). This is pattern is particularly exemplified by Tullock’s next chapter “The General Irrelevance of the General Impossibility Theorem,” which argues that majority cycling and a two-dimensional space is unlikely to be much of a problem with many voters. And in passing, Tullock essentially defined the “yolk” years before formal theorists did.

Ken Shepsle

From 1975 to 1980 I served as the “mathematical political science” editor of *Public Choice*. Gordon was the overall editor. This meant that I was responsible for one of the four issues published each year. Peter Ordeshook has preceded me in this capacity.

This was, I believe, an act of generosity on Gordon’s part (but not entirely selfless). Gordon very much wanted this part of the public choice community to prosper, even though it really wasn’t *his* part. He was in the business, along with the other founders, of assembling an intellectual coalition, and the modelers in political science were an important part of that. He gave a young pup like me complete discretion over editorial matters for that one issue. (And, I might brag, nearly every year a paper from my issue won the Duncan Black Prize, the most notable of which was Romer and Rosenthal’s famous paper.)

Barry Weingast

The early 1980s were a very productive time for me, with many on-going strands of research. My 1981 *Public Choice* paper with Shepsle represented one of these strands.

Tullock had published his paper, “Why so much stability?” that became a touchstone for the literature. He posed exactly the right question, and Shepsle and I wrote one of several papers that Tullock published on this topic. We titled our paper, “Structure-induced equilibrium and legislative choice.” I believe this paper won the prize for the best paper in *Public Choice* that year.

This paper, along with Shepsle’s 1979 paper, “Institutional arrangements and equilibrium in multidimensional voting models,” helped validate the idea of structure-induced equilibrium as a means of understanding how institutions solved the problem of cycling. This approach served as the basis for a great many works, including Krehbiels 1988 Pivotal politics (although Keith does not mention the concept). Cycles in preferences still existed, but institutions prevented a legislature from continuing to cycle. Our paper also highlighted the central importance of agenda institutions. Institutions that control the agenda play a major role in shaping legislative outcomes.

So, we can say that the series of papers that Tullock published on “why so much stability?” had a significant impact on how political scientists studied legislatures.

For Shepsle and me, this line of research culminated in the publication of our 1987 APSR paper, “The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power.” Two other papers in the series were our 1984 AJPS paper on the “uncovered set” and a 1984 JOP paper on, “When do Rules of Procedure Matter?”

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