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Employment

Associate Professor, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2007-present

Assistant Professor, University of Colorado-Boulder, 2000-2007

Education

Doctor of Philosophy, (Political Science) University of Houston, 2000

Bachelor of Arts with University Honors (German Area Studies): University of Houston, 1993

Research

BOOKS

[Baird, Vanessa A. 2007. *Answering the Call of the Court: How Justices and Litigants Set the Supreme Court Agenda*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.](#)

PEER REVIEWED ARTICLES

[Baird, Vanessa, and Jennifer Wolak. "Why Some Blame Politics for Their Personal Problems." *American Politics Research* \(2021\): 1532673X211013463.](#)

According to an algorithm created by Altmetrics, this paper is the 20th most influential Political Science article published in 2021 (out of 197590 papers). The *Altmetric Attention Score* is designed to measure the attention an article receives, from other academic sources, but also weighs quite heavily the representation of articles in the news media. The article was written up in *Psych News Daily*, and has been tweeted 256 times from 253 users, with an upper bound of 1,071,782 followers. 88% of tweets were by members of the public, and 9% were other scientists.

Here is the Psych News Daily article.

<https://www.psychnewsdaily.com/people-low-in-self-esteem-and-control-are-more-likely-to-blame-their-personal-problems-on-politics/>

Here is the Altmetric website that notes the top 50 articles in 2021.

<https://oior.org/trend.php?category=polisci&year=2021>

- [Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. 2013. "Institutional Persuasion to Support Minority Rights in Russia" *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 21, 1: 33-58.](#)
- [Liu, Amy and Vanessa A. Baird. 2012. "Linguistic Recognition as a Source of Confidence in the Judicial System." *Comparative Political Studies*, 20 \(10\): 1-27.](#)
- [Javeline, Debra and Vanessa A. Baird. 2011. "The Surprisingly Nonviolent Aftermath of the Beslan School Hostage Taking." *Problems of Post-Communism*, 58\(4-5\): 3-22.](#)
- [Fitzgerald, Jennifer, and Vanessa A. Baird. 2011. "Taking a Step Back: Teaching Critical Thinking by Distinguishing Appropriate Types of Evidence". *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44\(3\) 619-624.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. 2010. "The Effects of National and Local Funding on Judicial Performance: Perceptions of Russia's Lawyers." *Law and Society Review* 44\(2\): 331-64.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. and Tonja Jacobi. 2009. How the Dissent Becomes the Majority: Using Federalism to Transform Coalitions in the U.S. Supreme Court, *Duke Law Review* 59 \(November; 2\): 183-238.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. and Tonja Jacobi. 2009. Judicial Agenda Setting through Signaling and Strategic Litigant Responses." *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy* 29: 215-239.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. 2007. "The Persuasive Power of Russian Courts," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 60 \(3\): 429-42.](#)
- [Javeline, Debra and Vanessa A. Baird. 2007. "Who Sues Government? Evidence from the Moscow Theater Hostage Case," *Comparative Political Studies* 40 \(July\): 858-85.](#)
- [McLaren, Lauren, and Vanessa A Baird. 2006. "Of Time and Causality: A Simple Test of the Requirement of Social Capital in Making Democracy Work in Italy," *Political Studies* 54 \(December\): 889-897.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. and Amy Gangl. 2006. "Shattering the Myth of Legality: The Impact of the Media's Framing of Supreme Court Procedures on Perceptions of Fairness," *Political Psychology* 27 \(August\): 597-614.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. 2004. "The Effect of Politically Salient Decisions on the U.S. Supreme Court's Agenda," *Journal of Politics* 66 \(August\): 755-72.](#)
- [Baird, Vanessa A. 2001. "Building Institutional Legitimacy: The Role of Procedural Justice," *Political Research Quarterly*, 54 \(June\): 333-54.](#)
- [Gibson, James L., Gregory A. Caldeira and Vanessa A. Baird. 1998. "On the Legitimacy of National High Courts," *American Political Science Review*, 92 \(June\): 343-358.](#)

The first version of this article was my Data I paper (the first paper I wrote in graduate school). Initially, I focused on just East and West Germany, but Jim and Greg invited me to be their

coauthor and test the hypothesis with a wider set of countries. In 2020, it received the Lasting Contribution Award from American Political Science Association's Law and Courts Section from 2020. It has 899 citations and counts as one of the most cited papers in the subfield of law and courts.

[Baird, Vanessa, and Alan Stone. 1998. "Why Privatization: The Case of German Telecommunications," *Social Science Quarterly*, 79 \(March\): 193 – 211.](#)

NEW PROJECTS WITH UNDERGRADUATES IN 2022

Ford, Brett and Vanessa Baird. Using doctrinal ideology of a case to measure aggregate Supreme Court ideology over time. Status: Will be presented at the 2023 MPSA.

Using the most recent version of the Supreme Court database, we argue that we ought to use the updated version of the measure of the doctrinal ideology of a case instead of what is currently used: percent liberal of reversals. We explain why reversals were an improvement over using all cases, but we also show in this paper that some assumptions about why this was improved are not empirically sound. The argument for using only reversals depends on two assumptions: litigants in some cases place the question in a different place on an ideological continuum than litigants in other cases, and 2) petitioners are likely rational. We show that the first assumption is valid but that the second is not. We attempt to show the validity of our measure by looking at over time and across policy area illustrations.

[Gendhill, Lauren, Courtney Nava, and Vanessa A. Baird. **When an Internal Locus of Control Unravels and Produces Health Risk-Taking in the Early Stages of COVID-19.** Status: Submitted to *Social Science and Medicine*.](#)

Using a nationally representative sample in the summer and fall of 2020, investigated the relative merits of self-efficacy and internal locus of control from the literature on the health behavior model (HBM) for the decision to take COVID-19 seriously. While testing the robustness of the effects, however, we found that this effect does not apply to all people equally: among Republicans, an external locus of control made people more serious about taking COVID precautions. Looking back at the literature, we found that researchers identified a limited set of circumstances in which an internal locus of control can lead to overconfidence, a sense of invulnerability, or a sense of wanting to appear strong, which then might undermine a sense that one must be proactive about health (e.g. adolescent decision-making and other risk-taking behaviors of drivers or pilots). This effect is less likely to be true of self-efficacy which has more to do with themselves and less to do with external actors. With this idea in mind, we tested a new set of hypotheses and found that for risk takers, and who have reason to be less fearful, the more internal the locus of control, the more careful they were about COVID. For who have reason to be fearful, they take COVID seriously when they have more external locus of control. Given these findings, scholars ought to expand our understanding of the

mechanisms by which internal locus of control translates into a person taking their health seriously.

In 2022, we also submitted new questions and an experimental vignette that we pre-registered to further nail down the causal inferences from the 2022 data.

[Coley, Mackayla, and Vanessa A. Baird. The Impact of Single Parent Household on Interpersonal Trust and Confidence in Institutions. Status: will be presented at 2023 MPSA.](#)

Using the ANES and General Social Surveys of 2020, our paper shows that single parents have much lower levels of interpersonal trust and support for political institutions, particularly support for judicial institutions. This work challenges conventional wisdom put forward by Robert Putnam that argues that low social capital causes teenage births. Instead, inspired by work by Jamila Michener, we argue that Putnam has it the other way around: the daily humiliation of single parents by the political system and low access to social supports, single parents become alienated from normal access to social and political institutions, which then causes lower levels of aggregate social capital in those areas. We have an extensive policy analysis to suggest what can be done about this phenomenon.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Barwick, Corey and Vanessa A. Baird. Human Psychology and the Transition from Violence to the Rule of Law

This book project uses data from the 2016 and 2020 CCES (and now can include a survey experiment from the 2022 CCES) to understand what makes people support the rule of law, focusing on what makes people support even unjust laws but also looking at what makes people believe that political violence is acceptable. This psychological account looks particularly at explanations that allowed the transition from violence as the state of society to one that makes people accept potentially disagreeable political outcomes versus the hope that they can get what they want through violent means. Many accounts of support for constitutional democracies involve the success of socialization. We look at attributes of people that would have made them support the transition before socialization took root.

In the calendar year of 2022, I made extensive progress toward a final draft of this book. It is now 250 pages, includes support for violence. I am still working on the front and back end to respond to comments from reviewers on related article manuscript submissions.

Barwick, Corey and Vanessa A. Baird. On the Nature of the Rule of Law. Status: rejected from Law and Society Review

Using data from the 2016 CCES, this paper investigates the sources of support for the rule of law. Weaving together previous work on identity and procedural justice, threat and political tolerance, the locus of control and moral disengagement, we argue that support for the rule of law can be explained by some of the ways people see themselves vis-à-vis society. In particular, we find that when people's sense of themselves is insecure or threatened, support for the law unravels. Yet, we also find that certain identity insecurities, such as a sensitivity to social norms, make the idea of the law more appealing. The analysis corroborates decades of research showing that support for the law is connected to other democratic norms, and that education can strengthen the connection between the abstract rule of law and some concrete applications. In the end, the findings offer some speculative insights into some of the puzzles in other areas of legal culture.

[Barwick, Corey and Vanessa A. Baird. Non-material suffering and support for political violence. Status: Presented at Midwest Political Science Association meeting, April 2022. Status: revision.](#)

Using data from the 2020 CCES, this paper investigates the sources of support for several forms of politically motivated violence: protest violence, vigilante violence, and (illegitimate) police violence. Findings suggest that non-economic factors are the primary drivers of this support: negative emotions, an external locus of control (Bandura, 2015) and personality (dogmatism and a lower sense of empathy, and optimism) predicts higher support for violence, while support for the rule of law and other democratic norms strongly reduce violent tendencies. Findings also provide a clue for why economic factors do not always predict outbreaks of various forms of violence: many of these non-economic factors seem to be "activated" by economic grievances. A corollary of this is that the absence of economic grievances reduce the impact of negative life experiences and personality. The analysis suggests that when people's expectations about their life, status, and social identity are violated, they support violence at higher levels. Interestingly, racial or ethnic group identity reduces support for violence among non-whites, but among whites, such an identity increases support for violence. That, combined with the inference from the external locus of control, suggests that when people are empowered to influence the electoral system or in their own lives, they do not support violence.

Baird, Vanessa A. and Jennifer Wolak. The Empowering Force of Social Identity Attachments for Protecting Democratic Norms and Rejecting Violence.

Using data from the 2020 and 2022 CCES, this paper challenges the conventional wisdom that those with higher identity attachments are more willing to support violence for their political opponents. While there is some preliminary evidence that strong partisan identity encourages violence, our results show that party attachments significantly reduce violence, regardless of how it is measured. Moreover, racial, class, and political identity, whether measured as the salience of identity attachment, or their perception of linked fate, reduces support for every kind of violence and increases attachment to other norms of democracy, such as protest

liberties, support for the U.S. Supreme Court, and for the rule of law more generally. Status: analysis.

Jenny and I are presenting this paper at the 2023 MPSA. I preregistered our survey vignette.

Nadarevic, Sinan and Vanessa A. Baird. The Dark Side of Empathy and Optimism in the Rejection of Democratic Norms and Support for Violence.

While conventional wisdom suggests that as a person is more trusting, optimistic, and empathetic, they are more accepting of the rights of their fellow man and more opposed to optimism, newer literature suggests that there are correlates of these personal traits that can lead to negative results. Our results show that when a person has reasons to be disappointed in their personal life, that optimism and empathy can lead to increased support for violence and lower support for other democratic norms. Empathy can translate into higher outgroup hostility, for instance, for people with high levels of group connections, suggesting that they support violence to protect in-groups. Moreover, optimistic people who are doing well in their personal lives are generous with regard to liberty for their fellow man, those who have been disappointed – particularly in non-economic ways – are much less generous. As an example, optimistic people who have been through a recent divorce have some of the highest acceptance for political violence – of all kinds. These findings not only emphasize that scholars ought to expand their usual set of variables associated with political attitudes and economic conditions, but also point to the importance of violated expectations in a people's personal lives.

Law and Economics

[Baird, Vanessa A. and Douglas Rice. Why the Supreme Court Cannot Make Liberal Economic Policy: The Effect of Profit Minded Litigants' Strategies on the Supreme Court's Agenda.](#)

Status: Measurement portion of this paper will be presented as its own paper at 2023 MPSA, by Brett Ford, undergraduate student.

This paper offers an explanation for why the Supreme Court's economic agenda has been primarily conservative historically. It hands down liberal economic cases from time to time but has few eras where legal change builds case by case, such as we have seen in free speech or civil rights. This paper builds on findings from Baird (2004, 2007) that show that the Supreme Court's agenda varies with Justices' policy priorities from four to six years before, with the argument that future cases took that long to reach the Court. Yet incentives vary across different kinds of litigants, complicating the story; when the Court is perceived to be liberal, corporate interests are far more likely to be risk averse than other interests and may be more likely to settle or even fail to answer a suit by simply being more likely to accept the other party's terms. Thus, important economic cases that might alter public law in a liberal direction are not among the cases from which Justice choose to decide. This means that the Supreme Court is institutionally incapacitated to protect consumers, workers, or the environment. Even a

liberal Court will be hindered in its ability to reverse course from previous economic conservative decisions because it will lack a sufficient number of cases to promote such legal change.

Pedagogy

[Textbook. An introduction to statistics for causal inquiry: historical illustrations from the social, health, and life sciences.](#) Status: new chapters on comparative case studies and exogeneity written.

[Grant Proposal to test efficacy of learning assessments. NSF. Status: Based on preliminary feedback from NSF, we are waiting to publish other work before pursuing a large data collection effort.](#)

[Grant Proposal to test whether curriculum and learning assessments increase intellectual humility.](#) Status: submitted to [Templeton](#).

Baird, Vanessa A. Pedagogical Grant to Create Multimedia Illustrations of Concepts in Constitutional Law to Improve Distance Learning During COVID-19. Institute of Humane Studies. Status: Rejected. [Examples of illustrations that I created in the past.](#)

[Baird, Vanessa A. Improving Textbooks for Teaching Critical Thinking. Status: Revise and Resubmit, National Teaching and Learning Forum. Wiley.](#)

Textbooks that present information as a set of facts to be learned, independent from the epistemology of scholarly inquiry, might undermine critical thinking. Instead, textbooks ought to begin by introducing disciplinary methodological standards of how research is criticized. Then, knowledge of specific subject matter in following chapters should be presented in the format of a sequence of discovery: how what we know now depends on the critiques of previous research. Students can then apply the principles of critical thinking and disciplinary standards, in a way that is akin to “training wheels.” More creative textbook formats might enable faculty to be more effective at teaching and assessing critical thinking, given resource limitations in large undergraduate lecture courses.

[Baird, Vanessa A. Why We Should Teach Critical Thinking \(and Writing\) Without Assigning Essays: A Preliminary Guide, resubmitted to the Journal of Political Science Education](#)

The purpose of this essay is to reflect on some problems in our current way of teaching undergraduates and to present some preliminary tools to get them from where I perceive that they are to where I want them to be. I am hoping these tools will help make undergraduate education more equitable, more effective at assessing and evaluating information, and better at teaching writing skills. I am also hoping these assessment tools, as they are developed and shared, will also be easier on untenured professors who are dedicated teachers and researchers and on those who teach larger introductory courses.

Political Theory

Baird, Vanessa A. Ditching Justice: Testing Hobbes' Theories in Contemporary Political, Social, and Legal Psychology.

Hobbes tells us to give up on justice because it leads to 'competition for honor and dignity,' which leads to 'envy and hatred, and finally war.' The evidence that people's "honor and dignity" are more supported by fair procedures than fair outcomes (Tyler, et al. 2007) would probably surprise Hobbes, as would the evidence of the high support for even unjust laws and unfair legal institutions. On the other hand, when people do not identify with the dominant group in society, their dignity is not supported by fair procedures, and they are less likely to accept disagreeable outcomes. Extrapolating from this, I argue that Hobbes' advice about ditching justice in our political deliberations is even more important. Appealing to justice or the truth in our political deliberations ("I am right - you are wrong;" "You are racist - I am not,") likely undermine a person's honor and dignity could force them to seek alternative separationist identities, based on ethnic, racial or party lines where their self-esteem can be bolstered. This, in turn, could lead to lower support for disagreeable democratic procedures and laws that are perceived as unjust.

BOOK CHAPTERS

Gibson, James L., and Vanessa A. Baird. 1997. "Legitimacy of the United States Supreme Court: A Conceptual and Empirical Analysis." In *Perspectives on American and Texas Politics: A Collection of Essays*. Edited by Donald S. Lutz, Kent L. Tedin, and Edward P. Fuchs. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1997. Pp. 89-113.

BOOK REVIEWS

Designing Democracy: What Constitutions Do, Cass Sunstein. Law and Politics Book Review, 12 (May 2002): 246-249.

The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model, Revisited, Jeffrey Segal and Harold Spaeth. Journal of Politics, forthcoming.

SERVICE PUBLICATIONS

Baird, Vanessa A. 2009. Advice to New Faculty and Young Faculty for Prospering in the Field of Judicial Politics. Law and Courts: Newsletter of the Law and Courts Section of the American Political Science Association, 19 (2: spring): 7-8.

Baird, Vanessa A. 2008. Research Spotlight: Merging Phase I and Phase II of the United States Supreme Court Judicial Database. Law and Courts: Newsletter of the Law and Courts Section of the American Political Science Association, 19 (1: Winter): 17-18.

GRANTS*

Research - External

Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. After Violence: Participation over Retaliation in Beslan, proposal submitted to The National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, February 2008; status: funded (\$67,000).

Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. Political Responses to Tragedy: Citizen Participation after Beslan, proposal submitted to Kellogg, June 2006; status: funded (\$10,000).

Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. University of Notre Dame's Institute for Scholarship in the Liberal Arts, Pilot Fund for Social Sciences, "Political Responses to Tragedy: Citizen Participation After Beslan," matched by University of Notre Dame's Office of Research, 2006 (\$30,000).

Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. University of Notre Dame's Nanovic Institute, Collaborative Research Grant, survey research workshop to develop and refine questionnaire for "Political Responses to Tragedy: Citizen Participation After Beslan," 2006 (\$4,000).

Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. United States Agency for International Development, three-year study of attitudes of Russian public, judicial professionals, and NGO leaders toward the Russian judicial system, 2002-04 (\$389,527).

Baird, Vanessa A. and Debra Javeline. National Science Foundation Small Grants for Exploratory Research, "Judicial Pioneers: Litigants in the Moscow Theater Hostage Case," grant SES-0317122, 2003 (\$40,824).

Research – Internal

Baird, Vanessa A. Judicial Decisions and Compliance: The Electoral Connection. Vertically Integrated Research and Teaching Team (VIRTT) Grant. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts through the American Political Science Association, Council of Graduate Schools and the American Association of Universities and Colleges, through the Center for the Advancement of Research and Teaching in the Social Sciences (CARTSS), University of Colorado at Boulder, Spring 2004 (\$2000).

Teaching - External

Baird, Vanessa A. Michaele Ferguson and David Mapel. 2005. Ford Foundation Initiative. Difficult Dialogues: Promoting Pluralism and Academic Freedom on Campus. (\$10,000).

Teaching - Internal

Baird, Vanessa A. Michaele Ferguson and David Mapel. 2005. Institute of Civic and Ethic Engagement. (\$10,000).

*Grant authorship is listed alphabetically.

AWARDS

Nominee, Boulder Campus Faculty Assembly Excellence in Teaching Award, 2006

Teacher of the Year, Department of Political Science, University of Colorado, 2006

Undergraduate Mentor Award, Department of Political Science, University of Colorado, 2022

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

January 2016, University of Colorado Law

November 2015, Social Science Forum

November 2012, Northwestern Law School

April 2009, Northwestern Law School

November 2008, Brooklyn Law School

November 2008, University of Houston Law School

June 2007, CSPAN BookTV

May 2006, University of Colorado Law School

January 2006, University of Washington

August 2005, University of Colorado Law School

October 2003, University of Houston

June, 2002, Oxford University

May, 2001, University of Notre Dame

July, 1999, Texas A&M University

November, 1998, University of New Mexico

Teaching

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

The American Political System (Honors)

The American Political System

JUDICIAL POLITICS

Graduate: Behavioral Approaches to Public Law

Introduction to the Legal System

Judicial Behavior and Process

Law and Society

Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Constitutional Law

FIRST YEAR SEMINAR

Introduction to Political Dialogue

STATISTICAL METHODOLOGY

Graduate: Introduction to Political Science Data Analysis

Undergraduate: Introduction to Political Science Data Analysis

Undergraduate: Designing Social Inquiry

POLITICAL THEORY

Modern Political Thought (University of Houston)

Ancient and Medieval Political Thought (University of Houston)

Introduction to Political Theory (University of Houston)

Democratic Theory (University of Houston)