

**Hidden Agendas:
How Self-Interest Shapes
Our Political Opinions &
Why We Won't Admit It**

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People's (poorly) *Hidden Agendas*

Baby, showering
separately wastes water.



Agenda:

[stated] Wants to save the Earth.

[actual] Wants to get her naked.

People's (poorly) *Hidden Agendas*

Lower capital gains taxes
help the economy grow,
which lifts all boats.



Agenda:

[stated] Want to help everyone.

[actual] They themselves want bigger boats.

[Stated] Agenda:

People's
(poorly)
Hidden
Agendas



[Actual] Agenda:





**BIAS AGAINST ATHEISTS
IS NAUGHTY, NOT NICE.**



Board of Directors



Actual
Agenda



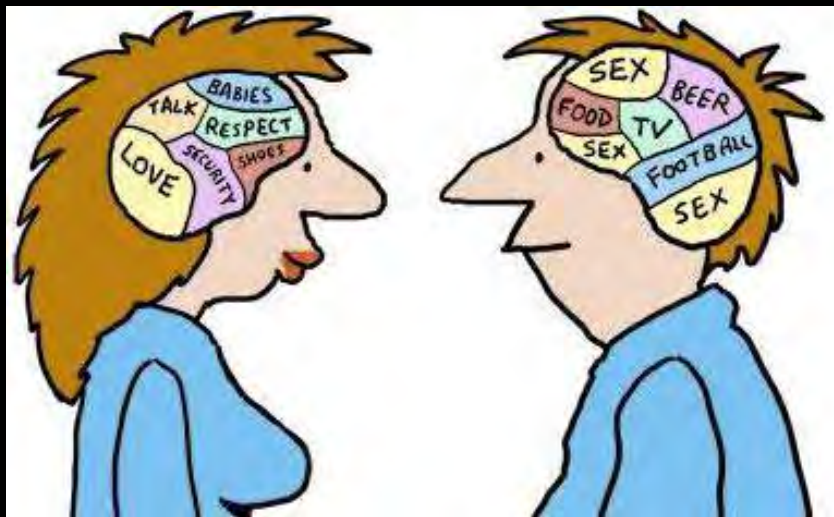
Stated
Agenda

Spokesperson



My political
views are smart,
generous,
principled,
moral, sensible,
caring,
consistent,
good...

The Board of Directors of the mind: The Actual Agenda



Lifestyle issues

- Moral costs on casual sex?
- Legal costs on partying?
- More difficult to obtain family planning tools?



The women of Sex and the City



Lifestyle Agenda



- Reduce moral costs of casual sex
- Reduce legal costs of partying
- Ensure easy access to family planning tools



The mother from Father Knows Best



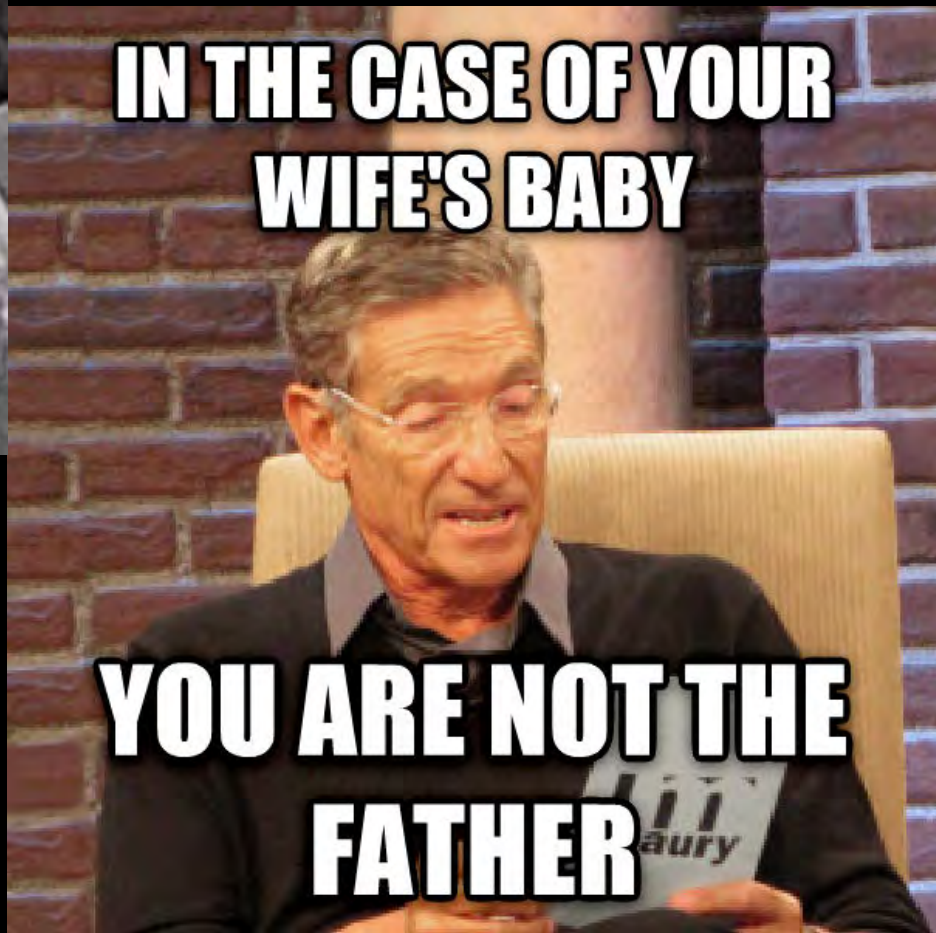


The father from Father Knows Best





**IN THE CASE OF YOUR
WIFE'S BABY**



**YOU ARE NOT THE
FATHER**

Lifestyle Fights

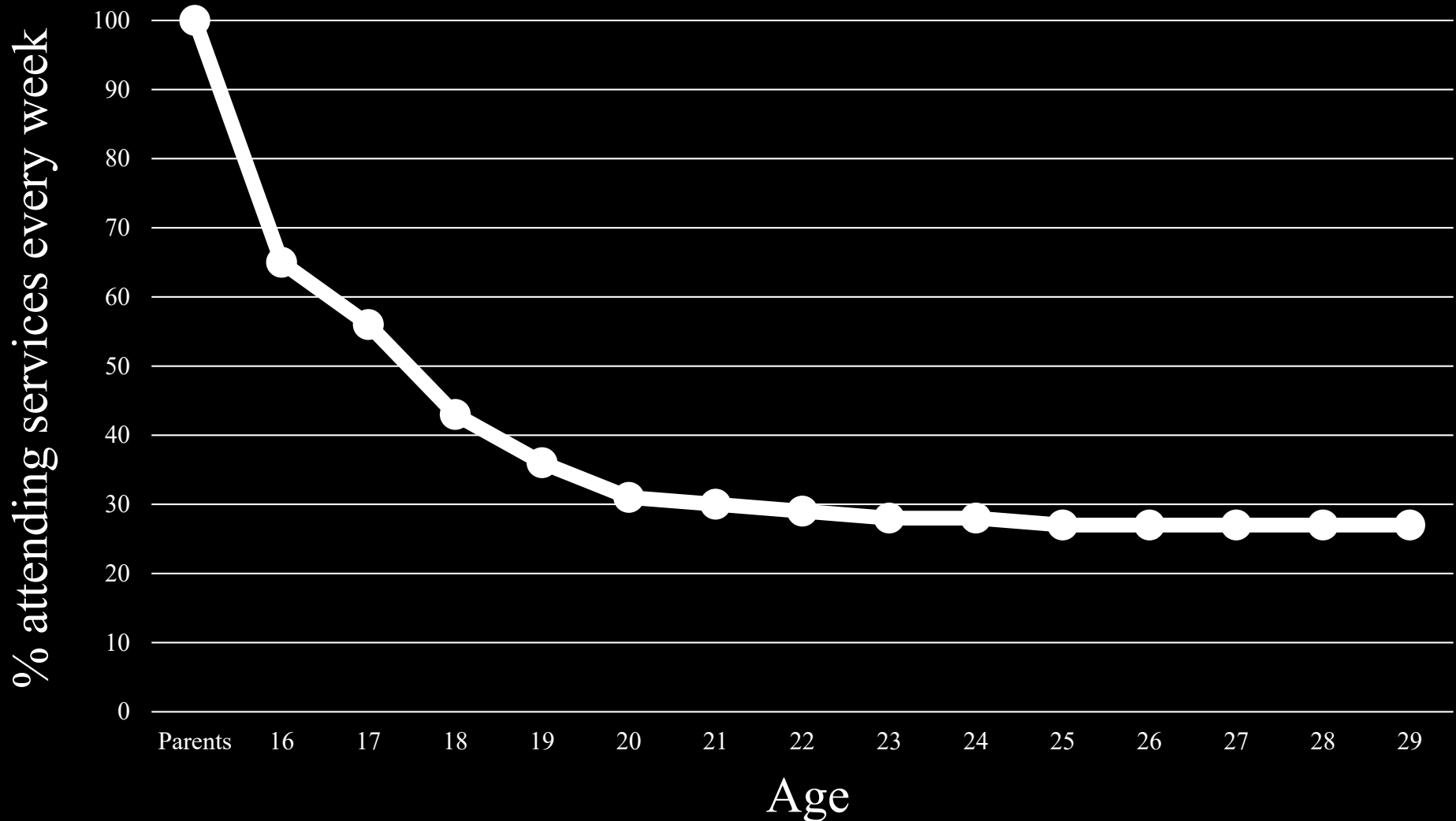
We don't want
people interfering
with our lifestyles.

We want to interfere
with lifestyles that
interfere with *our*
lifestyles.





Young adults whose parents attended religious services every week



“Many of our splendid young people are forgetting God, and are giving themselves over to the desires of the flesh.”

Norman H. Camp, 1931



Rethinking the causal arrow



People's (cleverly) *Hidden Agendas*

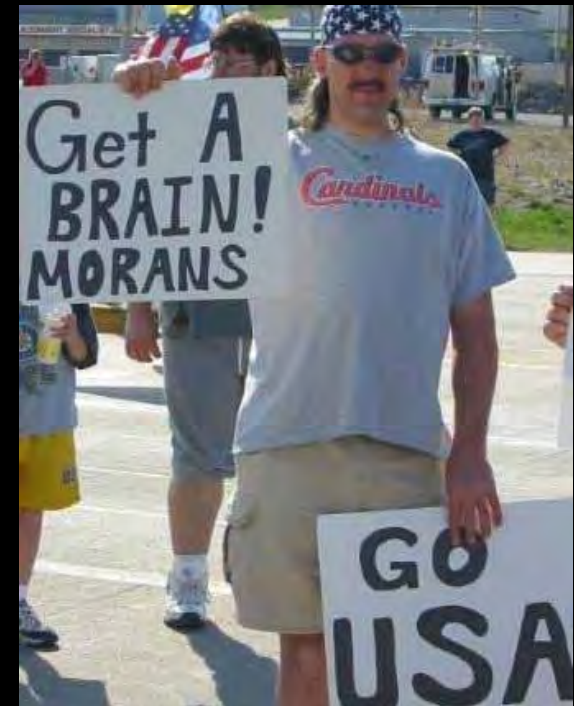


Agenda:

[stated] This is about the Bible and saving children.

[actual] We want casual sex to be more costly.

Don't
discriminate!
Just let the smart
people win!



Discrimination (!)



- Brainy folks
 - Want the brainy folks to win (i.e., meritocracy)
 - Especially oppose discrimination against their own groups



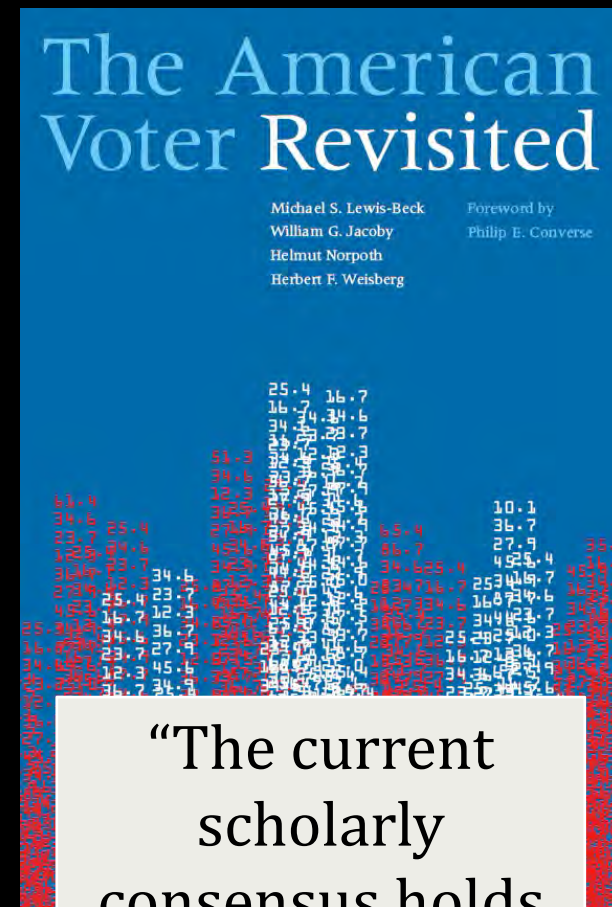
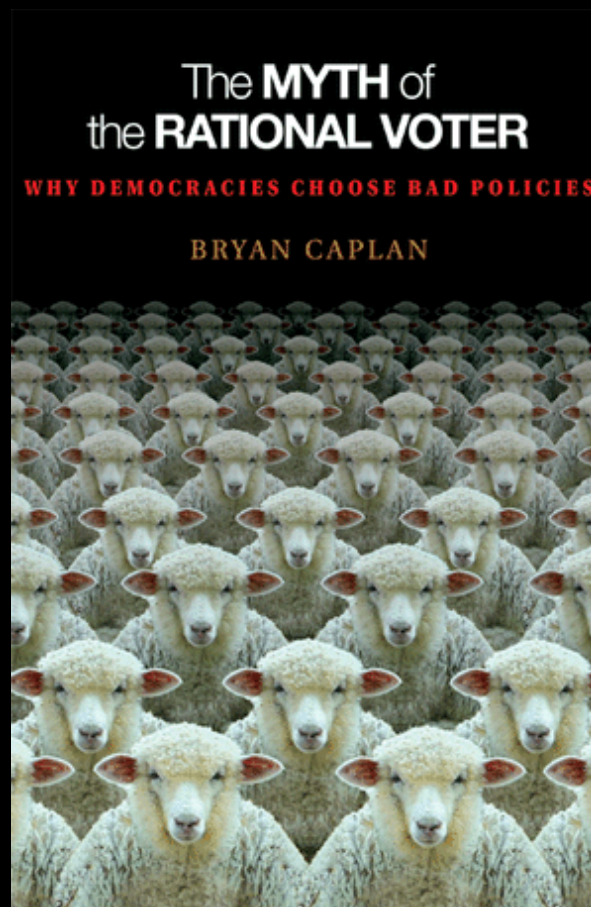
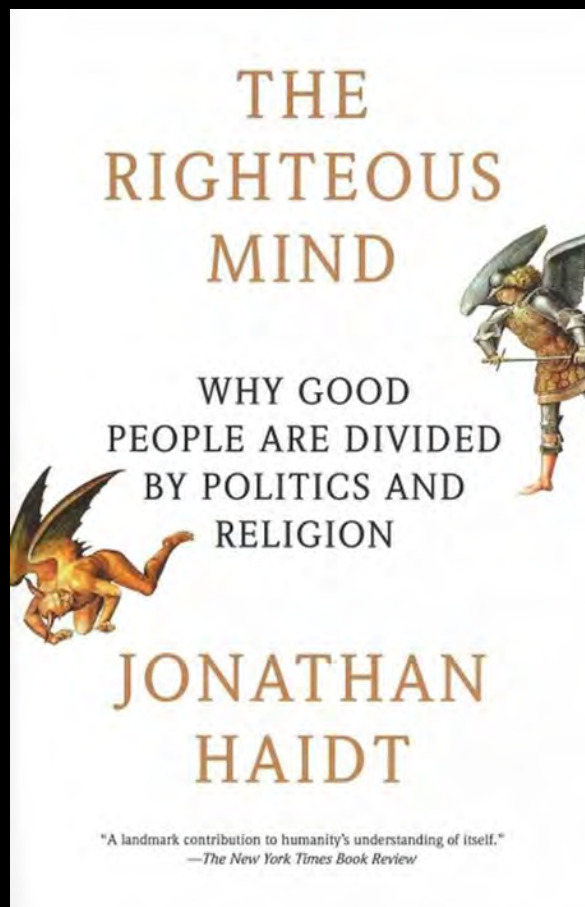
- Less-brainy folks
 - Don't want to let the brainy folks win
 - Want their groups to be favored
 - "Group" could be race, native-born, etc.

Discrimination (!)



Members of *subordinate* groups **high in merit** reap the most benefit from **meritocracy**.

Members of *dominant* groups **low in merit** reap the most from **discriminatory regimes**.

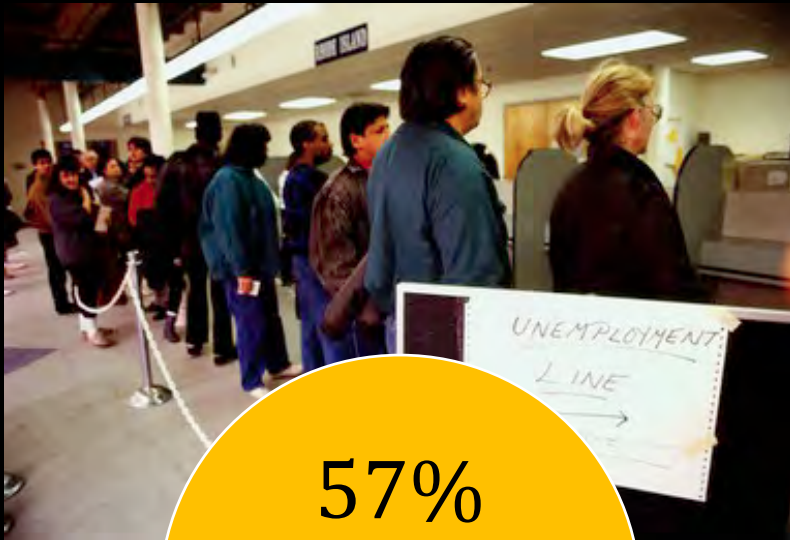


“Self-interest is a weak predictor of policy preferences.”

“The *self-interested voter hypothesis* is false.”

“The current scholarly consensus holds that self-interest is not a major determinant of issue attitudes or voting choices.”

“The unemployed are behind policies designed to alleviate economic distress.”



57%
say
“yes”



27%
say
“yes”

Should government spending on unemployment benefits be increased?

“Differences in income do not give rise to differences in opinion.”



57%
say
“yes”

24%
say
“no”

30%
say
“yes”

54%
say
“no”

Should the government reduce income differences?

Different demographics

Different issues

Church attendance;
Sexual/family differences

Lifestyle
Issues

Race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.;
Education/brains

Group-
Based
Issues

Income;
Race

Money
Issues

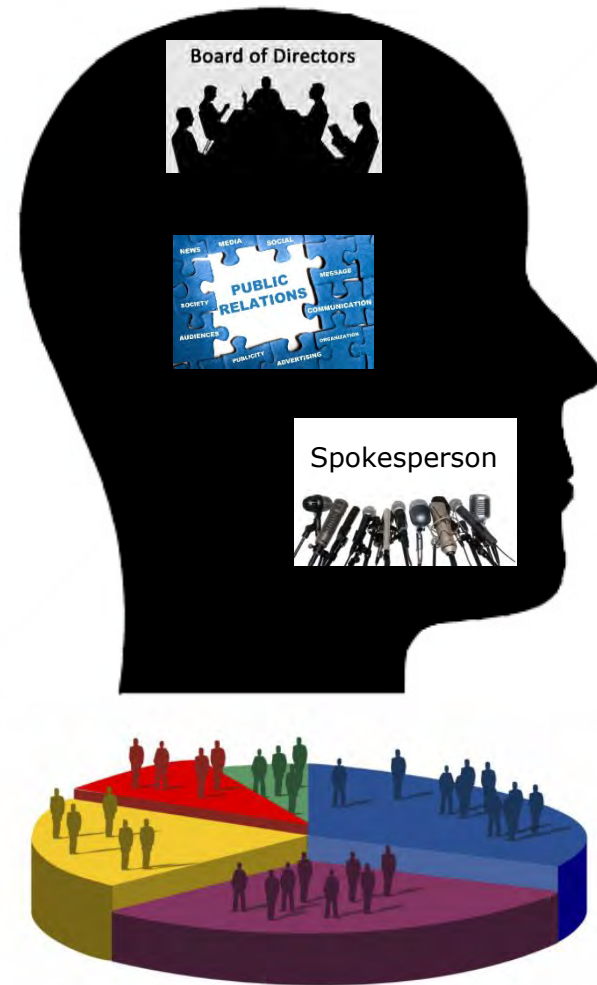


Self-deceptive intuitions

Demographics and self-interest

Mixed liberal/conservative views

Complex party coalitions



HOW SELF-INTEREST SHAPES OUR OPINIONS
AND WHY WE WON'T ADMIT IT

Caveats

- Not claiming *only* self-interest matters.
- *Perceptions* of self-interest can matter more than *actual* self-interest.
 - Especially policies with complex effects





Wearing
Fur Is
Wrong!



End anti-
fox bias in
henhouses!

Mostly Conservative

Frequent church attendance;
Traditional family



White, Christian, heterosexual, etc.;
Less education/brains



Rich;
White



Mostly Liberal

Rare church attendance;
Sex and the City



Minority, non-Christian, homosexual, etc.;
More education/brains



Poor;
Minority





Gov. help the poor

Abortion

Gender-based aff. action

Same-sex marriage

Race-based aff. action

School prayer

Gov. help for African Americans

Atheists' rights

Spending on African Americans

Premarital sex

Liberal

Conservative

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH KANSAS?

Immigration

Pornography

Gov. healthcare

Same-sex marriage

Gov. help the poor

Atheists' rights

Social Security

Abortion

Income redistribution

Premarital sex

Liberal

Conservative



Immigration

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