The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the Soviet Bloc provided political scientists with unprecedented opportunities to investigate the attitudes and values of those socialized under communism. Extensive opinion studies have documented that, in terms of political attitudes, there are considerable differences between western and eastern Europeans: the latter are more distrustful of both political parties and party discipline, less tolerant of disliked groups, more likely to favor economic equality than political freedom when forced to make a choice, and more in favor of direct than representative democracy. These attitudinal differences, shared by both masses and elites, are generally hypothesized to hinder democratization in post-communist Eastern Europe.

Yet only limited research has been done to determine whether these attitudes have actually influenced either elite political behavior or policy outcomes in the region since the collapse of Soviet political institutions. *Becoming Party Politicians* fills this empirical gap and finds little evidence to suggest that eastern elites’ aforementioned attitudes have led to undemocratic actions or policies. Instead, the book argues, today's political and legal institutions are important, and often overlooked, intervening variables which limit the influence of eastern political elites’ attitudes on their contemporary actions in office. When placed in identical political institutions, both eastern and western European politicians respond similarly despite the differences in their initial political attitudes.

These findings are based on the study of German state legislators between 1990 and 2002. In this quasi-experimental setting, easterners with the above-mentioned attitudes entered into state legislatures modeled on those inhabited by western German politicians. These institutions contained strong incentives for eastern politicians to act in ways at odds with their political attitudes. These incentives included those for joining and becoming active in a political party, voting along party lines, embracing representative democracy, adhering to budget constraints, and being politically tolerant. Eastern legislators – in keeping with their initial attitudes – at first eschewed partisan policy-making and party discipline and wrote state constitutions somewhat more conducive to direct democracy than in western German states. By the end of the decade, however, eastern and western parliamentarians were equally likely to be active in political parties, vote along party lines, resist direct democracy, limit their support for economic equality, and exhibit political tolerance.

Germany's political system is often referred to as a party state, and it has indeed been successful in creating a class of party politicians in eastern Germany, despite easterners' skepticism of parties after four decades of communist rule. German state legislators’ voting on issues
surrounding political tolerance, direct democracy, and economic equality can now be predicted on the basis of partisan affiliation rather than eastern or western origin. Ironically, while Germany's political institutions have helped create eastern legislators who are just as much professional party politicians as their western counterparts, eastern legislators' political behavior is at odds with what the post-communist mass public views as desirable; popular support for German political institutions has declined in eastern Germany as elite actions have converged across the country.

Contributions

I draw on, and contribute to, several different strands of literature within comparative politics. Primarily, the book provides an important qualification to work that has previously been done on post-communist elite attitudes. *Becoming Party Politicians* makes the case that the attitudinal differences observed by others during the start of the 1990s have had only limited influence on actual elite political behavior throughout the past decade. Instead, democratic political institutions have played an important role in shaping elite behavior and limiting the effects of these observed value differences. Thus, the book is an important sequel to Robert Rohrschneider's *Learning Democracy: Democratic and Economic Values in Unified Germany* (Oxford University Press 1999) and Jennifer A. Yoder's *From East Germans to Germans: The New Postcommunist Elites* (Duke University Press 1999).

*Becoming Party Politicians* also contributes to the growing body of literature on the development of post-communist legislatures. While a number of edited volumes have appeared on these newly democratized legislatures, their chapters generally provide snapshots of various parliaments at fixed points in time, usually in the early 1990s. In contrast, this book traces the behavior of state legislators over the course of a decade, providing a much more detailed account of the waning influence of elites' initial political attitudes and the increasing influence of democratic political institutions. Steven S. Smith and Thomas F. Remington's *The Politics of Institutional Choice* (Princeton University Press 2001) follows the Russian Duma in a similar longitudinal fashion. In contrast to the Russian case, which allowed Smith and Remington to examine the politics of institutional choice, legislators in the German case had little choice over political institutions as they were imposed upon them from above. *Becoming Party Politicians* therefore offers political scientists a detailed account about the ability of transferred institutions to shape political elites' behavior. In this sense, it is an important empirical treatment of the aftermath of what Douglass North’s *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance* (Cambridge University Press 1990) called “discontinuous institutional change.”

Because the book devotes chapters to attitudes involving political parties, party discipline, direct democracy, economic attitudes, and political tolerance, it contributes to these areas of research well. While there is an extensive literature on the post-communist German party system and on the weakness of grass roots party organizations in eastern Germany, there has been little work done on legislative parties in the region. *Becoming Party Politicians* fills this gap and argues that, despite the weakness of parties outside parliaments, strong legislative parties have developed in post-communist eastern Germany. It also sheds light on the origins of party discipline by tracing the development of party voting agreement in five legislatures across the span of a decade. For advocates of direct democracy, the book offers an explanation of why
different states varied in their willingness to create constitutional provisions allowing referenda. For scholars interested in the effect of elites’ economic values on economic policy making, the book examines the struggle between post-communist elites’ preference for economic equality and capitalist budget constraints. Finally, the book enriches the literature on political tolerance because it is one of very few empirical investigations of the relationship between politically (in)tolerant attitudes and actual policy outcomes. The findings here suggest that political institutions are an important intervening variable between the two.

Evidence

The book’s conclusions are based on an in-depth study of the state legislatures in Germany's five new Länder and eastern Berlin between 1990 and 2002. In order to compare eastern elites to western politicians, I also studied deputies in each eastern state's western partner Land during this period. The findings are based on both qualitative and quantitative evidence derived from primary sources. Eastern legislators' growing involvement with political parties is gleaned from the biographical data that the nearly 2500 state legislators under study were required to publish about themselves in the Handbook of each state parliament. The rise of disciplined voting in eastern legislatures was established by coding over 10,000 floor votes taken in the above-mentioned states in 1991, 1996, and 2000. Rules governing direct democracy, reasons for their adoption, and subsequent legislative reactions to referenda attempts are traced by examining parliamentary debates over the drafting of state constitutions in 1990 as well as by analyzing data collected by the German pro-plebiscite organization Mehr-Demokratie e.V. associated with the University of Marburg. Many of these referenda involved citizen demands for greater economic equality; elite reactions to these demands document eastern elites’ increasing reluctance to promote such equality. The relationship between political tolerance and policy outcomes is assessed by comparing texts of the laws passed as well as reading parliamentary debates and newspaper accounts surrounding the implementation of Germany's same-sex partnership law in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Finally, all of these chapters are supplemented with material drawn from nearly forty personal interviews conducted in 2001 with legislators representing all parties in seven different eastern and western state legislatures.
Chapter 1: Introduction: Eastern German State Legislators’ Political Attitudes and the Party State

The book begins by reviewing the literature on post-communist political attitudes and outlining the ways in which eastern German parliamentarians’ beliefs have been found to differ from their western counterparts' values. I then go on to argue that these attitudinal differences will not necessarily translate into contrasting legislative behavior. Instead, contemporary political institutions are an important intervening variable in determining the influence of elite attitudes and values. The final part of the chapter illustrates how united Germany's political institutions, the so-called party state, are at odds with easterners' attitudes and instead contain powerful countervailing incentives for eastern legislators. The next chapters compare eastern and western state legislators' actions over the decade following unification, tracing the rise of party politicians and partisan politics in eastern Germany between 1990 and 2002.

Chapter 2: Becoming Party Politicians: Eastern German State Legislators' Ties to Political Parties

After decades of dictatorship by the communist party, eastern Europeans exhibited a strong distrust of political parties. While grass-roots parties have been slow to develop in eastern Germany, Germany's political institutions give political parties considerable influence over candidate selection and its electoral system advantages those running on a party ticket. As a result, eastern legislators who wish to continue their careers have strong incentives to become active in political party organizations. This chapter compares eastern and western legislators' involvement in party organizations over the past decade finds that easterners have come more and more to resemble their western counterparts who have played extensive roles in their political parties. These findings are based on biographical data about the nearly 2500 state legislators elected to the five eastern state legislatures and their western partner state parliaments between 1990 and 2000. This data comes from the handbooks of each state legislature in which state parliamentarians are legally required to publish their biographies. The analysis is supplemented by personal interviews with legislators in seven states.

Chapter 3: Becoming Disciplined: Eastern German State Legislators and Party Discipline

Although eastern legislators were initially skeptical of party politics, they inherited a parliamentary system after unification that requires disciplined political parties. While eastern parliamentarians initially attempted to rely on consensus-based or cross-party decision-making, these practices were inefficient and harmed legislators' chances for reelection. As a result, eastern German state-level legislators have begun to vote in much the same way as western legislators and eastern parliamentary parties have become much stronger over the past decade. Since 1990 party discipline has risen in eastern German state legislatures and now occurs even more frequently than in western Germany. The rise of disciplined voting in eastern legislatures was established by coding over 10,000 floor votes taken in four eastern states in 1991, 1996, and
2000 and in their western partner states in 2000. The analysis is supplemented by personal interviews with parliamentarians in seven states.

Chapter 4: Becoming Representatives: Eastern German State Legislators, Direct Democracy, and Economic Equality

Opinion surveys have consistently found eastern Germans to be more in favor of both direct democracy and economic equality than their western German counterparts. This chapter shows that eastern parliamentarians’ initial support for direct democracy resulted in the inclusion of slightly more generous provisions for referenda in the eastern states' newly-drafted constitutions than was the case in western Länder. Even though these constitutions were written only shortly after the introduction of the Federal Republic’s political institutions, the key provisions of state laws governing direct democracy already varied according to the partisanship of state legislatures. The chapter then goes on to analyze legislators' reactions to subsequent citizen initiatives, referenda which have primarily aimed at achieving greater economic equality among citizens. As time has passed, eastern majority parties and coalitions – like their western counterparts – have come to oppose citizen initiatives and prefer to keep the power to make policy in their own hands. Fiscal realities have tempered even ruling left-wing eastern elites' support for economic equality. German parliamentarians' support for citizen initiatives aimed at greater economic equality, then, tends to fall along government/ opposition lines rather than east/west lines. Opposition parties, denied influence over public policy by the majority’s strict party discipline, support referenda as a way to shape policy outcomes. After a decade as professional party politicians, then, easterners have come to behave much like their western counterparts. These conclusions are based on analysis of parliamentary debates surrounding the use of referenda, data from the pro-plebiscite organization Mehr-Demokratie e.V., and personal interviews with both eastern and western legislators.

Chapter 5: Becoming Tolerant: Eastern German State Legislators and Germany's Same-Sex Partnership Law

The last decade has produced a surge of research on political tolerance in post-communist states. Political tolerance, or “putting up with what you don’t like” involves extending democratic rights to disliked groups. Eastern Europeans have been shown to have a low level of political tolerance when compared to citizens in established democracies. No studies have systemically examined whether intolerant attitudes have actually translated into intolerant public policy in the region, however. Indeed, this link is only weakly established in western democracies. In this chapter I compare implementation of Germany's federal same-sex partnership law in post-communist eastern German states and long-democratic western Länder. I examine whether, as the literature on tolerance would expect, eastern state legislatures extended fewer rights to a disliked group, in this case homosexuals, than their western counterparts did. In contrast to the conventional wisdom, I find that the partisanship of the state government, rather than the length of experience with democracy, accounts for variance in policy outcomes across Germany. This result can be explained by adding institutional variables – including elites' learning in democratic institutions, constitutional constraints, and the incentives of Germany's electoral system – to the study of elite
attitudes. While low levels of political tolerance did produce intolerant policies, not all post-communist political elites were intolerant and those who were were also constrained by democratic institutions. These results are based on an analysis of parliamentary debates surrounding the partnership law, a comparison of the texts of laws ultimately passed, and newspaper coverage surrounding the same-sex partnership law.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Becoming Party Politicians concludes by discussing the implications of the above findings for German politics, in particular, and for the discipline of political science in general. The results clearly show that contemporary political institutions have come to override easterners' initial attitudes and after a decade in the party state, there is little to differentiate eastern and western legislators. Ironically, however, while Germany's political institutions have helped create eastern parliamentarians who act as their western counterparts do, this elite behavior is at odds with what the post-communist mass public views as desirable political behavior; popular support for German political institutions has declined in eastern Germany as elite actions have converged across the country. The book’s findings also offer lessons for comparative politics about the staying power of traditional western political institutions in the face of sociological change, the relationship between political intolerance and democratic consolidation, the origins of legislator behavior, and the aftermath of what Douglass North (1990) calls discontinuous institutional change.