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by showing how “old school” members of Congress are less partisan than newer members. Yet, there are no statistical tests, or even any statement, on how old school members were selected.

More troubling is that Ahuja’s argument about partisan polarization in chapter 3 is contradicted by his own claims in the next chapter (pp. 62, 64, 68) that the electorate has become less divided by party and that the congressional parties are now weak since incumbents run their own campaigns divorced from the parties more than in the past. There are more independents and fewer strong party identifiers, and voters are more likely to split their tickets. Yet the sheer number of independents is not the issue, since independent party leaners are more like regular party identifiers than pure independents. Pure independents were only 7.5 percent of the electorate in 2006, among the lowest share in memory. Only 13.6 percent of congressional districts split their tickets between the House candidates and the president in 2004, the lowest share since 1944. Congressional parties are now stronger than at any time since the nineteenth century, as Ahuja notes later (pp. 115–117) and as both Mann and Ornstein and I have also noted.

Other arguments are not new. Redistricting leads to polarization, which is Eilperin’s major claim, but is wrong. As I argued in *The Decline of Comity in Congress*, incivility has increased in the Senate—and even the Supreme Court, where there is no redistricting. Alan Abramowitz has several papers and a forthcoming book showing that the link between redistricting and polarization does not hold for the House either. Television promotes bad manners—yet, as I argued in my book, incivility has increased in state legislatures, where there are no televised hearings—and the closed-door meetings over the savings and loan bailout in September 2008 were filled with shouting and recriminations. Social issues promote conflict—and I argued as much in 1993, but there seems no way to “remove social issues from the public square,” as Ahuja suggests (p. 142). Members are mean to each other because they do not socialize as much as in the past—very true, but several attempts at holding retreats to get members and their families together have led nowhere.

The roots of incivility in Congress lie deeper than Ahuja admits. The rhetoric of much of daily life—and of our presidential campaigns—suggests that an imminent solution is not in sight.

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Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City by
Colin Gordon. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
304 pp. \$55.00.

Readers of the *Political Science Quarterly* need not be reminded that the industrial cities of the American heartland—Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Buffalo, Detroit, Youngstown, Milwaukee, and St. Louis prominent among

them—have been declining since 1950. All have experienced white flight to the suburbs, the closing of downtown department stores, the emptying out of the central business district, the collapse of the municipal tax base, a loss of confidence in public schools, and the abandonment of houses, streets, and sometimes entire neighborhoods. Meanwhile, inner-city poverty and crime have increased, and the middle class has come to see the urban core as something to be avoided rather than celebrated. In some respects, St. Louis is the poster child of this tragedy—in 1950, the city had 857,000 residents; by 2000, that number was 348,000, a loss of more than 60 percent. As early as 1956, a visiting French businessman could say of St. Louis that the view from a downtown skyscraper “looks like a European city bombed in the war.” The situation only got worse in the ensuing decades.

This is by now a familiar story, and it has been well-documented by scholars. Some of their work has been spectacularly good, and a few books—like Arnold Hirsch’s *Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983) and Thomas Sugrue’s *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)—have come to be regarded as classics.

So what is there yet to say about this depressing urban phenomenon? Quite a bit, it turns out. *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City* is an exceptional book, and it breaks new ground in important ways. Organized topically rather than chronologically, it ranges over such subjects as political power, suburban balkanization, race, zoning, and urban renewal. Along the way, Colin Gordon combines intellectual rigor, a compelling argument, and extensive archival research with the latest geographic information system digital mapping techniques. Dozens of color maps, together with numerous figures and tables, allow the reader to examine the data with fresh eyes. Gordon’s focus on a single city, a single neighborhood (Greater Ville), and even a single house (4635 North Market Street) give his comprehensive analysis an immediacy and power that it might otherwise lack. And the prose is so thoughtful, so well-written, and so engaged with recent scholarship that scholars on the topic will be fascinated.

In general, Gordon faults the usual suspects—local leaders who in 1941 thought that the city needed “more traffic speed and more parking spaces,” federal programs that achieved the opposite of the ends that they were presumably set up to achieve, a ring of nearby communities that refused to take responsibility for metropolitan problems, racism that affected almost every aspect of local life, and Washington mortgage and urban renewal programs that systematically discriminated against the city and its inhabitants. In my view, no event was as damaging as the decision in 1876 to separate the city from the county, thus almost guaranteeing that the city, now hemmed in by 789 different political units, would be forever crippled.

One can always quibble about peripheral facts and issues. Gordon wrongly suggests that New York City’s population peaked (thus far) in 1990 rather than

2000, and that it experienced deindustrialization later than the heartland. And fewer maps and more photographs might have better sustained reader interest.

But *Mapping Decline* is an outstanding achievement, and I intend to keep it near my desk as an example of the kind of research and writing that we should all seek to emulate.

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The Cult of the Presidency: America's Dangerous Devotion to Executive Power by Gene Healy. Washington, DC, CATO Institute Press, 2008. 264 pp. \$22.95.

In *The Federalist*, No. 70, Alexander Hamilton acknowledges that some people believe “a vigorous Executive is inconsistent with the genius of republican government.” Gene Healy certainly falls into that camp. His book is a passionate denunciation of the central place the presidency has assumed in American politics. Healy traces the degeneration of a modest institution to its current status as a quasi-religious superman whom Americans trust to solve all their problems. The expectations of this office are now so high that they cannot possibly be met, but presidents try to compensate by drawing even more power into their vortex. The result is a gravely disturbed constitutional order.

Healy begins with the Framers' intent and marches swiftly to his crisis point—the Progressive Era. This period witnessed a dramatic change in public philosophy, resulting in a new understanding of presidential power predicated on a “sustained atmosphere of crisis” (p. 52), leading to serial abuse of power. The Progressive reinterpretation of the Constitution is a sensible target, and Healy recounts his story with gusto, writing in an entertaining style. He makes the obligatory critique of the unitary executive theory, and spends a third of the book assaulting the conduct of the George W. Bush administration. Arguing that our current psychosis did not start with neoconservatives, he charges liberals, conservatives, academics, and popular culture with perpetuating this problem. One cannot help but be amused when reading Healy's description of the president's current tasks—consoler in chief, national chaplain, national fitness coach (p. 205).

The book is not without significant problems, however. First, Healy often employs intemperate language. He is needlessly snide when discussing some contemporary political and scholarly figures, sometimes dismissing them without doing his adversaries the courtesy of addressing their strongest arguments. Meanwhile, he simply asserts that Ron Paul was the only candidate in the recent nomination battle to give “consistently constitutionalist answers” (p. 192).

Second, Healy overlooks important historical facts. It is debatable whether the nineteenth-century presidency was “insignificant” (p. 38). Several high-profile characters won the office and several more sought it, so it was obviously