Books have a life of their own, apart from whatever the author originally intended them to be. They are like children in that way; the parent is responsible for how they turn out ... but not entirely responsible. And the reviews a book receives reflects that partial responsibility in that an author cannot be simultaneously answerable for glowing and damning readings. In this case, I would like very much to be responsible for the book that Professor Smith has so expertly dissected and summarized. But I shan’t say anything more for fear of contradicting myself.

There is, however, one aspect of the review that it might be useful to address. At the very beginning, Professor Smith places (accurately) *The American Ballot Box* within the American Political Development subfield, and then situates the subfield between the conventional disciplines of history and political science. This discussion is, in my opinion, a fair and informed interpretation of the place APD occupies and the ambitions, so far as they can be generalized, of APD scholars. However, there is more diversity (no surprise there, perhaps) within the APD field than he describes in this brief discussion. For example, I am strongly opposed to any overt or covert attempts to maintain disciplinary boundaries. This opposition stems from a conclusion that such boundaries are utterly indefensible intellectually and, much worse in my opinion, tend to encourage the emergence of methodological rituals and conventions that have as their primary purpose the demarcation of disciplinary memberships and identities. Because I have written on this elsewhere (1), there is no need to discuss those issues here. I only wish to individuate, just a little, how I would go about describing what I intend in my writing...that, of course, does not obviate the fact that our books are our children, for which we are only partially responsible.

**Notes**

1. R. Bensel, 'The Tension between American Political Development as a Research Community and as a Disciplinary Subfield', *Studies in American Political Development*, 17 (2003), 103–6. The article is a comment on John Gerring's 'APD from a Methodological Point of View', *Studies in American Political Development*, 17 (2003), 82–102. [Back to (1)]

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