

9 and 5; and gross unfairness when it comes to debilitating illness—a 17 year old girl diagnosed with multiple sclerosis becomes essentially uninsurable unless she can land a job with a large and generous corporation or government body).

Fogel's postscript concerns the extent to which longevity increases are likely to continue. He takes the optimistic view that the linear increases experienced in the last 300 years will continue over the next 100 years. On that basis, the average life expectancy of a woman born in 2070 would be about 97 years. It would have been nice to see evidence beyond extrapolation (of both actual increases in longevity and in the underestimation of these by the experts of the day). For example, comparisons of the life span of animals such as genetically similar feral dogs, pets and show dogs, could provide additional evidence on what lifetime extension better environments might bring.

The book's first 'essay' is the most demanding and occasionally frustrating. This is where Fogel's professional expertise lies, and yet, putting aside the section's overarching themes, it is where the reader repeatedly has doubts about various propositions advanced. Nor does it help that Fogel repeatedly cites an unpublished work still in progress. Let me provide two examples that are interesting and important, though not critical to Fogel's basic arguments.

Fogel takes the view that the ideal average height for males is perhaps well over 190 cm. A good deal of Fogel's evidence for this comes from military records. However, he does not discuss whether there might be some endogeneity in this finding. In particular, relative rather than absolute height differences could play a role. For example, it may be that bigger men, especially those in the military, are marginally less likely to get into fights or otherwise be hurt, leading to greater longevity. Similarly, some evidence suggests that relatively tall men are more likely to be married and

earn higher incomes than other men. Marriage and income are known to play a role in longevity.

Fogel also provides fascinating discussion on a controversy about ideal body size, concluding that, on average, small is unlikely to be healthy. While the evidence he presents from the US and northern Europe is compelling, it contains no data from Japan, where one suspects data exists. This seems a curious omission. The Japanese are among the longest living people in the world. I would guess, from casual observation, that, with the possible exception of today's Japanese children, Japanese are on average smaller than their American and European counterparts (even after excluding those who are overweight). Moreover, Japan is the most affluent Asian nation, making it a good comparator with America and Europe. Consequently, examining the Japanese data could conclusively support or negate Fogel's view.

Fogel's demonstration of the main points in the first section of the book also gets a little lost in the details. For example, he makes the staggering claim that the increase in accessible calories between 1790 and today accounts for 30% of the British growth rate over the same period. Yet I did not appreciate why this was likely true until I had pieced together information found in later chapters (such as on the extraordinary increase in the average working life access to adequate nutrition allowed).

Some quibbles in ending: This book desperately needed an editor. It uses inches, centimetres and metres interchangeably. It employs complex graphs that are difficult to read and with thought (in some cases very little—see Figure 3.1) could have been made more readable. It relies on endnotes instead of footnotes, despite having 1.6 notes per page. Surely not because footnotes scare off the general reader? Anyone frightened of footnotes will be terrified of the first 20 pages of this book.

**Reviewed by Eric Kodjo Ralph**

*The Persuaders: Inside the Hidden Machine of Political Advertising*

by Sally Young

Sydney, Pluto Press, 2004

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**T**he study of political advertising and its impact on democracy is a growth industry. It interests observers of politics as well as university students studying political science. Sally Young, who currently lectures in media and communications at the University of Melbourne, is at the forefront of its scholarly study. She completed a PhD on political advertising in Australia (1949-2001) in 2003 and has also written widely on the subject, including in the *Australian Journal of Political Science*. *The Persuaders: Inside the Hidden Machine of Political Advertising* is her latest contribution.

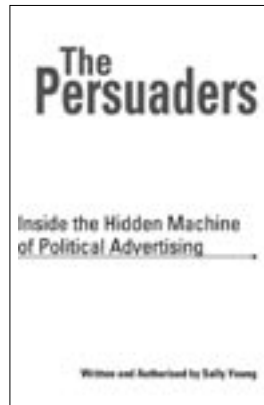
Young's study is well researched and supported by a range of primary and secondary literature. One of the book's most valuable aspects for a political science readership is the quality of the reference list contained in the bibliography (p.365). She clearly spent many hours reviewing National Library of Australia collections for each of the major parties.

Given the insiders nature of Australian major parties, academics generally find it very difficult to ascertain what really goes on in party backrooms. Young has an insider story of her own to tell. She confesses to having worked as a Labor Party volunteer in the lead up to the 2001 federal election and the 2002 Victorian state election (p.3). Her experience was one of being shut out, unable to get near the action. Sadly this is a typical sensation for new entrants into the world of political staffing/volunteering. On both sides of politics it is often not what you know but who you know.

Young's experiences clearly left her with a story to tell—that of the difficulty ordinary citizens

have in engaging with their elected representatives or the parties they operate within. My own academic research reveals that on both sides of the ideological divide the pre-parliamentary jobs of major party MPs are increasingly as Ministerial staffers and central party operatives, further isolating politics in the world of nepotism (unless you are a local community type in a marginal seat—in which case the professional party machine can see your electioneering benefits). Of course this is not the whole story, but Young highlights a concerning trend.

The title, *The Persuaders: Inside the Hidden Machine of Political Advertising*, is borrowed from



Vance Packard's 1957 book *The Hidden Persuaders*, which examined how advertisers seek to manipulate consumers. In Australia, Stephen Mills pioneered the study of professional political practice in Australia, including the role of campaigning and advertising, with his 1986 text *The New Machine Men*. Young's account is a long overdue update of campaigning and advertising tactics used by political parties in Australia.

The book is broken into 13 chapters. The first chapter details the revolution in campaign tactics adopted by the Whitlam Labor Opposition in its successful 1972 'It's time' campaign. That campaign used celebrity comment, musical renditions and slick commercial advertising. Young contends that the Whitlam years started an arms race in campaign spending. She also alludes to a loss of substance in political advertising. She quotes a Laurie Oakes comment that 1972 was the year of the 'soft-sell' (p.21). It is an engaging and interesting entrée to the chapters ahead.

Young briefly traces the evolution of political advertising on radio, cinema, newspapers and television. Broadcast advertising in Australian federal elections grew by 900% from 1974 to 1996. No doubt this figure has substantially increased since then. Young's analysis would have benefited from a direct response to the argument, often put by political parties, that their spending is but a fraction of commercial advertising campaigns. The rise in political advertising spending may be less alarming if the base from which it started was an unprofessional low.

Chapters three and four are perhaps the most valuable in the book. They address the rise and rise of the swinging voter, and the question of whether Australia is descending into a PR state. Major parties try to avoid wasting their funds raised (and apportioned from public funding) on voters whose minds are firmly fixed on either party. Saving the cost of a postage stamp may seem trivial in isolation, but the savings from a swinging voter strategy across the country are in the millions of dollars.

Compulsory voting in Australia removes the need to 'get out the vote' that exists in the US. Political parties can therefore, to some extent, take their own supporters for granted, as well as ignore the entrenched voters of the other lot. So much for 'governing for all of us'! Young laments that parties don't just focus on swinging voters, they focus even more narrowly, on swinging voters in marginal seats.

The PR state chapter canvasses increased use of political databases to track voters, their policy preferences, and most importantly their voting preferences. In identifying the rise of databases Young highlights direct mail's central importance to modern

campaigning. Heavily subsidised by parliamentary entitlements, direct mail assists incumbents over competing candidates, both before elections are called and during the campaign itself. Young concludes that parties are becoming obsessed with the marketing side of politics, arguably at the expense of policy development and good governance.

The following chapters focus the reader's attention specifically on the advertising campaigns of major parties, including public funding, invasion of privacy and stretching of the truth in campaigning. Young concludes there is a need for urgent reforms, and she outlines them in her final chapter. Her 18 recommendations for reform are reasonable in principle, but she perhaps should have spent more time developing a planned approach to achieving such reforms, including the framework by which they would be instituted. Such a practical strategy for implementation of reforms would strengthen her criticism of the status quo.

Importantly, Young has not written *The Persuaders* as a purely academic account. On the contrary, large parts of it border on polemic. This is not meant as a criticism. In places the author embarks on a crusade to uncover unethical and arguably illegal activities by both major parties. Doing so in a readable popular style helps to engage a wider reading audience.

I recommend *The Persuaders: Inside the Hidden Machine of Political Advertising* as an interesting, well-researched read. It has the dual benefit of appealing to a general and specialised readership. But I can see the lighter side of politicians and their advertising pitches, and fortunately I think voters still can as well. The dangers of political manipulation Young highlights are present, but perhaps they are yet to reach the alarming heights she suggests.

**Reviewed by Peter van Onselen,  
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