

Content Policies and the “View From Nowhere”

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What is the “view from nowhere”?

- Donna Haraway, feminist scholar, Science and Technology Studies
- Criticism of objectivity: knowledge is always situated



Postmodern Gravity Deconstructed, Slyly

By JANNY SCOTT

A New York University physicist, fed up with what he sees as the excesses of the academic left, hoodwinked a well-known journal into publishing a parody thick with gibberish as though it were serious scholarly work.

The article, "Transgressing the Boundaries: Toward a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity," appeared this month in *Social Text*, a journal that helped invent the trendy, sometimes baffling field of cultural studies.

Now the physicist, Alan Sokal, is gloating. And the editorial collective that publishes the journal says it sorely regrets its mistake. But the journal's co-founder says Professor Sokal is confused.

"He says we're epistemic relativists," complained Stanley Aronowitz, the co-founder and a professor at CUNY. "We're not. He got it wrong. One of the reasons he got it wrong is he's ill-read and half-educated."

The dispute over the article — which was read by several editors at the journal before it was published — goes to the heart of the public debate over left-wing schol-

“... the π of Euclid and the G of Newton, formerly thought to be constant and universal, are now perceived in their ineluctable historicity; and the putative observer becomes fatally de-centered, disconnected from any epistemic link to a space-time point ...”



arship, and particularly over the belief that social, cultural and political conditions influence and may even determine knowledge and ideas about what is truth.

In this case, Professor Sokal, 41, intended to attack some of the work of social scientists and humanists in the field of cultural

studies, the exploration of culture — and, in recent years, science — for coded ideological meaning.

In a way, this is one more skirmish in the culture wars, the battles over multiculturalism and college curriculums and whether

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The Science Wars

- The Sokal hoax
- Debate on the social construction of reality
- Constructivists vs. Realists

The New York Times — May 18, 1996

Lessons from the Science Wars

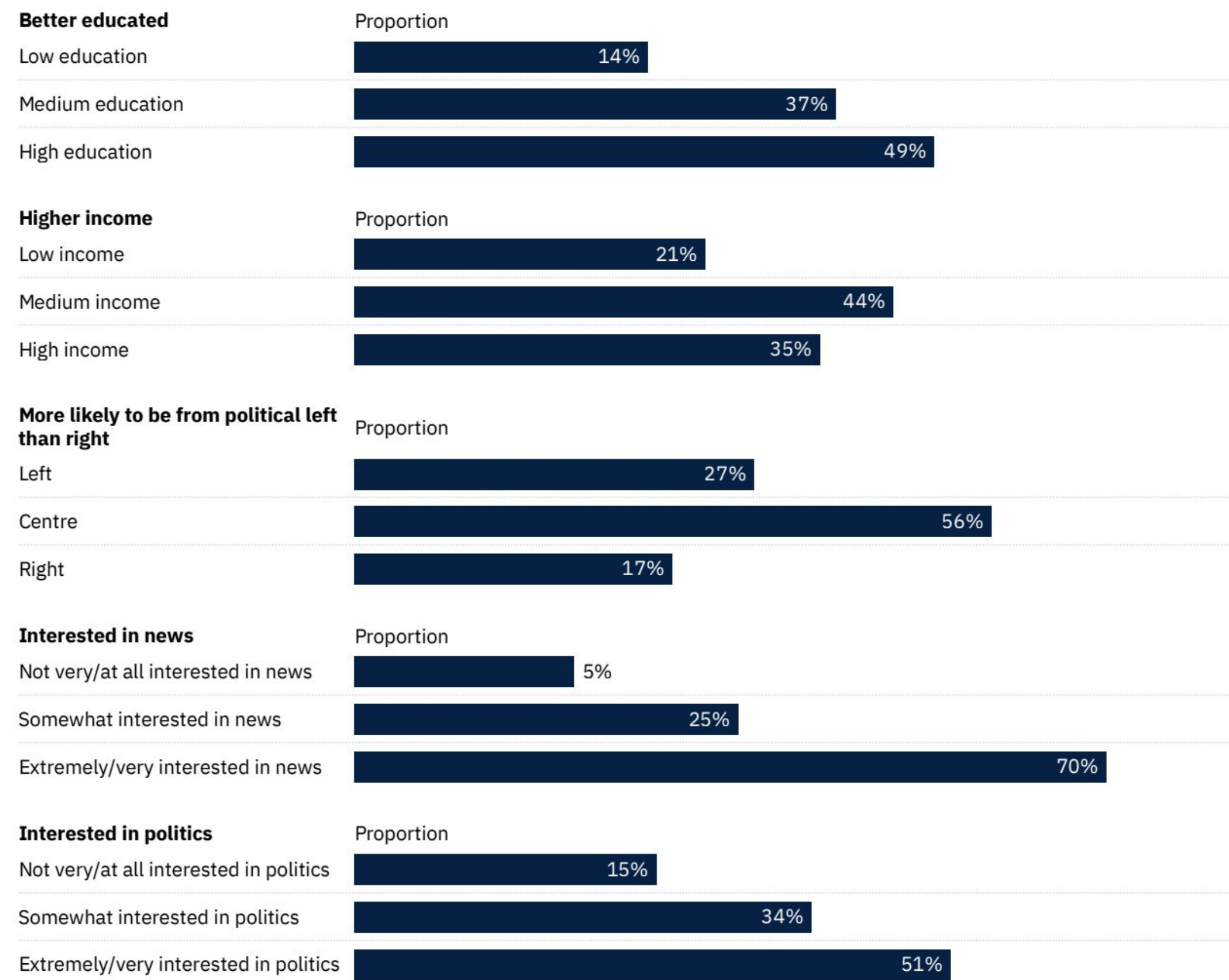
1. Knowledge has a history
2. This history includes individual interests
3. Maybe objective truths would be different if other interests had won



Why does this matter?

- We live in the science wars
- Application to all forms of knowledge
- How to accept both critiques?





Source : Newman and Robertson (2023) *Paying for news: Price-conscious consumers look for value amid cost-of-living crisis*, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism



From alternative conceptions of honesty to alternative facts in communications by US politicians

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 Check for updates

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The spread of online misinformation on social media is increasingly perceived as a problem for societal cohesion and democracy. The role of political leaders in this process has attracted less research attention, even though politicians who ‘speak their mind’ are perceived by segments of the

Platform	Definition of climate change misinformation	Rationale for removing climate change misinformation	User resources on climate provided by platform	Internal actors	External collaborators
Facebook	Content determined as false by an authoritative third party and subject-matter experts.	Help educate and inform people about the realities of climate change.	Climate Science Center ; Climate Info Finder tool.	Automated tools and human content moderators: Keyword detection ; Behavioural Insights Team .	Third-party fact-checking organisations ; partnership with authoritative organisations (Climate Science Literacy Initiative with Monash , Cambridge , Yale); Climate Misinformation Grant program; Climate pledges with United Nations .
Instagram	Content determined false by an authoritative third party and subject-matter experts.	Help educate and inform people about the realities of climate change.	Climate Science Literacy Service	Automated tools and human content moderators: Keyword detection ; Behavioural Insights Team .	Third-party fact-checking organisations .
YouTube	Non-existent.	Non-existent.	Non-existent.	Automated tools and human content moderators. ²	Unclear.
TikTok	Content that disavows the established scientific consensus. ³	Empower accurate climate discussions and reduce harmful content.	Search features directing users towards authoritative information.	Automated tools. Human content moderators.	Third-party fact-checkers . ⁴ Partnership with authoritative organisations (UN).
X/Twitter	Non-existent.	Non-existent.	Unclear.	Unclear.	Non-existent.

Source : Romero-Vincente (2023), *Platforms' Policies on Climate Change Misinformation*, EU DisinfoLab

In the name of what should we regulate speech?

- Universal Human Rights
- A European history
- Challenge for Europeans: each time they defend their own values, they think they work in the interest of everyone else



Conclusion

- The science wars help understand the current situation
- Universal value claims are limited
- How to use high-level terms like objectivity, reality, truth etc.

Thank you!

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