

October 1, 2013

Interesting look at education philosophies from [WSJ OpEd](#).

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The Journal also reviewed the latest Malcolm Gladwell offering - David and Goliath. Written by a psychology professor at Union College in Schenectady, it is a first class criticism of Gladwell's approaches.

*... In a section on what Mr. Gladwell calls "the theory of desirable difficulty," he asks: "You wouldn't wish dyslexia on your child. Or would you?" You might if you were aware that Mr. Boies himself attributes his success to his dyslexia, as do Gary Cohn, the president of Goldman Sachs, and Brian Grazer, the Hollywood megaproducer. Examples like these are the main source of evidence Mr. Gladwell marshals for the claim that dyslexia might actually be a desirable trait. Difficulty reading is said to have forced Mr. Boies to compensate by developing skills of observation and memory, which he exploited in the courtroom. It's an uplifting story; what seems on the surface to be just a disability turns out, on deeper examination, to be an impetus for hard work and against-all-odds triumph.*

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*First, the study involved just 40 people, or 20 per typeface—a fact Mr. Gladwell fails to mention. That's a very small sample on which to hang a big argument. Second, they were all Princeton University students, an elite group of problem-solvers. Such matters wouldn't matter if the experiment had been repeated with larger samples that are more representative of the general public and had yielded the same results. But Mr. Gladwell doesn't tell readers that when other researchers tried just that, testing nearly 300 people at a Canadian public university, they could not replicate the original effect. Perhaps he didn't know about this, but anyone who has followed recent developments in social science should know that small studies with startling effects must be viewed skeptically until their results are verified on a broader scale. They might hold up, but there is a good chance they will turn out to be spurious.*

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**Glenn Reynolds** of Instapundit writes his weekly TODAY column on the IRS and our mistrust of government and the creeps who work there..

*So last week, while most of the country was talking about football or fears of a government shutdown, Rasmussen released a poll that should worry everyone -- but especially incumbent Democrats in Congress. According to Rasmussen's survey, most Americans think the IRS broke the law by targeting Tea Party groups for harassment, but few expect it to be punished. Fifty-three percent think the IRS broke the law by targeting the Tea Party and other conservative groups like the voter-integrity outfit True The Vote; only 24% disagreed. But only 17% think it is even somewhat likely that anyone will be charged, while 74% think that criminal charges are unlikely.*

*So a majority of Americans think that government officials who exercise an important trust broke the law, but only a very small number think anything will be done to punish them.*

*There are a couple of lessons to draw from this. One is bad for the country in general, but the other is bad for congressional Democrats.*

*The lesson for the country is that trust in the government is very low. (In another Rasmussen poll, 70% think that government and big business often work together against consumers and investors. According to Gallup, trust in government is lower than during Watergate.) But it's worse than that.*

*Believing that government officials break the law is one thing; believing that they face no consequences when they're caught and it becomes public is another. Not only is this a sort of "broken windows" signal to other bureaucrats -- hey, you can break the law and get away with it -- but it's particularly damaging where the IRS is concerned. ...*

**Andrew Malcolm** with late night humor.

**Leno:** *Treasury Secretary Lew says the U.S. will run out of money in three weeks. I'm no financial wizard, but at \$16 trillion in debt, didn't we run out of money \$16 trillion ago?*

**Fallon:** *President Obama won't postpone his Asia trip over the government's fiscal problems. Obama said, "Who do you think I'm gonna ask for the money?"*

**Leno:** *A happy wedding today in Washington state--a 90-year-old bride married her 93-year-old boyfriend. They both found someone they wanted to spend the rest of the month with.*

**Conan:** *Analysts say Apple's actual manufacturing cost for the iPhone is \$199. That's just parts. When you add in the labor, it's \$200*

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WSJ

## [Why Tough Teachers Get Good Results](#)

by Joanne Lipman

I had a teacher once who called his students "idiots" when they screwed up. He was our orchestra conductor, a fierce Ukrainian immigrant named Jerry Kupchynsky, and when someone played out of tune, he would stop the entire group to yell, "Who eez deaf in first violins!?" He made us rehearse until our fingers almost bled. He corrected our wayward hands and arms by poking at us with a pencil.

Today, he' be fired. But when he died a few years ago, he was celebrated: Forty years' worth of former students and colleagues flew back to my New Jersey hometown from every corner of the country, old instruments in tow, to play a concert in his memory. I was among them, toting my long-neglected viola. When the curtain rose on our concert that day, we had formed a symphony orchestra the size of the New York Philharmonic.

I was stunned by the outpouring for the gruff old teacher we knew as Mr. K. But I was equally struck by the success of his former students. Some were musicians, but most had distinguished themselves in other fields, like law, academia and medicine. Research tells us that there is a positive correlation between music education and academic achievement. But that alone didn't explain the belated surge of gratitude for a teacher who basically tortured us through adolescence.

We're in the midst of a national wave of self-recrimination over the U.S. education system. Every day there is hand-wringing over our students falling behind the rest of the world. Fifteen-year-olds in the U.S. trail students in 12 other nations in science and 17 in math, bested by their counterparts not just in Asia but in Finland, Estonia and the Netherlands, too. An entire industry of books and consultants has grown up that capitalizes on our collective fear that American education is inadequate and asks what American educators are doing wrong.

I would ask a different question. What did Mr. K do right? What can we learn from a teacher whose methods fly in the face of everything we think we know about education today, but who was undeniably effective?

As it turns out, quite a lot. Comparing Mr. K's methods with the latest findings in fields from music to math to medicine leads to a single, startling conclusion: It's time to revive old-fashioned education. Not just traditional but old-fashioned in the sense that so many of us knew as kids, with strict discipline and unyielding demands. Because here's the thing: It works.

Now I'm not calling for abuse; I'd be the first to complain if a teacher called my kids names. But the latest evidence backs up my modest proposal. Studies have now shown, among other things, the benefits of moderate childhood stress; how praise kills kids' self-esteem; and why grit is a better predictor of success than SAT scores.

All of which flies in the face of the kinder, gentler philosophy that has dominated American education over the past few decades. The conventional wisdom holds that teachers are supposed to tease knowledge out of students, rather than pound it into their heads. Projects and collaborative learning are applauded; traditional methods like lecturing and memorization—derided as "drill and kill"—are frowned upon, dismissed as a surefire way to suck young minds dry of creativity and motivation.

But the conventional wisdom is wrong. And the following eight principles—a manifesto if you will, a battle cry inspired by my old teacher and buttressed by new research—explain why.

### **1. A little pain is good for you.**

Psychologist K. Anders Ericsson gained fame for his research showing that true expertise requires about 10,000 hours of practice, a notion popularized by Malcolm Gladwell in his book "Outliers." But an often-overlooked finding from the same study is equally important: True expertise requires teachers who give "constructive, even painful, feedback," as Dr. Ericsson put it in a 2007 Harvard Business Review article. He assessed research on top performers in fields ranging from violin performance to surgery to computer programming to chess. And he found that all of them "deliberately picked unsentimental coaches who would challenge them and drive them to higher levels of performance."



*Mr. Kupchynsky helps his daughter with her bow stroke in 1966.*

### **2. Drill, baby, drill.**

Rote learning, long discredited, is now recognized as one reason that children whose families come from India (where memorization is still prized) are creaming their peers in the National Spelling Bee Championship. This cultural difference also helps to explain why students in China

(and Chinese families in the U.S.) are better at math. Meanwhile, American students struggle with complex math problems because, as research makes abundantly clear, they lack fluency in basic addition and subtraction—and few of them were made to memorize their times tables.

William Klemm of Texas A&M University argues that the U.S. needs to reverse the bias against memorization. Even the U.S. Department of Education raised alarm bells, chastising American schools in a 2008 report that bemoaned the lack of math fluency (a notion it mentioned no fewer than 17 times). It concluded that schools need to embrace the dreaded "drill and practice."

### **3. Failure is an option.**

Kids who understand that failure is a necessary aspect of learning actually perform better. In a 2012 study, 111 French sixth-graders were given anagram problems that were too difficult for them to solve. One group was then told that failure and trying again are part of the learning process. On subsequent tests, those children consistently outperformed their peers.

The fear, of course is that failure will traumatize our kids, sapping them of self-esteem. Wrong again. In a 2006 study, a Bowling Green State University graduate student followed 31 Ohio band students who were required to audition for placement and found that even students who placed lowest "did not decrease in their motivation and self-esteem in the long term." The study concluded that educators need "not be as concerned about the negative effects" of picking winners and losers.

### **4. Strict is better than nice.**

What makes a teacher successful? To find out, starting in 2005 a team of researchers led by Claremont Graduate University education professor Mary Poplin spent five years observing 31 of the most highly effective teachers (measured by student test scores) in the worst schools of Los Angeles, in neighborhoods like South Central and Watts. Their No. 1 finding: "They were strict," she says. "None of us expected that."

The researchers had assumed that the most effective teachers would lead students to knowledge through collaborative learning and discussion. Instead, they found disciplinarians who relied on traditional methods of explicit instruction, like lectures. "The core belief of these teachers was, 'Every student in my room is underperforming based on their potential, and it's my job to do something about it—and I can do something about it,'" says Prof. Poplin.

She reported her findings in a lengthy academic paper. But she says that a fourth-grader summarized her conclusions much more succinctly this way: "When I was in first grade and second grade and third grade, when I cried my teachers coddled me. When I got to Mrs. T's room, she told me to suck it up and get to work. I think she's right. I need to work harder."

### **5. Creativity can be learned.**

The rap on traditional education is that it kills children's' creativity. But Temple University psychology professor Robert W. Weisberg's research suggests just the opposite. Prof. Weisberg has studied creative geniuses including Thomas Edison, Frank Lloyd Wright and Picasso—and has concluded that there is no such thing as a born genius. Most creative giants work

ferociously hard and, through a series of incremental steps, achieve things that appear (to the outside world) like epiphanies and breakthroughs.

Prof. Weisberg analyzed Picasso's 1937 masterpiece *Guernica*, for instance, which was painted after the Spanish city was bombed by the Germans. The painting is considered a fresh and original concept, but Prof. Weisberg found instead that it was closely related to several of Picasso's earlier works and drew upon his study of paintings by Goya and then-prevalent Communist Party imagery. The bottom line, Prof. Weisberg told me, is that creativity goes back in many ways to the basics. "You have to immerse yourself in a discipline before you create in that discipline. It is built on a foundation of learning the discipline, which is what your music teacher was requiring of you."

## 6. Grit trumps talent.

In recent years, University of Pennsylvania psychology professor Angela Duckworth has studied spelling bee champs, Ivy League undergrads and cadets at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y.—all together, over 2,800 subjects. In all of them, she found that grit—defined as passion and perseverance for long-term goals—is the best predictor of success. In fact, grit is usually unrelated or even negatively correlated with talent.



*Tough on the podium, Mr. K was always appreciative when he sat in the audience. Above, applauding his students in the mid-1970s.*

Prof. Duckworth, who started her career as a public school math teacher and just won a 2013 MacArthur "genius grant," developed a "Grit Scale" that asks people to rate themselves on a dozen statements, like "I finish whatever I begin" and "I become interested in new pursuits every few months." When she applied the scale to incoming West Point cadets, she found that those who scored higher were less likely to drop out of the school's notoriously brutal summer boot camp known as "Beast Barracks." West Point's own measure—an index that includes SAT scores, class rank, leadership and physical aptitude—wasn't able to predict retention.

Prof. Duckworth believes that grit can be taught. One surprisingly simple factor, she says, is optimism—the belief among both teachers and students that they have the ability to change and thus to improve. In a 2009 study of newly minted teachers, she rated each for optimism (as measured by a questionnaire) before the school year began. At the end of the year, the students whose teachers were optimists had made greater academic gains.

## **7. Praise makes you weak...**

My old teacher Mr. K seldom praised us. His highest compliment was "not bad." It turns out he was onto something. Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck has found that 10-year-olds praised for being "smart" became less confident. But kids told that they were "hard workers" became more confident and better performers.

"The whole point of intelligence praise is to boost confidence and motivation, but both were gone in a flash," wrote Prof. Dweck in a 2007 article in the journal *Educational Leadership*. "If success meant they were smart, then struggling meant they were not."

## **8....while stress makes you strong.**

A 2011 University at Buffalo study found that a moderate amount of stress in childhood promotes resilience. Psychology professor Mark D. Seery gave healthy undergraduates a stress assessment based on their exposure to 37 different kinds of significant negative events, such as death or illness of a family member. Then he plunged their hands into ice water. The students who had experienced a moderate number of stressful events actually felt less pain than those who had experienced no stress at all.

"Having this history of dealing with these negative things leads people to be more likely to have a propensity for general resilience," Prof. Seery told me. "They are better equipped to deal with even mundane, everyday stressors."

Prof. Seery's findings build on research by University of Nebraska psychologist Richard Dienstbier, who pioneered the concept of "toughness"—the idea that dealing with even routine stresses makes you stronger. How would you define routine stresses? "Mundane things, like having a hardass kind of teacher," Prof. Seery says.

My tough old teacher Mr. K could have written the book on any one of these principles. Admittedly, individually, these are forbidding precepts: cold, unyielding, and kind of scary.

But collectively, they convey something very different: confidence. At their core is the belief, the faith really, in students' ability to do better. There is something to be said about a teacher who is demanding and tough not because he thinks students will never learn but because he is so absolutely certain that they will.

Decades later, Mr. K's former students finally figured it out, too. "He taught us discipline," explained a violinist who went on to become an Ivy League-trained doctor. "Self-motivation," added a tech executive who once played the cello. "Resilience," said a professional cellist. "He taught us how to fail—and how to pick ourselves up again."



Clearly, Mr. K's methods aren't for everyone. But you can't argue with his results. And that's a lesson we can all learn from.

*Ms. Lipman is co-author, with Melanie Kupchynsky, of "Strings Attached: One Tough Teacher and the Gift of Great Expectations," to be published by Hyperion on Oct. 1. She is a former deputy managing editor of The Wall Street Journal and former editor-in-chief of Condé Nast Portfolio.*

## WSJ

### **Book Review: 'David and Goliath' by Malcolm Gladwell**

***Malcolm Gladwell too often presents as proven laws what are just intriguing possibilities and musings about human behavior.***

by Christopher F. Chabris

David Boies is the super-lawyer who represented IBM against the U.S. government, the U.S. government against Microsoft, Al Gore against George W. Bush and gay marriage against California's Proposition 8. A man at the top of his profession, presiding over a firm of 200 lawyers, he would seem to be a metaphorical Goliath. But Malcolm Gladwell sees this literal David as a figurative David too, because Mr. Boies came from humble origins and faced mighty obstacles to success.

We learn in Mr. Gladwell's "David and Goliath" that Mr. Boies grew up in rural Illinois, where he was an indifferent student. After he graduated high school, he worked construction. He went to college mainly because his wife encouraged him to. But the small university he attended near Los Angeles happened to have one of the country's premier debate programs. Mr. Boies traveled more than 20,000 miles to participate in debate tournaments. He left college early to start law school at Northwestern, became editor in chief of its law review and transferred to Yale, where he received his law degree.

One of Mr. Gladwell's best sellers, "Outliers" (2008), was about how outsize success results from arbitrary advantages and disciplined practice. Bill Gates was lucky enough to have a computer terminal in his high school when personal computers didn't yet exist; the Beatles laboriously honed their craft in Germany before hitting the London scene. So is the story of David Boies just another case like these—of a guy who stumbled into a rigorous debate program that inculcated the skills and provided the training he would need to out-argue his law-school peers and reach the top?

### **David and Goliath**

*By Malcolm Gladwell*

Little, Brown, 305 pages, \$29

Not in this book. The overarching thesis of "David and Goliath" is that for the strong, "the same qualities that appear to give them strength are often the sources of great weakness," whereas for the weak, "the act of facing overwhelming odds produces greatness and beauty." According to Mr. Gladwell, the secret of Mr. Boies's greatness is neither luck nor training. Rather, he got where he did because he was dyslexic.

You read that right. In a section on what Mr. Gladwell calls "the theory of desirable difficulty," he asks: "You wouldn't wish dyslexia on your child. Or would you?" You might if you were aware that Mr. Boies himself attributes his success to his dyslexia, as do Gary Cohn, the president of Goldman Sachs, and Brian Grazer, the Hollywood megaproducer. Examples like these are the main source of evidence Mr. Gladwell marshals for the claim that dyslexia might actually be a desirable trait. Difficulty reading is said to have forced Mr. Boies to compensate by developing skills of observation and memory, which he exploited in the courtroom. It's an uplifting story; what seems on the surface to be just a disability turns out, on deeper examination, to be an impetus for hard work and against-all-odds triumph.

Mr. Gladwell enjoys a reputation for translating social science into actionable insights. But the data behind the surprising dyslexia claim is awfully slim. He notes in passing that a 2009 survey found a much higher incidence of dyslexia in entrepreneurs than in corporate managers. But this study involved only 102 self-reported dyslexic entrepreneurs, most of whom probably had careers nothing like those of Mr. Boies or his fellow highfliers. Later Mr. Gladwell mentions that dyslexics are also overrepresented in prisons—a point that would appear to vitiate his argument. He addresses the contradiction by suggesting that while no person should want to be dyslexic, "we as a society need people" with serious disadvantages to exist, for we all benefit from the over-achievement that supposedly results. But even if dyslexia could be shown to cause entrepreneurship, the economic analysis that would justify a claim of its social worth is daunting, and Mr. Gladwell doesn't attempt it.

To make his point about the general benefits of difficulty, Mr. Gladwell refers to a 2007 experiment in which people were given three mathematical reasoning problems to solve. One group was randomly assigned to read the problems in a clear typeface like the one you are reading now; the other had to read them in a more difficult light-gray italic print. The latter group scored 29% higher, suggesting that making things harder improves cognitive performance. It's an impressive result on the surface, but less so if you dig a bit deeper.

First, the study involved just 40 people, or 20 per typeface—a fact Mr. Gladwell fails to mention. That's a very small sample on which to hang a big argument. Second, they were all Princeton University students, an elite group of problem-solvers. Such matters wouldn't matter if the experiment had been repeated with larger samples that are more representative of the general public and had yielded the same results. But Mr. Gladwell doesn't tell readers that when other researchers tried just that, testing nearly 300 people at a Canadian public university, they could not replicate the original effect. Perhaps he didn't know about this, but anyone who has followed recent developments in social science should know that small studies with startling effects must be viewed skeptically until their results are verified on a broader scale. They might hold up, but there is a good chance they will turn out to be spurious.

This flaw permeates Mr. Gladwell's writings: He excels at telling just-so stories and cherry-picking science to back them. In "The Tipping Point" (2000), he enthused about a study that showed facial expressions to be such powerful subliminal persuaders that ABC News anchor Peter Jennings made people vote for Ronald Reagan in 1984 just by smiling more when he reported on him than when he reported on his opponent, Walter Mondale. In "Blink" (2005), Mr. Gladwell wrote that a psychologist with a "love lab" could watch married couples interact for just 15 minutes and predict with shocking accuracy whether they would divorce within 15 years. In neither case was there rigorous evidence for such claims.

But what about those dyslexic business titans? With all respect to Messrs. Boies, Cohn and Grazer, successful people are not the best witnesses in the cases of their own success. How can Mr. Boies, or anyone else, know that dyslexia, rather than rigorous debate training, was the true cause of his legal triumphs? His parents were both teachers, and could have instilled a love of studying and learning. He also had high SAT scores, which indicate intelligence and an ability to focus. Maybe his memory was strong before he realized he had trouble reading. Perhaps it's a combination of all these factors, plus some luck. Incidentally, Mr. Boies's SAT scores and debate training aren't mentioned in "David and Goliath." I learned about them from his 2004 memoir, "Courting Justice."

In Mr. Cohn's case, dyslexia is said to have made him willing to take risks to get his first job in finance, as an options trader. Suppose he weren't dyslexic—isn't it likely that he would have still been a bit of a risk-taker? I know of no scientific evidence for a correlation between risk-taking and reading difficulty, and even if there were one, taking risks might just as well lead to bad outcomes (like those prison sentences) as to good ones.

A theorem of mathematics implies that in the absence of friction, any knot, no matter how complicated, can be undone by pulling on one end of the string. The causes of success in the real world are nothing like this: Resistance abounds, and things are so tangled up that it is virtually impossible to sort them out. Mr. Gladwell does no work to try to loosen the threads. Instead he picks one and, armed with the power of hindsight, just keeps yanking on it. Why are the Impressionist painters renowned today? Because they set up their own exhibitions to gain greater visibility in the 19th-century Paris art scene. "David and Goliath" discusses no other possibilities. Why did crime go down in Brownsville, Brooklyn over the past decade? Because the local police worked hard to increase their legitimacy in the minds of the community members. Nothing else is seriously considered.

None of this is to say that Mr. Gladwell has lost his gift for telling stories, or that his stories are unimportant. On the contrary, in "David and Goliath" readers will travel with colorful characters who overcame great difficulties and learn fascinating facts about the Battle of Britain, cancer medicine and the struggle for civil rights, to name just a few more topics upon which Mr. Gladwell's wide-ranging narrative touches. This is an entertaining book. But it teaches little of general import, for the morals of the stories it tells lack solid foundations in evidence and logic.

One of the longest chapters addresses the question of how high-school students choose colleges. The protagonist is a woman with the pseudonym of Caroline Sacks, who was at the top of her class in high school and had loved science ever since she drew pictures of insects as a child. She was admitted to Brown University and the University of Maryland; she went to Brown, her first choice of all the colleges she visited, with the goal of a science degree.

Ms. Sacks ran into trouble early on in her science courses and hit a wall in organic chemistry. There were students in her classes who seemed to effortlessly grasp concepts she struggled with, and she got discouragingly low grades. She switched her major and looks back with regret, saying that if she'd gone to Maryland, "I'd still be in science."

In this conclusion she may be right. Mr. Gladwell reports data showing that, no matter what kind of college students attend, those who start a science major in the top third of the ability range of students at their own college (judged by their SAT scores) are much more likely to graduate with a science degree than those in the bottom third—the odds are about 55% versus 15%.

This is a classic "fish and ponds" problem. Being the Little Fish in the Big Pond can be daunting. "It's the Little Pond that maximizes your chances to do whatever you want," Mr. Gladwell concludes. Ms. Sacks should have gone to Maryland instead of Brown—she would have been a Big Fish, avoided discouraging competition and stayed in science.

This argument exemplifies one of Mr. Gladwell's stock maneuvers. We might call it "the fallacy of the unexamined premise." He starts this discussion by saying that "a science degree is just about the most valuable asset a young person can have in the modern economy." And if you would be a weak student at an elite university or a strong student at a lower-ranked school, the literature says that you are more likely to get that science degree at the lower-ranked school. Therefore you should ignore conventional wisdom and pick the lower-ranked school over the higher one.

The problems here are many: Degrees from different kinds of schools are not assets of identical value, as Mr. Gladwell baldly implies when he writes that students at Harvard University and at a mid-ranked liberal-arts college are "studying the same textbooks and wrestling with the same concepts and trying to master the same problem sets." As anyone with experience at both sorts of institutions knows, this is false. All of the things that Mr. Gladwell says are the same are in fact different, and the market know this. To be sure, not every Ivy League science graduate is a genius, and many will be outperformed in science jobs and careers by the graduates of state universities and small colleges. But on average, an employer should bet on the Ivy Leaguer.

As for Ms. Sacks, why should she have lowered her sights only as far as Maryland? Even there she might have struggled. A science degree would have been hers even more surely if she had gone to her local community college, where she had already gotten a couple of As in courses she took during high school. But would she have learned as much? And would that degree have much real value?

Perhaps tough competition gives students a more realistic view of their own strengths and weaknesses. An accurate sense of one's own ability could help the process of acquiring expertise. I loved computer programming in high school, so I majored in computer science in college, but by graduation it was clear that I was no standout. Accepting that fact freed me to switch to psychology, where I have had some success. Finding your skills may trump following your passion.

Indeed, Mr. Gladwell never really explains why being a small fish is an "undesirable difficulty," rather than the kind of desirable difficulty like dyslexia that led David Boies to greatness. Shouldn't Caroline Sacks be on her way to a Nobel Prize by now? Aside from the end result—Mr. Boies won, Ms. Sacks lost—we have no guide to which difficulties are desirable and which are not. Losing a parent at an early age is a desirable difficulty because it is common among eminent achievers in a variety of fields, argues Mr. Gladwell at one point. But in later criticizing California's infamous three-strikes law for its devastating effects on families, he says that "for a child, losing a father to prison is an undesirable difficulty." The idea that difficulty is good when it helps you and bad when it doesn't is no great insight.

In a recent interview, Mr. Gladwell suggested that the hidden weakness of "Goliath" enterprises is their tendency to assume that the strategy that made them great will keep them great. But there are prominent examples of companies that failed after not changing direction (Blockbuster and Kodak) as well as ones that succeeded (Apple deciding to stick with a proprietary operating system rather than shift to Windows). There is no prospective way to know which is right,

despite what legions of business gurus say. Sticking with what has worked is far from irrational; indeed, it is the perfect strategy right up until it isn't.

One thing "David and Goliath" shows is that Mr. Gladwell has not changed his own strategy, despite serious criticism of his prior work. What he presents are mostly just intriguing possibilities and musings about human behavior, but what his publisher sells them as, and what his readers may incorrectly take them for, are lawful, causal rules that explain how the world really works. Mr. Gladwell should acknowledge when he is speculating or working with thin evidentiary soup. Yet far from abandoning his hand or even standing pat, Mr. Gladwell has doubled down. This will surely bring more success to a Goliath of nonfiction writing, but not to his readers.

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## USA Today

### [IRS scandal means bad news for Obama](#)

***Come 2014, the government's damaged brand will reflect poorly on president and his party.***

by Glenn Harlan Reynolds

So last week, while most of the country was talking about football or fears of a government shutdown, Rasmussen released a poll that should worry everyone -- but especially incumbent Democrats in Congress. According to Rasmussen's survey, [most Americans](#) think the IRS broke the law by targeting Tea Party groups for harassment, but few expect it to be punished. [Fifty-three percent](#) think the IRS broke the law by targeting the Tea Party and other conservative groups like the voter-integrity outfit True The Vote; only 24% disagreed. But only [17%](#) think it is even somewhat likely that anyone will be charged, while [74%](#) think that criminal charges are unlikely.

So a majority of Americans think that government officials who exercise an important trust broke the law, but only a very small number think anything will be done to punish them.

There are a couple of lessons to draw from this. One is bad for the country in general, but the other is bad for congressional Democrats.

The lesson for the country is that trust in the government is very low. (In another [Rasmussen poll](#), 70% think that government and big business often work together against consumers and investors. According to [Gallup](#), trust in government is lower than during Watergate.) But it's worse than that.

Believing that government officials break the law is one thing; believing that they face no consequences when they're caught and it becomes public is another. Not only is this a sort of "broken windows" signal to other bureaucrats -- hey, you can break the law and get away with it -- but it's particularly damaging where the IRS is concerned.



*Tea Party activists in Cincinnati demonstrate in May*

America's tax system, despite the feared IRS audit, is fundamentally based on voluntary compliance. If everyone starts cheating, there aren't enough IRS agents to make a dent. Beyond taxes, that's true regarding compliance with the law in general. Moral legitimacy is what makes honest people obey the law even when they can get away with breaking it. Undermine that and you get a country like, say, Italy, where tax evasion is a national sport.

Meanwhile, there's another bit of bad news buried in that poll, this time for Democrats. The bad news is that a majority of Americans thinks the IRS broke the law even though the [news media](#) have consistently downplayed the scandal. But as the scandal has dragged on [for months](#), word has filtered out anyway. Come 2014, the government's damaged brand will reflect poorly on members of the president's party, regardless of media efforts to protect them.

Beyond that, the *Wall Street Journal's* James Taranto has begun calling President Obama "[President Asterisk](#)," saying that IRS efforts to weaken his opposition in the run-up to the 2012 election devalue Obama's victory the way illegal steroid use devalues an athlete's record-book standing. [Taranto writes](#) that this puts Obama in a situation that is in some ways worse than Nixon after Watergate: "We now know that government corruption -- namely IRS persecution of dissenters -- was a factor in Obama's re-election.

To be sure, Obama himself has not, at least so far, been implicated in the IRS wrongdoing as Nixon ultimately was in Watergate. On the other hand, Nixon's re-election victory was so overwhelming that no one could plausibly argue Watergate was a necessary condition for it. The idea that Obama could not have won without an abusive IRS is entirely plausible."

Of course, the press hated Nixon, while it is still doing everything it can to protect Obama. But, as we see, word filters out. Stay tuned.

*Glenn Harlan Reynolds is professor of law at the University of Tennessee and the author of [The New School](#): How the Information Age Will Save American Education from Itself. He blogs at [InstaPundit.com](#).*

**IBD**

### [Obama plans Asia trip to borrow billions more](#)

by Andy Malcolm



*Obama pleads for loan to keep spending*

Conan: Microsoft founder Bill Gates says he regrets dropping out of school and making users hit “control, alt, delete” to log in. Both admissions appear in his new book, “Bill Gates: A Life of Failures.”

Fallon: Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt said he plans to retire after the 2016 Olympics in Brazil. Asked what he'll do in retirement, Bolt said, “Walk.”

Leno: Vladimir Putin lashes out again at the U.S.. This time for giving an Emmy to "The Liberace Story: Behind the Candelabra."

Conan: A new Cosmopolitan article explains ObamaCare to women. The article is called, "10 Pre-existing Conditions to Drive Your Man Crazy."

Leno: Britney Spears has signed a two-year deal to perform at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas. If you go to Vegas, you don't want to miss that show. They say seeing Britney in concert is the closest thing to seeing her sing live.

Letterman: Well, the U.N. General Assembly is open again -- 135 world leaders in town. That's why you can't find a hooker.

Fallon: After Obama's United Nations speech, Mideast leaders said, 'You have touched our hearts. We want peace.' Obama said, 'Really?' They said, 'No, but your look was priceless.'

Conan: The NBA considers game jerseys with player nicknames rather than last names. It would be easier for fans to relate and harder for women looking for child support.

Conan: Analysts say Apple's actual manufacturing cost for the iPhone is \$199. That's just parts. When you add in the labor, it's \$200.

Fallon: Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has launched a new project to bring Internet access to everyone in the world. It's called, "Starbucks."

Fallon: President Obama says Florida residents will have 102 different insurance options under ObamaCare. Because we all know Florida people love a confusing number of options.

Letterman: The United Nations brings hundreds of world leaders to New York City each September. They get full diplomatic immunity. I saw one dictator walking down Broadway with a 16-ounce drink.

Letterman: Evil Russian dictator Vladimir Putin is also in town for the U.N.. He's actually here to steal a World Series ring.

Letterman: It's a very important U.N. session. Today they addressed the whole Ben Affleck-as-Batman thing. Tomorrow is Angela Merkel Bobblehead Day.

Conan: The South Carolina winner of the \$400 million Powerball has decided to remain anonymous. But I'm guessing it's the Cracker Barrel cashier with the Lear jet.

Conan: Miley Cyrus says she'll "probably never twerk again." Miley said, "There's too many other things I want to try once and do badly."

Leno: Sen. Ted Cruz spoke for 21 straight hours on the Senate floor, still three hours short of the record when someone asked Joe Biden, "What's new?"

Conan: A new cable channel is on with all dog programs called "DogTV." In related news, there's also an [all-cat channel called "YouTube."](#)

Leno: In Russia, a group of parents have asked President Putin to cancel an Elton John concert because it promotes a homosexual lifestyle. They say they don't want to see gay people on



stage. So instead, they're going to replace Elton John's show with a performance of the Bolshoi Ballet.

Conan: The U.S. Postmaster General said the Postal Service must raise postage rates due to terrible financial troubles. He conveyed this news in an email.

Conan: A new British TV show has people having sex in front of a live audience. It started out as a regular talk show, but everyone just really hit it off.

Conan: New research says we should change how we feed cows to reduce greenhouse gas: methane. The first recommendation— Eliminate "Taco Night."

Leno: Treasury Secretary Lew says the U.S. will run out of money in three weeks. I'm no financial wizard, but at \$16 trillion in debt, didn't we run out of money \$16 trillion ago?

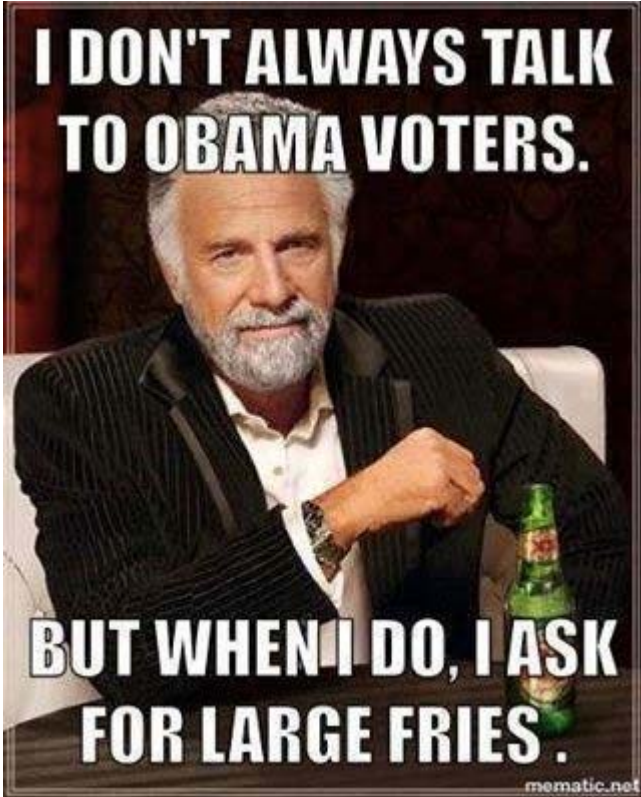
Fallon: OJ Simpson was caught stealing cookies from the prison cafeteria. Simpson denies that. But he is writing a book about how he WOULD'VE done it.

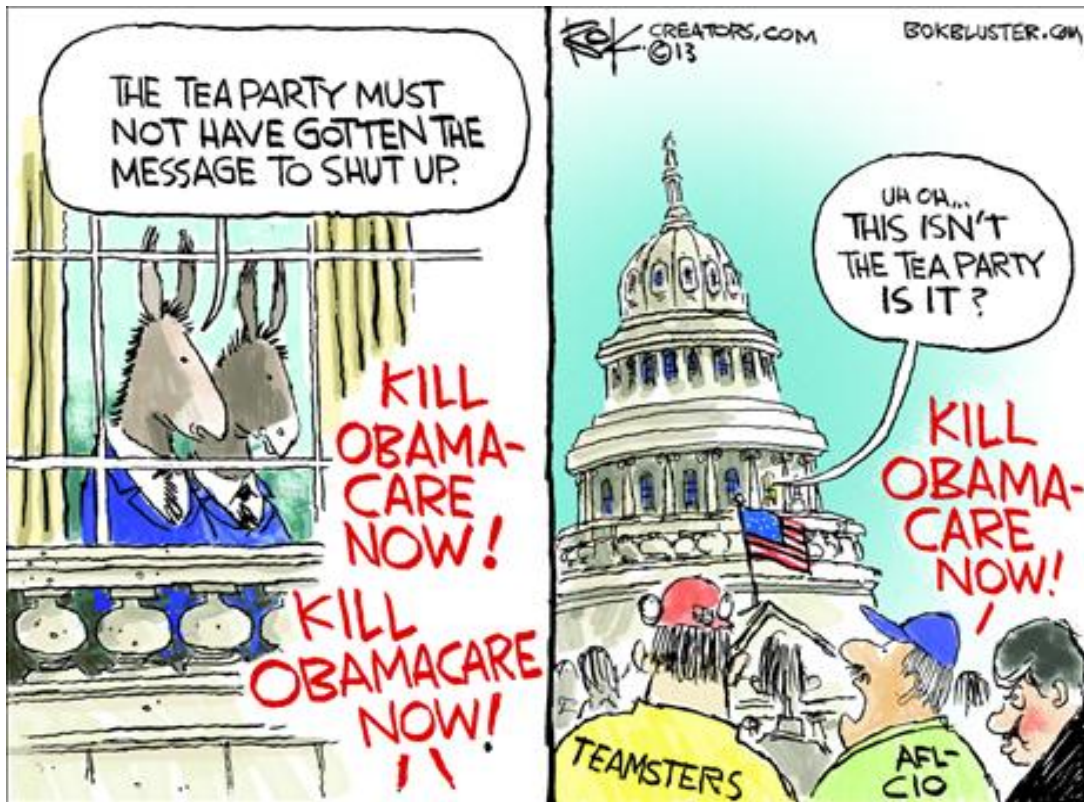
Fallon: OJ was caught with the cookies. Unfortunately, officials blew the case, when they had him stick his hand in the cookie jar and it wouldn't fit.

Fallon: President Obama won't postpone his Asia trip over the government's fiscal problems. Obama said, "Who do you think I'm gonna ask for the money?"

Leno: A happy wedding today in Washington state--a 90-year-old bride married her 93-year-old boyfriend. They both found someone they wanted to spend the rest of the month with.



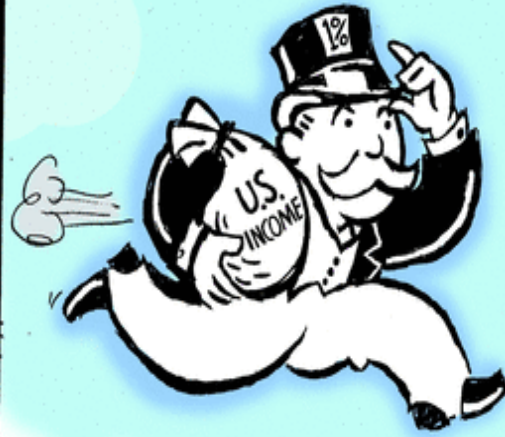




# MAKERS



# TAKERS



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