Quantitizing the Problematic: Applying Statistical Methods to Popular Medievalisms

Ken Mondschein, Northampton, Massachusetts, USA

The study of popular medievalism tends to follow the modes of scholarly writing most imbued in its practitioners by their professional training. As most of us are degreed as historians, art historians, or as scholars of modern languages, these methods typically include literary criticism, rich description, and deep reading, with an emphasis on the exegesis of singular texts—often texts (including image/texts such as memes) we find online. Such exegesis often concentrates on lay medievalist communities who we see as exhibiting attitudes that we "academics" find undesirable (or "problematic" in professional parlance), such as pursuing a narrative of a Middle Ages that was white, Christian, cis-gendered, imperialist, and patriarchal. These methods often lead to these communities being painted with a broad brush in our studies, where we cherry-pick our sources, take the part as standing for the whole, and bend them to the needs of our preferred narrative.

An example of this approach is Cord Whitaker's exegesis of a photograph of Aaron "Rusty" Lloyd in his introductory note to a 2015 issue of *Postmedieval*.[1] Mr. Lloyd, known as Aaron Palomides of Buckminster in the medievalist community called the Society for Creative Anachronism,[2] poses for a photographer while wearing typical SCA kit: a surcoat, a coif, and stainless-steel armor; and holding a steel sword —which marks this, even more than his hamming it up for the camera, as a posed photograph, since the SCA uses rattan sticks for armored combat. My own eye is drawn to the "SCA-ness" of the photo; for instance, his armor, which looks to be from Ice Falcon Armory and simultaneously suggests fifteenth-century harness while utterly failing to resemble it any way. Whitaker's gaze, however, latches onto the signification of Mr. Lloyd's skin, asserting that the fact that he is Black is disruptive of expectations and hierarchies, and concluding that, "When Aaron Palomides confronts you with his sidelong gaze, he knows he is a black knight." Nowhere, however, are Mr. Lloyd's own views, or those of his friends in the SCA, recorded. The academic eye has made Mr. Lloyd into an object of study while claiming to speak for him, while the subject's own voice is unheard. (I did, naturally, contact Mr. Lloyd for comment. While not disagreeing with Whitaker's interpretation, and stating that he is "very proud of that picture," "it would have been nice if he had asked me. It would have made for a stronger piece.")

The political orientation of the viewer whom Whitaker interrogates is similarly assumed. The fact that the possessor of this hypothetical gaze would take issue with Mr. Lloyd being a "[B]lack knight" is a given. And, if they have an issue with this, what can we say of their views towards decolonization, LGBTQ rights, and other social-justice issues? In other words, the inherently problematic nature of lay medievalist

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1 Cord Whitaker, "About the Cover," *postmedieval* 6.1 (2015): 1–2.
2 The SCA's history and origins will be discussed below.

communities is presumed by academic medievalists who, in reality, do not engage with such communities and treat them as convenient stalking-horses for their own agendas.

The aim of this paper is to take a different approach and attempt to show how we can use the tools of social science to nuance, deepen, and better our exploration of modern medievalist communities by conducting broad research and allowing the participants to speak for themselves. In other words, I wish to replace anecdote with data. This, in turn, not only allows these communities collective agency and a collective voice, but gives us a far better picture of what is going on in popular medievalism. My specific subject is to examine attitudes towards the aforementioned categories of race, religion, xenophobia, gender roles, patriarchy, etc., in the Society for Creative Anachronism in a quantifiable, statistically sound way. Because I am not presupposing any knowledge of sociology, statistics, or other research methods in you, the reader, I will depart from the standard social-science writing style, especially the use of the passive voice, and will rather walk you through the project and its results as I would any other text.

Statement of Positionality

As has become common in several fields, it would be appropriate for me to note those elements of my own positionality that I feel comfortable disclosing. This is a work of "outsider" scholarship: I am neither a member of the SCA nor of the academy, and feel alienated from both; however, I still attend occasional SCA events and academic conferences. Additionally, I have previously published on the SCA and social-justice issues, particularly critiquing the issues I outlined above, as well as related issues in Historical European Martial Arts and other medievalist communities, as well as critiqued academia and its privileges. My political sentiments are especially influenced by my Jewish heritage and having grown up in a community that included Holocaust survivors.

Background

The Society for Creative Anachronism was founded in Berkeley, California in 1966 and incorporated in 1968.[3] It claims 30,000 members and as many non-member participants. The SCA is primarily based in North America, with active branches in Australia, South Africa, and around US military bases—in other words, places where the European Middle Ages did not take place, but to where Anglophone culture, with its romanticized view of the Middle Ages, has been exported. There is also a European contingent, seeded by US servicemembers around military bases, but there is some irony that all of Europe is considered its own "kingdom" (regional governing chapter) of Drachenwald, while the U.S. and Canada are divided into 18 kingdoms. (Of course, as I mentioned, the SCA is a primarily Anglophone organization, and would-be reenactors in Europe have no shortage of other reenactment groups to choose from—most with considerably more grounding in

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3 The best scholarly treatment of the SCA is probably Michael A. Cramer, *Medieval Fantasy as Performance: The Society for Creative Anachronism and the Current Middle Ages* (New York: Scarecrow Press, 2009).

historical authenticity.) Though originally focusing on "recreating" European culture from the Fall of Rome to c. 1600, the SCA has since officially expanded to a world focus—though participants have been adopting the "personas" of premodern Japanese, Native Americans, or Mongols for decades.

The SCA is currently in the midst of numerous equity and diversity efforts and the attendant controversies, which are hindered by the fact that, despite protestations to the contrary, its activities have historically centered around mostly-male participants, using a semblance of medieval armor (such as Mr. Lloyd wears in the photo), or gear inspired by other cultures, engaging in full-contact competitive stick fighting. I argue for the centrality of the stick-fighting game to the organization's ethos because leadership of the individual SCA "kingdoms" is determined, by the organization's own corporate charter, to the winner of a periodic "crown tournament." In other words, participants actually engage in physical fighting with each other in order to gain a respected administrative role.

This combat and its outcomes are deeply meaningful to participants, who are expected to play along as good "subjects." Cramer states that through this ritualized combat and the "king game" that arises therefrom, SCAdians "have created a community, or better yet a tribe, which gives them romance, companionship, and identity, a literate/filmic/academic/ludic Middle Ages. And at the center of this Middle Ages is a king, part Aragorn, part Charlemagne, part King Arthur from Malory, and part King Arthur from Monty Python…"[4] So, too, is it a performance of masculinity: as I have previously written, this was "more than a physical outlet for the creative energies and unfulfilled ideations of a generation of young misfits: It was also a way to impress chicks with one's physical prowess, the perfect antidote to the stereotype of the bespectacled, Spock-grokking sci-fi nerd."[5]

To my knowledge, no other 501(c)(3)[6] nonprofits in the United States elect officers through single combat. However, this corporate governing structure has direct equity implications, or, as I have previously written on *medievalists.net*:

> All awards, recognition, and rank for participation or excellence in the Society's various activities ultimately stems from the "king" and "queen." Normally, it is a male who fights and wins for a female consort, though in 2012 the rules changed to allow same-sex couples—if the current Crown permits it: "Each competitor… must be fighting for a prospective consort of the opposite sex unless the Crown has elected to permit a competitor to fight for a prospective consort of the same sex."
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> …[The SCA] is an egalitarian organization, but one in which social status is ultimately based on a romanticized might-makes-right mentality. While many academic considerations of the Society perhaps mistakenly concentrate on the idea of an imagined Middle Ages as a problematic "white space"… few have handled the diversity aspects of choosing one's leader-

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4 Cramer, *Medieval Fantasy*, 173.

5 Ken Mondschein, "The Society for Creative Anachronism." Disinfo.com, February 2, 2004, <https://web.archive.org/web/20040204021101/http://www.disinfo.com/site/displayarticle2028.html>, last accessed December 25, 2021.

6 501(c)(3) organizations are named after the section of the US tax code that establishes nonprofit educational corporations.

ship through stick-fighting: Those who are older, not able-bodied, without the resources to put in long hours training and traveling to tournaments, or simply not athletically inclined are unlikely to rise to the organization's single most prestigious leadership position.[7]

More importantly, as I have written elsewhere about modern-medieval martial sports in general, the SCA's attitude makes "a virtue of the very idea the Victorians condemned…. [the medieval is] strong, manly, authentic, and good, while anything not matching this vision of the world is weak, inauthentic, degenerated, effeminate, and adulterated."[8]

It will perhaps then be unsurprising to you, my audience, that "problematic" behaviors, such as the 2018 incident where an SCA "king" and "queen" in California trolled the populace by wearing reproduced swastika trim on their garb, have been associated with reigning "royalty."[9] More recently, the former king of the East, Luis Rondon, was convicted in October 2021 for the murder of his girlfriend two years previously. Rondon had stepped down from the throne upon his arrest shortly after the murder and was promptly given a lifetime banishment, and his wife, who was known in the Society as "Margarita De' Siena" and who had been unaware of her husband's affair, led the kingdom alone for almost a year since the usual cycle of Crown Tournaments had been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Rondon incident reveals the best and the worst of the SCA: the capacity for male entitlement and violence, and the ability of the community to rally around a central figure in the face of tragedy.

This gave rise to my thesis: Considering that I can certainly identify problematic attitudes and behaviors among some subset of SCA members, what can I say of actual attitudes amongst participants in the organization at large? The objective of this study is to measure and quantitize such attitudes using the tools of social science research.

Methodology

In 2018, which is to say pre-pandemic and thus before many schisms that arose in the Society around suspension of activities and masking and vaccination policies, I administered an online survey primarily via Facebook and obtained 550 responses (or, to use statistical parlance, "n = 550"), which is considered a very solid sample size for statistical purposes. My access was aided by the fact that I am well-known to these communities; it was also possibly hindered by my well-known commitment to, and writing on, social justice.

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7 Ken Mondschein, "Medievalisms: The Society for Creative Anachronism." *The Public Medievalist,* November, 2018, <https://www.medievalists.net/2018/11/society-for-creative-anachronism/>, last accessed December 25, 2021.

8 Ken Mondschein, "What *Knight Fight* gets Dead Wrong About Medieval Men." *The Public Medievalist*, February 14, 2019, < https://www.publicmedievalist.com/knight-fight/>, last accessed December 25, 2021. I would add to my earlier observations that, since cis-gendered males tend to be the ones who win at the stick-fighting game, same-sex female couples (or couples where the fighter is FTM trans) are also excluded.

9 Ken Mondschein, "Not a Good Look: The SCA Swastika Incident." *The Public Medievalist*, February 1, 2018, < https://www.publicmedievalist.com/sca-swastika/>, last accessed December 25, 2021.

I captured data not just from the SCA, but from several communities, which included gaming, LARPing, and historical medieval martial-arts. For this paper, however, we will concentrate on the subset of respondents who identified as SCA participants (n = 253). This is still considered a very good sample size.

Participants were asked about their attitudes in approximately 20 categories, asking related questions from both positive and negative positions along a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). In designing a survey, one should not only ask, for instance, "I agree that Christmas has become over-commercialized," but also, "I would like it if the Christmas season was less commercialized." This is considered best practices in order to eliminate what is known as "acquiescence bias."[10]

The individual Likert scales were then turned into composite scores using the following formula:

$$S = \frac{s1 + (6 - s2)}{2}$$

In plain English, I created a composite score (S) by averaging the scores in one direction ($s1$) with the inverse of the scores in the other direction $(6 - s2)$. This was not appropriate for all the scores; I note variations in the table below and in my footnotes. I also asked participants for demographic and other information, such as levels of education and the study of history. Responses were anonymous, identified only by a timestamp.

The questions and categories were as follows. Note that because questions were asked from both *positive* and *negative* ends, some wording, at first glance, seems offensive, but it was important to gauge the survey participants' agreement or disagreement with the statements.

Category	Question 1	Question 2
Attitudes towards objective truth	There exists an objective truth in the study of history	In the study of history, we need to consider that the "truth" will look different depending on where you stand
Historical projection	I admire the Middle Ages as an age when people believed in important values like faith, honor, and family	The Middle Ages are interesting, but shouldn't guide our ideas of morality today
Attitudes towards historical violence	The study of history is the study of conflict between peoples	There are lots of important things to study in history besides conflict and warfare

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10 See, for instance, Ozan Kuru and Josh Pasek, "Improving social media measurement in surveys: Avoiding acquiescence bias in Facebook research," *Computers in Human Behavior* 57 (2016): 82–92, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.12.008>.

Perspicuitas

Category	Question 1	Question 2	
Attitudes towards academia	The study of history in an academic setting is really useful	Taking classes in history is useless; you can learn everything you need on your own	
Anti-intellectualism	Academic historians these days are more concerned with ideology than really studying what happened in history	Academics often ask really interesting questions about the past that wouldn't have occurred to me	
Authoritarianism	I believe that in my reenactment/martial arts organization(s), people who are more successful in competition should have more authority	In my reenactment/martial arts organizations(s), I think that leadership should come from those with the most knowledge	
Western chauvinism	It's potentially troublesome to me when someone talks about "being proud of one's European heritage."	It's no different to say, "I'm proud of my European heritage" than it is to say "I'm proud of my African heritage"	
Positivism/anti-positivism	I am uncomfortable calling a society "primitive," since even less technologically advanced cultures can be quite sophisticated	History is the story of progress to a better world	
Anti-Islamicism/ Convivencia	I am interested in learning about times when Muslims, Christians, and Jews lived productively together	The Muslim and Christian worlds will always be in conflict	
Pro/anti-trans attitudes	Men who want to be women and women who want to be men are most likely mentally ill	I welcome trans people into my communities	
Sexism[11]	Men and women are inherently different, and their roles in modern society should reflect this	I don't have a problem with women doing "men's jobs" in modern society	Women should not do male things like fighting in my reenactment/martial arts organization

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11 Again, categories with more than one question were averaged between all scores after correction.

Perspicuitas

Category	Question 1	Question 2
"Jimmy the Greek" score[12]	Your potential for athletic performance is determined by your genes, and certain racial backgrounds are naturally more athletic	What people are good at is for a large part shaped by their racial and ethnic background
Anti-xenophobia[13]	I don't feel at all like European culture is being threatened	I think that people who come to my country from other places should have to conform to the way we do things here
	Multiculturalism has been a failure	European society has always been diverse
Other (1)[14]	It's important to consider modern concerns like diversity and the representation of women when choosing which aspects of the past to study	(N/A)
Other (2)[15]	It's important to have a global perspective on history	(N/A)

Additionally, I asked the following demographic questions:

- Where do you live?
- What do you identify as racially/ethnically?
- Religious identity
- Sex and gender identity
- Amount of formal study of history

Geographical distribution was preeminently in the U.S. (77%), with most respondents living in the Northeast, followed by the Midwest and the South.

12 Since this category (named after the sports bookmaker James George Snyder Sr.'s racist comments of 1988) did not ask the question positively and negatively, it was simply averaged.
13 Again, categories with more than one question were averaged between all scores after correction.
14 These questions were considered individually.
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International	
Australia	16
Canada	22
Europe (all)	9
Other	7
United States	
Midwest	41
Northeast	71
South	36
Southwest	15
West	18
West Coast	18
Total US	199
Total	253

Unsurprisingly, most respondents (83%) were of European ancestry:

European	211
African American	1
East Asian	2
Latin American	2
Native American	3
Mixed	20
Other	14
Total	253

If we look at whiteness on a more granular level, we see most (68% of Europeans, or 57% of the total) considered themselves of northern European ancestry:

European minority (Jewish, Romany, etc.)	11
European—mixed or other	49

European—northern (British, German, Swedish, etc.)	144
European—Southern	7
Total	211

Religion seems to be the most diverse category, though the largest number of participants (85, or 33%) identified as non-religious (agnostic, atheist, not religious). Much could be written about new religious and spiritual movements such as Asatru, heathenism, Wicca, and other neo-paganisms and neo-medievalism, but such is outside the scope of the present article.

Agnostic	38
Asatru/Heathenism/Wiccan/ other neopagan religion	28
Atheist	33
Buddhist	4
Catholic	13
Christian, evangelical Protestant	14
Christian, mainline Protestant	31
Jewish	16
None of the above	11
Not religious	14
Other	22
Spiritual/theist, but no organized religion	29
Total	253

Gender skewed male and cis-gendered (57%).

cis-female	86
cis-male	146
MTF trans	1
FTM trans	2

Nonbinary/other	9
Found the question offensive	10
Total	253

Education has a wide distribution. Considering the inaccessibility and classism of higher education, I made sure to include not just formal education, but self-study.

I have postgraduate training in history, art history, languages/literature, or a related discipline	23
I majored or double-majored and I've been continuing my own education ever since	31
I majored or double-majored in history, art history, languages/literature, or a related discipline	15
I took some courses in college and I've been reading about it on my own	115
I took some courses in history, art history, languages/literature, or a related discipline as an undergraduate	30
What I remember from high school, plus reading on my own	39
Total	253

Results

Likert scales are best expressed as histograms, which express number of scores for each aggregated question, by count (number) of individuals. Remember that a score of 1 indicates strong disagreement, while 5 indicates strong agreement.

Figure 1: Objective truth exists
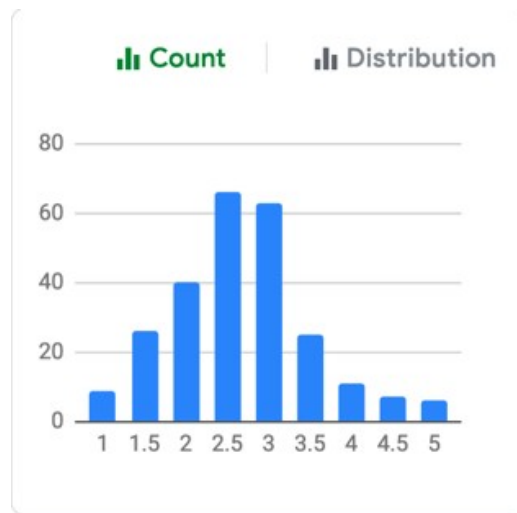
Discussion: Scores have a strong central tendency, indicating that most responders are indifferent to an idea of "objective truth," with a slight tendency towards disagreement.

Figure 2: Projection
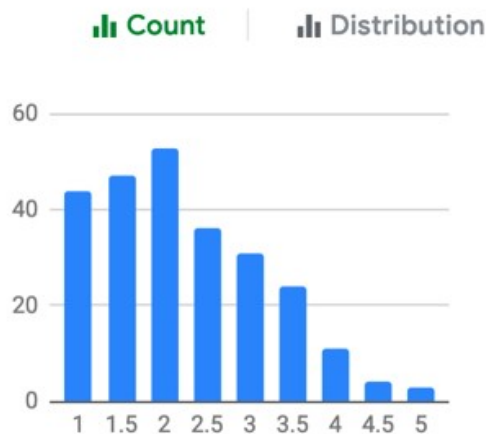
Discussion: Scores cluster around disagreement, suggesting that, while most think there are admirable things about the past, only a small minority of respondents see their vision of the Middle Ages as a model for the present day.

Figure 3: Violence as a driver of history
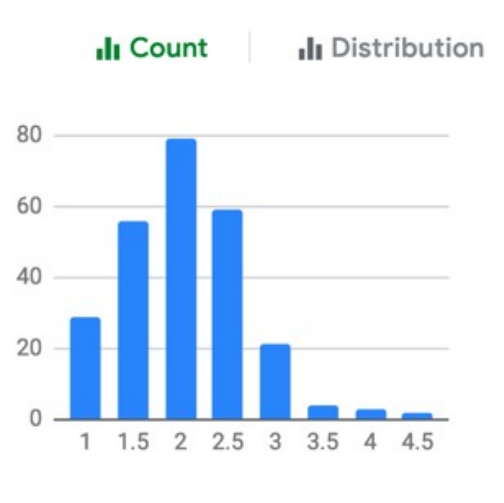
Discussion: Scores cluster around moderate disagreement, suggesting a less Hobbesian worldview.

Figure 4: Pro-academia
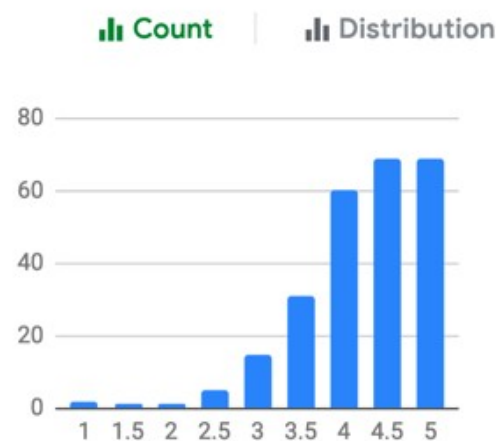
Discussion: Only a small number of respondents were negative or neutral towards the academic establishment, while most seem to have quite a favorable opinion.

Figure 5: Anti-intellectualism
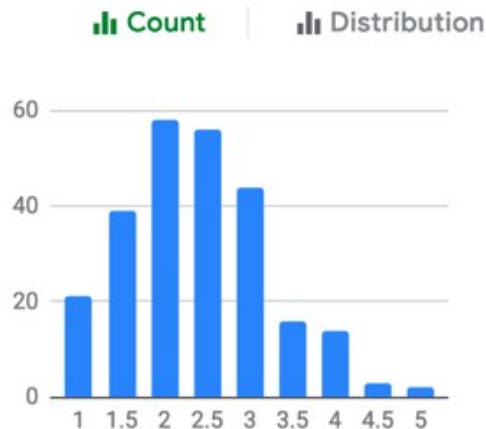
Discussion: Here, we see a clustering around moderate disagreement with the sorts of diversity and equity foci that have become popular in the academic discipline of medieval history, with some strongly disagreeing. This is understandable, coming from a group primarily concerned with modern recreation in its own social environment.

Figure 6: Authoritarianism
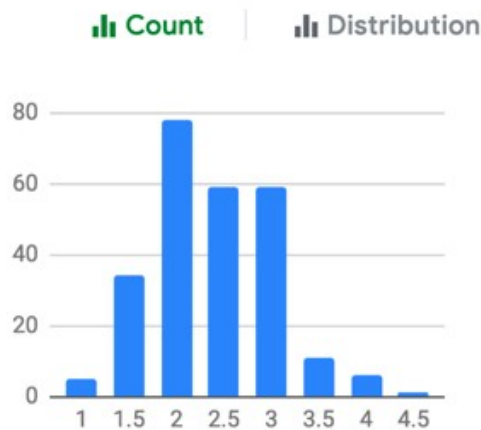
Discussion: This question asked whether leadership should come from physical prowess, or from knowledge. Most respondents shaded towards neutral or moderate disagreement with the proposition of success in combat sports being the primary qualifier for leadership.

Figure 7: Western chauvinism
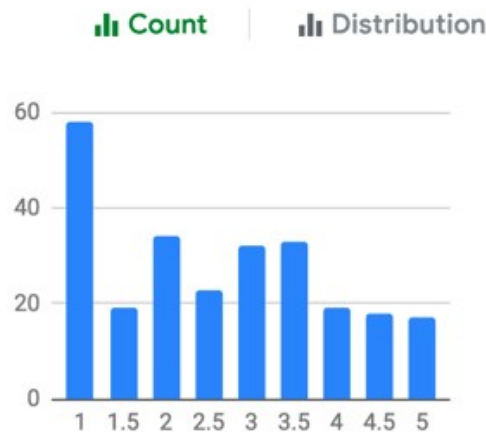
Discussion: Here, we find some problematic information. While the greatest *number* of respondents do see a difference between "I'm proud of one's European heritage" and "I'm proud of my African heritage," the answer distribution is quite diverse.

Figure 8: Anti-positivism
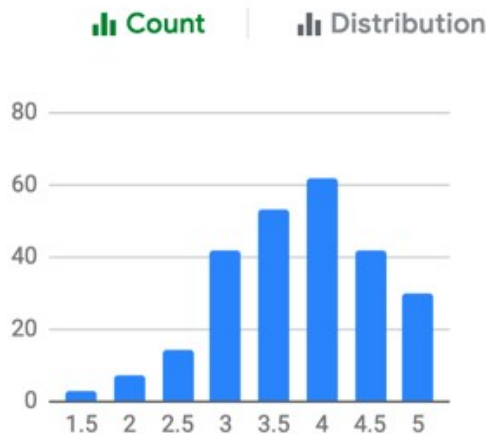
Discussion: We find weak anti-anti-positivism; in other words, there is some attachment to the ideas of progress and some cultures being more "advanced" than others. However, the scores shade towards disagreement.

Figure 9: Pro-Convivencia
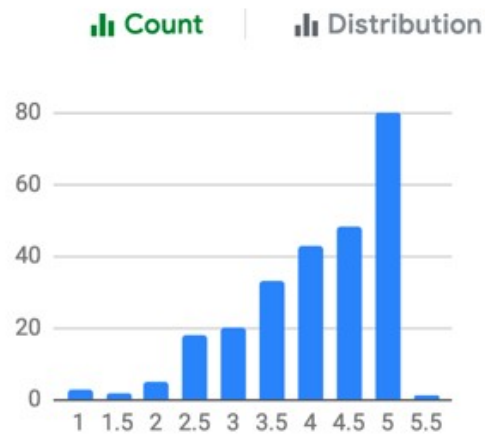
Discussion: While there is a small minority who think otherwise, most do not think cultural conflict between the West and the Muslim world is inevitable.

Figure 10: Pro/anti-trans attitudes
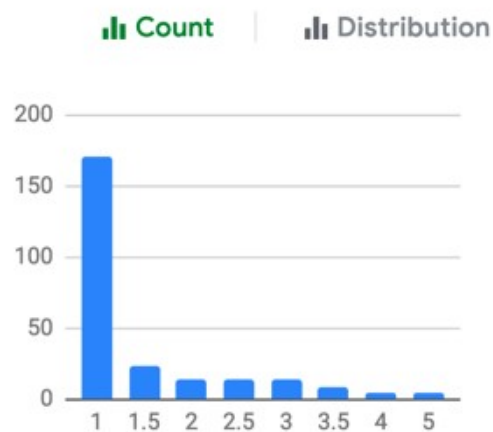
Discussion: With very few exceptions, the respondents were overwhelmingly accepting of trans people.

Perspicuitas

Figure 11: Sexism (aggregate)
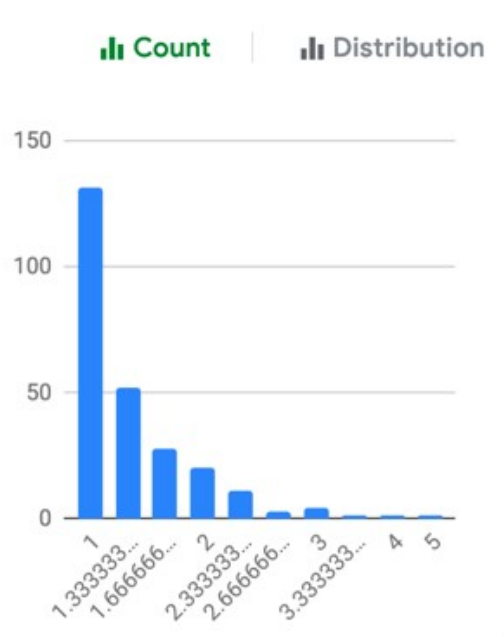
Discussion: We find a strong and almost universal anti-sexist attitude.

Figure 12: "Jimmy the Greek" score
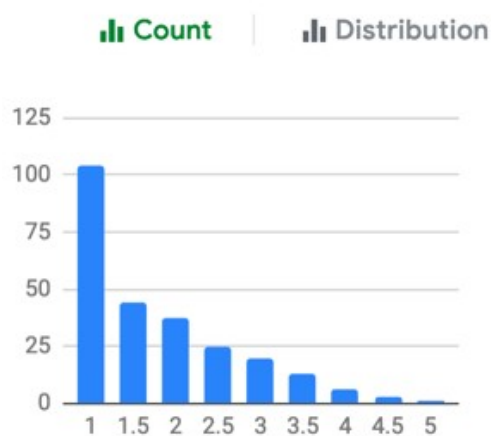
Discussion: We find a strong tendency to disagree with genetic racial determinism.

Figure 13: Aggregate anti-xenophobia
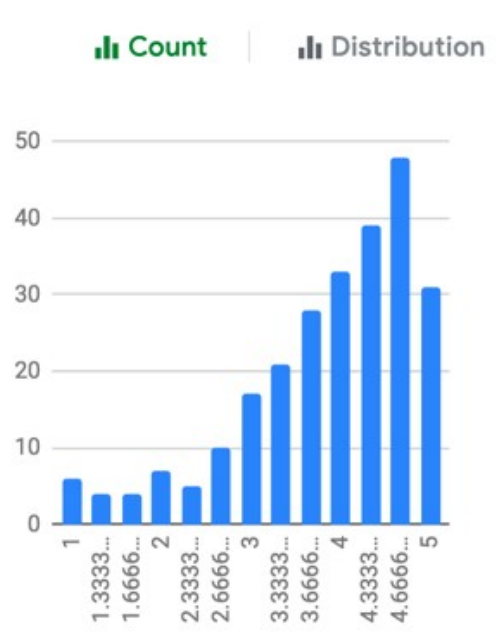
Discussion: Though there are again outliers, most participants seem to want to live in a diverse society, feel that such is possible, and recognize historical precedents for doing so.

Figure 14: It's important to consider modern concerns like diversity and the represen-tation of women when choosing which aspects of the past to study
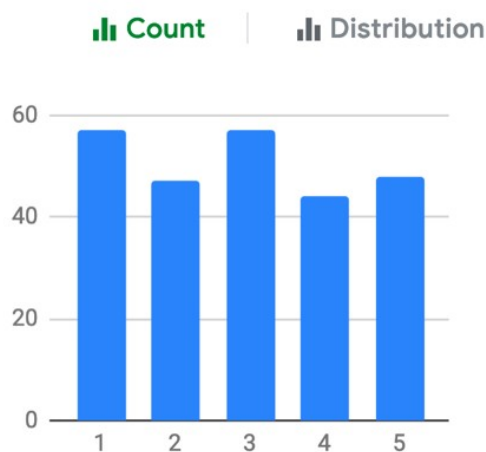
Discussion: This is a very interesting result, showing a great deal of disagreement with the ideas of "diversity" and representation in the study of history—one could even say these views are majority. Bear in mind, however, that this is an uncorrected score.

Figure 15: It's important to have a global perspective on history
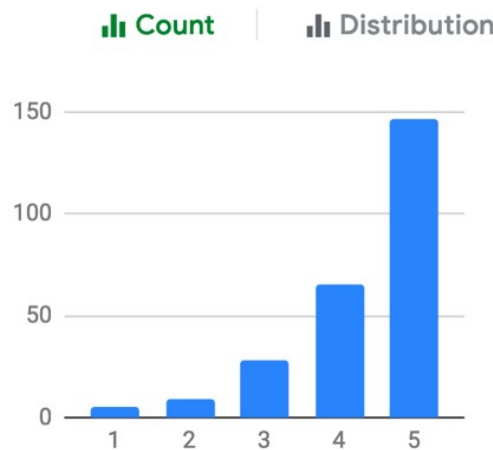
Discussion: Conversely, this uncorrected score shows a strong bias for globalism in the study of history. It does not account, however, for biases in such study, such as imposing an Orientalist or culturally appropriative perspective on the study of East Asia.

Figure 16: Average scores, by educational level
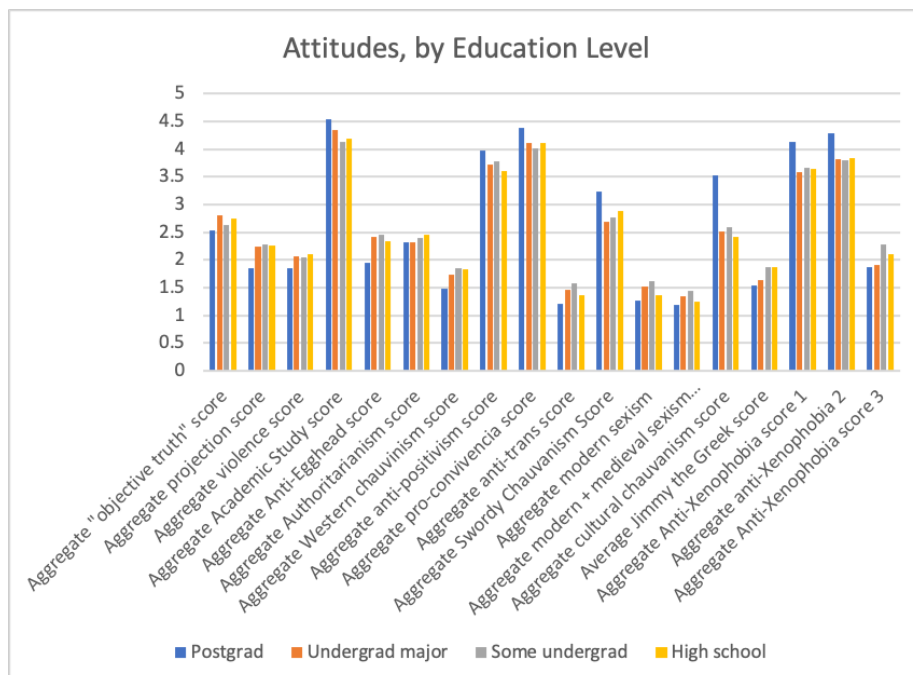
Results by educational level

We might predict that the respondents who had received more formal academic train-ing in history to have certain marked biases. After all, most academics feel that, if only people simply *knew* more about historical truth (or at least their version of it), then their opinions would align with a social-justice framework. If, however, we sort responses by educational level, we find *most* average scores differed very little—save for those respondents who had taken graduate training in the humanities.

Can we say that education has a "significant effect" on scores? In other words, did the effect of graduate training mean that one's responses would shade in one direc-tion or another, within accepted standards of error? Indeed, it does: Having postgrad-uate training tended to make one an outlier in every category save "authoritarianism." Having majored or double-majored in history or a related discipline similarly had a significant effect on "objective truth," "academic study," "swordy chauvinism," "Jimmy the Greek," and "anti-xenophobia." In short, medievalists' public-education efforts are *seemingly* backed up by statistics: the more (formal) history education a respondent had, the more liberal their answers skewed. Whether this is *meaningful* is another question, as the results approach the tautological: It seems obvious that those ex-posed to the academic *habitus* will agree with its presuppositions. Put another way, however, we might also suspect a selection bias among those who seek out gradu-ate education, while those who self-educate can pick which sources they choose to learn from in alignment with their own interests and predilections.

One could obviously see if region, gender, etc., affect opinions in a similar fashion. Unfortunately, I did not think to capture age, which might reveal generational differ-ences, or sexual identity. Since such analysis would make this article overly long, I will save it for a follow-up essay.

Correlations

Bien-pensants often see "liberalism" and "conservatism" as a constellation of beliefs: if one holds racist beliefs, one is probably also anti-trans. Statistics give us a means of testing this presupposition: Spearman correlations, or "r values," measure the as-sociation of different values on a scale from -1 (strongest possible negative correla-tion) to +1 (strongest possible positive correlation). Values close to +1 or -1 indicate the strongest possible correlations; anything greater than .8 is considered strong; anything less than .5 is considered weak.

However, counterintuitively and against our hypothesis, are *no* "strong" correlations in this dataset! The strongest correlations are sexism and trans acceptance (~.7); western chauvinism and anti–trans sentiment and anti-convivencia (~.6); a negative correlation between convivencia and chauvinism (~.6); and a not very strong at all correlation between sexism, xenophobia, and non-convivencia (~.5). All of these make somewhat intuitive sense. However, all other attitudes are "weakly" (which is to say, not at all) correlated.

Perspicuitas

Figure 17: Table of correlations

Conclusions

The thesis "is the Society for Creative Anachronism a hotbed for regressive views towards the Middle Ages?" cannot, of course, be definitively answered. People are complex; Likert scales do not capture everything. The fact that I am a "known social justice warrior" who has previously written on these matters may have also tainted responses. People on the right, or with libertarian and anti-intellectual/anti-academic impulses, may not have responded. However, I feel that I can state three things with a reasonable degree of intellectual confidence.

First, beliefs about the past amongst popular medievalists are diverse. We cannot say there are *no* problematic beliefs in the Society for Creative Anachronism; indeed, they seem, in some cases, to be fairly widespread. There is also some skepticism about the academy and academic diversity and equity projects. Yet, with regards to modern political beliefs, there is a definite liberal skew in the results, even if participants are not likely to accept all the tenets of critical race theory or other ideologies of the academy. Further, amongst at least some participants, there is a vehement commitment to social justice.

Second, and most importantly, there are no strong correlations, either ideologically or causatively; the idea that there is a constellation of "reactionary" beliefs does not seem to hold true. Notably, there is not always a strong correlation of beliefs about the past and its uses and other political beliefs. Most especially, beliefs about the past, or about how a medieval hobbyist organization ought to be run, do not predict one's modern political stance. I would further argue that, based on the "anti-intellectualism" scores, our public-education efforts bear limited fruit. As has been seen in, for instance, campaigns to persuade the vaccine-hesitant, people choose their facts to suit their worldview, and they mistrust sources that tell them otherwise.

Third, this study has broader implications for how we, as scholars, build our arguments: our intuition to draw causative or correlative relationships can be mistaken, and we must be aware of our own confirmation bias and positionality, particularly in our work that has more exegetical methodologies. We must argue inductively from evidence, not deductively from what we "know" to be true. Similarly, we must avoid seeing popular medievalisms as monolithic, when there is considerable diversity of opinion. In the same way, we must be conscious that the current obsession with white supremacy in medievalism has something of the character of a self-serving moral panic. (I have previously, and rather cynically, argued that "deploying Crit arguments in such a manner is… beneficial to imperiled humanities departments in making an argument for their continued survival in a time of tightened belts and increased neoliberal governance."[16])

My study is, of course, only a preliminary investigation. Besides the fact that one could do yet more analysis with this dataset, one could attempt to replicate it, as well as compare it against the general population—though I would argue for the inutility of the latter, since the general population doesn't spend much time thinking about the Middle Ages. What this study does suggest is that the Society for Creative Anachronism is not as "problematic" as scholars indicate, or as some members

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16 Ken Mondschein, "Liberal Arts for Social Change," *Humanities* 2020, 9(3), 98; <https://doi.org/10.3390/h9030098>.

Perspicuitas

themselves have feared. While recent well-publicized incidents have called attention to particularly problematic behaviors, these cannot be taken as speaking for the whole. The SCA, in other words, is a poor straw man for arguments as to the problematic nature of modern medievalist communities.

Appendix A

I gave respondents a space to add whatever comments they might like. A selection follows. These have been edited for clarity, but speak for themselves.

- Although I will adhere to the rules of my group, I find gays repulsive and people who feel that they can rewrite the number of genders imbecilic.

- Foucault gives the best reason for studying history.

- I contend that continental philosophy is intellectually bankrupt and that post-modern influences on scholarship rooted in the techniques of literary criticism is pseudo-intellectual tripe based on buzzwords. I feel this infects a lot of study of history, etc. and that the Sokal affair is telling of the lack of rigor in cultural studies fields.

- I found many of the questions to contain assumptions which I do not share. As an example, "What do you identify as racially/ethnically?" I do not identify as racially or ethnically. I do identify culturally, but the culture I identify with is so small and distinct as to not be one which could be included on a survey such as this (it is a subset of a larger culture, but its distinctive characteristics would cause people to completely misunderstand how it fits into the answers given to these questions).

- I really question your motives and methodology when you post surveys like this, given your questionable use of your academic background in the past to appeal to your own authority. I think it'd be worth your time to take a good objective look at yourself and ask, rather than everybody obviously being secret Nazis, maybe your historiographical methodology just isn't that good, and that's what people have a problem with.

- Interesting questions, though it seems more about the modern political biases than about admiration for a culture. Perhaps that's the point, however.

- Non-neurotypical, autism spectrum

- Some clarification: I gave a 4 to "I am proud of my European heritage" as I believe it should be considered the same as saying "I am proud of my African heritage," however repeated misuse has turned it into a negative or pejorative term to the degree that I would always think twice before making that declarative statement.

- Thank you for bringing these questions to the forefront. Appreciation of the past does not require worship of outdated ideas and ideals, and many of the ideas we may put on the past can be more recent racial/political ideas, attempting to justify regressive policy as "traditional."

- The academic study of history should teach standards through critical thinking (skepticism), not what one person should study. What is important is the quality of the source(s) useful before anything else. Interpretations,

moral judgments, cultural judgments, or any synthesis should wait until a time, place, and people are fully. The student of history does not have the right to pick and choose, but rather must see the good, the neutral, and the bad in any one time.

- The only way forward is to know the way back.

Ken Mondschein
via Massachusetts Historical Swordsmanship
243 Stafford St, Worcester, MA 01603 USA
ken - at - kenmondschein dot com