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also subject to binge drinking, and tended to commit many of their crimes with peers," says Sampson. "Marriage tended to break that cycle; often the wife would intervene in the drinking pattern and help the man shift peer affiliations. The wife of one man we interviewed said, 'It's not how many beers you have, it's who you're drinking them with.'"

Meaningful employment also led many subjects away from criminal lifestyles. "My employer was good to me," said one man. "He trusted me with the money, put his confidence in me, and I learned to respect such confidence and was loyal to him." Military service—which provided structure and discipline, a sense of belonging, and the incentive of the GI Bill—was another life-changing force. One of the men, who learned in the Army how to control his temper and cooperate with peers, commented, "They teach you that you can be your own boss as long as you do what the other people want you to do."

The aging process also influenced behavior. "Lawbreaking is often risky business, and people often become risk-averse as they get older," Sampson notes. "They also become less physically capable of doing the things a criminal lifestyle might involve. And they become more afraid of incarceration." Of course, desisting from crime is not always a voluntary decision, and the researchers point out that "high-rate offenders are disproportionately likely to exit the risk pool involuntarily through death, injury, and incarceration."

Nonetheless, according to Sampson, the results have profound implications for criminal-justice policy. "What do we do with people who are coming out of prison?" he asks. "If supervision and support affect behavior, we need to rethink our incarceration policy, because we've effectively done away with the kinds of parole, substance-abuse counseling, and training programs that are just as important as supportive family structures when a person is trying to make a successful transition from prison to the outside world."

When we view incarceration simply as punishment, and not as an issue of public health and safety, we fail to act in society's

best long-term interests, Sampson says. "We need to realize that we can't know everything about a person by looking at their behavior when they were 16," he points out. "The simple fact is that most people now in prison will one day be back on the streets, and we need to start looking

very seriously at how to create support structures that encourage released individuals to lead stable, orderly lives, rather than return to lives of crime." ~CHARLES COE

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FLOODING THE BALLOT BOX

The Politics of Disaster

WHEN a natural disaster strikes in the United States, only the president has the power to declare the site a federal disaster area, making it eligible for a variety of assistance. In such apparently nonpolitical situations, presidents theoretically have a fair, if personal, standard by which to determine whether to issue the necessary declaration.

But an analysis of 10 years (1989-1999) of such decisions by former presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton shows that, at least in marginal disasters, the size of the state (in terms of electoral votes) and whether the political parties view it as "competitive" matters quite a bit. In 1994, for example, Bill Clinton turned down a request by Illinois governor James Edgar for help with floods on Chicago's South Side that caused \$6.7 million in damage. The 1992 Clinton campaign had declared Illinois Republican territory. A year later, Clinton did declare a disaster in response to New Orleans floods that caused \$10 million in damage; Clinton's strategists considered Louisiana a pivotal state.

"An uncompetitive state with three electoral votes is 50 percent less likely to receive a disaster declaration than a competitive state with 20 electoral votes," says Andrew Reeves, a doctoral candidate in the department of government. "The best predictor of a presidential disaster declaration, bar none, is actual need. The question arises in these marginal cases, when it's unclear whether to give or not." Marginal disasters include events like the 1994 "deep freeze" in Michigan, which garnered less than \$6 million in aid.

In his paper-in-progress, "Political Disaster? Electoral Politics and Presidential Disaster Declarations," Reeves draws on research about disaster declarations by economists Thomas A. Garrett (of the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis) and Russell S. Sobel (of the College of Business and Economics at West Virginia University), as well as statistics from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). He combines these with data on whether political parties view particular states as "friends," "enemies," or "competitive," based on their likelihood of voting



The aftermath of a tropical storm near New Orleans

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for the party's presidential candidate.

In the decade under study, there were 659 presidential disaster declarations. Every state had at least one, but Texas was such an extreme disaster area in 1996 and 1998, with a combined total of 89 disasters, that Reeves excluded Texas data for those years and eventually examined a total of 570 cases. All but four of the disasters analyzed were due to extreme weather, including fires. (President Bush declared a disaster in 1992 in response to the Los Angeles riots sparked by the Rodney King beating, and in 1994 President Clinton declared disasters for the salmon industry in Washington, Oregon, and California.)

Emergency aid, it turns out, is an easy-to-use political tool at the president's disposal. When an emergency hits, the governor of the affected state can request a disaster declaration, which the president may accept or deny. (In the decade studied, 17 percent of the requests, "generally minor weather events," were turned down, Reeves says.) When the requests are accepted, FEMA, not the president, decides how much money to allocate. The average grant for the 570 disasters (not including those in Texas) was \$36.4 million. Outlays ranged from \$6,301 (Montana, 1999) to \$7 billion (California, 1994).

During his four years in office, President George H. W. Bush averaged 39 disaster declarations annually. The seven years of the Clinton presidency that Reeves studied averaged 72 disasters per year. When he focused on the presidential election years of 1992 and 1996, Reeves found that "President Clinton was about 60 percent more likely than President Bush to declare a disaster in a pivotal, electorally important state."

Large, friendly states appear to be more important in the equation than large, unfriendly states. "Even if California's 54 electoral votes are virtually assured to a candidate, he will most likely be more protective of a lead here," Reeves writes. Yet, presidents tend to give more to small-state "enemies" than small-state "friends." Reeves explains that the positive public-relations impact of disaster relief may worry political opponents, perhaps forcing them to spend money in a state they had previously considered

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friendly. On the other hand, spending the money in a small, friendly state may be a waste of political capital.

Though there may be many reasons why small, uncompetitive states receive less money—including, perhaps, the fact that they expect less and so don't even apply—the political ramifications stand out to Reeves. "My results show that in these (marginal) cases, small, non-competitive states receive less help because they are just not that important in terms of an election," he says. "If a major tornado runs through the state, they will get aid. But if it's something marginal—a flood, or a windstorm that doesn't cause as much damage—I think those states should be a little irritated." ~BRIAN TARCEY

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THE MINDS, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'

Pliable Paradigms

IF EVER someone understood the challenges of changing people's minds, it was Charles Darwin. After doing his research in the Galápagos Islands in the 1830s, Darwin spent the next 20 years developing his theory of evolution. He was slow to publish his ideas. Because they contradicted the prevailing creationist view, Darwin realized just how much they would offend fellow scientists and the general public, including his own devoutly Christian wife. In fact, when *On the Origin of Species* eventually appeared in 1859, the backlash was immediate. Scientific colleagues, the clergy, and the public all initially rejected his theory. But over time, thanks to the efforts of vocal defenders like Thomas Huxley, scientists began to change their

minds and accept Darwin's ideas.

What tipped the balance in Darwin's favor? For that matter, how does a CEO get his employees to adopt new quality standards, or a wife convince her husband to quit smoking? How did modernists like Stravinsky, Picasso, and T.S. Eliot overthrow the romanticism of the nineteenth century? Cognitive psychologist Howard Gardner, Hobbs professor of cognition and education at the Graduate School of Education, says the ability to change someone's mind (including your own) depends on seven factors, which he calls "levers." "The more you understand about the levers," he says, "the more you ought to be able to bring about mind-change."

Gardner describes these levers in a forthcoming book, *Changing Minds: The Art*

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