

In “Knowledge and Democracy: The Epistemics of Self-Governance,” Miller joins a conversation perhaps initiated by Machiavelli about the relationship between power, knowledge production and forms of government, including democracy. Miller frames his work with a leading question: “If the state, citizens and society are thoroughly epistemic, can democracy be anything else?” (p. 198) Yaron Ezrahi asserts that democracies must be imagined, and it is in that imagining that public expectations are shaped. As a container for his work, Miller uses Jasanoff’s concept of civic epistemologies to encapsulate the process by which knowledge is made and shared within a political system. However civic epistemologies should not be blindly trusted as producers of knowledge and, in a healthy democracy, civic epistemologies must align with democratic imaginaries.

Miller looks specifically at the ways electoral knowledge is produced, verified and disseminated and the compatibility of those *ways with* democratic imaginaries. He uses *Shelby County v. Holder* as an example of the construction, evaluation, reevaluation and subsequent deconstruction of a form civic epistemology that is in conflict with a democratic imaginary.

The Voting Rights Act was implemented to create alignment between the “imaginary” of democracy in which everyone has equal access to voting and the reality: one of the manifestations of white supremacy in the United States is restricted access to voting for African Americans. The Voting Rights Act allowed the government to get involved in states’ control over their voting regulations and subjected states to preclearance - states would need their voting regulations pre-cleared by the US government before they could implement them at the state level. This ensured equal voting access in districts that were deliberately racist and exclusionary.

In *Shelby*, the Supreme Court ruled that because other districts not subject to Voting Right Act preclearance had more racist laws than Shelby County, the entire Act is unconstitutional. In this way, Miller argues, the Supreme Court was fulfilling its role in reevaluating outdated epistemologies and creating space for people to get involved in crafting a democratic process aligned with their democratic imaginary.

Miller’s answer to his leading question is “no.” Democracy is “constituted in the very acts of making knowledge” (p. 199)

Miller, C. (2015). Knowledge and Democracy: The Epistemics of Self-Governance. In *Science and Democracy: Making Knowledge and Making Power in the Biosciences and Beyond*. (pp. 198–219). London: Routledge.