

---

## EDITORS' CORNER

---

This issue marks the 50th anniversary of *PS: Political Science & Politics*. For a half-century, *PS* has occupied a unique niche in publishing in political science, spanning research *on* politics, research *about* political science, and scholarship on teaching and learning. *PS* has also served as the journal of record for the profession.

For its first two decades, the journal was titled simply *PS*. For many years, the journal functioned primarily as an outlet for information about the Association, mainly committee documents, reports of other affiliated organizations (e.g. Social Science Research Council), and other Association reports.

The first article in the first issue, published Winter 1968, was the “Bernstein Committee Interim Report: Ethical Problems of Political Scientists.”<sup>1</sup> The report was prepared by an ad hoc committee, appointed by President Robert Dahl and chaired by Professor Marver Bernstein of Princeton University. The committee charge was, in part, to address the “broader and extremely complex problem of standards of behavior for all political scientists in their relationship with government agencies.” At the time, the Association (and the academy more generally) was roiled by controversies regarding academic relationships with the CIA, nondisclosure of support from said government agencies, and research conducted in foreign countries and in the midst of “alien cultures.”<sup>2</sup>

Much of the discussion in the report resonates with recent controversies in the discipline: can a political scientist “intervene” in some communities and some countries without disclosing the reasons for the intervention? When do we need to disclose our funding sources? Can political scientists ever be truly “objective” with respect to their object of study? *Plus ça change*.

The issue also included a picture of the front door of the Association’s “new building” situated at 1527 New Hampshire Avenue, NW, Washington DC.

Over the next decade, the journal remained filled with news of the profession. For example, the winter 1975 issue

included a report on the 1974 Annual Meeting, held in Chicago. This was the first meeting held the five days *before* Labor Day. The practice had been to hold it for five days *following* Labor Day. One wonders how well that proposal would go over today.

On the other hand, the 1975 meeting was to be held in San Francisco, and the Association announced pre- or post-convention tours of that exotic island destination: Hawaii! That is an idea well overdue for reconsideration for our 2017 return to the City by the Bay.

The structure and attendance patterns at the meeting were quite different from today. There did not appear to be a proliferation of very small panels. Nancy Boland Edgerton of APSA reported on “Panels attended by 100 people or more.” A panel discussion of “Conservatism’s Search for Meaning,” chaired by William F. Buckley was seen by 350 audience members, while 239 watched “The Contribution of Leo Strauss to the Interpretation of Political Philosophy,” and 176 saw “The Contribution of Reinhold Niebuhr to American Political Thought.” “Sections” were five hours long, and political theory had the most popular “section” by far—an average of 139 attendees across nine panels.

By 1980 (Volume 13), *PS* took its first tentative steps toward serving as a venue for articles by political scientists *about* political science. In summer 1980, Ronald Herring’s poetic contribution “A Young Person’s Guide to Positivism”<sup>3</sup> was published in *PS*, including such memorable stanzas as:

If you can’t draw from Phenomena,  
Their own True Confession,  
Trim them till they’ll fit,  
A Linear Regression.  
And if your explanation flounders  
In Conceptual Paralysis,  
Convert to Matrices,  
Employ Factor Analysis.

In a more serious vein, the fall 1980 issue included a report on “Changes in State Party Organization 1960–1980: A Preliminary Report and a Request for

Data” coauthored by Cornelius P. Cotter, John F. Bibby, Robert J. Huckshorn, and a young assistant professor, James L. Gibson. This contribution is the first we can find that can be fairly described as an independent research article published in *PS*.

Under the editorial direction of Cathy Rudder, the journal continued to publish increasing numbers of original research throughout the 1980s, and this trend accelerated under Robert Hauck, who took over the editorship in 1988 and who would serve as editor for the next quarter century. *PS* today is as much a product of Rob’s editorship as anyone else’s.

In January 1988 (Volume 21), Rob’s first issue included a symposium on “Education at Risk” which looked at the politics of censorship and global threats to education. The issue also included an assessment of several “Micro-Computer Statistical Packages.” The list of packages evaluated were STATA version 1.5, Systat version 3, and ABstat. The assessment compared the inclusion of command driven versus the “new” menu driven statistical procedures and the frequency which the software packages crashed.

We hope you have enjoyed this stroll through the first 20 years of *PS: Political Science & Politics*. Throughout this 50th year of *PS*, we will highlight in the Editors’ Corner more of the unique and interesting contributions of *PS* to the discipline of political science. We welcome any suggestions or independent contributions about *PS* for consideration in our Reflections section.

This issue of *PS* follows in the tradition of the previous 50 years, examining issues of importance to politics, political science, and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Following the tumultuous 2016 presidential campaign, Michael Grossman and his colleagues examine the legacy and record of the Obama Presidency. In addition, a symposium initially published in the Presidents and Executive Politics Section of APSA is included, which examines the contributions of Professor George C. Edwards III to the study of the presidency.

---

Also included within The Profession section are two symposia. The first examines the politics of constructivist IR in the US Academy. The second explores ethnography, participant observation, and how these methods can inform political science understanding and explanation. Finally, The Teacher section includes several articles examining pedagogical methods of increasing student engagement and

giving voice to underrepresented student populations. ■

—Phillip Ardoin  
*Chair and Professor,  
Appalachian State University*

—Paul Gronke  
*Professor, Reed College*

#### NOTES

1. Committee on Professional Standards and Responsibilities. 1968 "Ethical Problems of Political Scientists." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 1 (1): 5–16.
2. Apologies for the direct quotation, but recall that this was written a half century ago.
3. Herring, Ronald. 1980 "A Young Person's Guide to Positivism." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 13 (3): 292. With all due respect to Professor Herring, he admits that this was distributed to incoming graduate students at Northwestern and he got strong-armed into publishing it in *PS*.