

Notes from the Editor

Because I spend so much time reviewing potential *APSR* articles, it pains me to admit what is undeniably true: that a great deal of the important intellectual work in our discipline comes packaged not as journal articles, but as books. Many disciplines help their members stay abreast of new books in their field by maintaining “official” single-purpose book review journals. In political science, this function has long been performed by the *APSR*, which despite its name is primarily an outlet for research, not for reviews. That long-standing arrangement is about to change, for book reviews will bid farewell to the *APSR* after the current issue. Hereafter, the book review section, which has occupied approximately one-third of our pages, will migrate to the APSA’s new journal, *Perspectives on Politics*, where it will reappear in volume 1, number 1, in March 2003. Gone from the *APSR* but not forgotten will be the invaluable contributions made by book review co-editors Susan Bickford and Gregory McAvoy, the long line of *APSR* book review editors who preceded them, and, of course, the thousands of scholars who over the years have taken on the thankless (and often cursed at) task of writing book reviews for the *APSR*. The *APSR*, sans book reviews, will continue to be published on a quarterly basis, but beginning in 2003, our new cover dates will be February, May, August, and November.

Beginning in 2003, *PS*, the APSA’s “other” periodical, will also shift to a new schedule, appearing in January, April, July, and October. Included in its January issue will be a copy of my first annual editorial report, which was presented to the APSA Executive Council at the annual meeting in Boston. Editorial reports are usually pretty dull. Mine may be, too (though naturally I don’t think so), but in light of the attention, much of it critical, that the *APSR* has attracted in recent years, I think you will find this particular report to be of special interest. I hereby call it to your attention and express the hope that after reading it you will pass along any thoughts you may wish to share; please direct these to apsr@gwu.edu.

IN THIS ISSUE

The orange cover of this issue completes our annual cycle of the color palette. Next year and for the foreseeable future, the same red, green, blue, orange progression will be repeated. Still changing from issue to issue will be the cover graphic, which we will continue to key to the theme of the first article in the issue.

To find a cover graphic that is somehow linked to the first article in an issue and is also interesting to look at, I rely on the scholarly expertise and aesthetic sense of Rob Hauck, the APSA’s deputy executive director and a highly accomplished artist as well. To present the theme of Robert Lieberman’s “Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change,” this issue’s graphic features gears (standing for change),

turning wheels (representing ideas), and the meshing of the gears (representing structure)—a set of identifiable, concrete objects that cohere conceptually, signifying the broad thrust of Lieberman’s essay. In recent years, debates have raged about the relative roles of “ideas” and “institutions” in explaining political change. Lieberman acknowledges both the strengths and the weaknesses of each approach, and sets for himself the daunting task of melding the two into a viable new synthesis. Then, rather than leaving the stage after making the case for a synthetic approach, he uses it as a framework for analyzing shifts in civil rights laws and policy in the United States. This application not only concretizes Lieberman’s abstract argument, but also does much to illuminate U.S. “race policy” during the 1960s.

The next article in this issue also operates on a high conceptual plane, considering substantive and epistemological issues of broad disciplinary and interdisciplinary interest. In the search for useful ways to understand the political influences of “culture,” political scientists have borrowed heavily from disciplines as diverse as literature and economics. Rarely, though, have they returned to first principles and devoted the necessary effort to fleshing out their understanding of culture. In “Conceptualizing Culture: Possibilities for Political Science,” Lisa Wedeen suggests that this inattention may be the primary reason why the study of culture in political science has become so divided. Wedeen offers a more fully theorized understanding of culture that holds out promise for solidifying research in this booming area of political analysis.

The next two articles could hardly be more different in approach, but share the very same substantive focus. Their common focus is one of the Big Issues of democratic governance: representation, and more specifically the representation of minorities. Overshadowed by the debate between “descriptive” versus “substantive” representation and purposefully disregarded by advocates of the former lurks the question of what characteristics of representatives are most likely to advance the interests of disadvantaged groups. Suzanne Dovi tackles this question head-on in “Preferable Descriptive Representatives: Or, Will Just Any Woman, Black, or Latino Do?” Dovi argues that well-intentioned and seemingly sound reasons for not articulating desirable criteria for descriptive choices are ultimately outweighed by the need for such criteria. She goes on to endorse a criterion that she claims will foster mutual understanding between descriptive representatives and their constituents. Are you convinced by Dovi’s argument? No matter how you answer this question, Dovi’s analysis should significantly sharpen your understanding of the issues swirling around the concept of descriptive representation.

This emphasis on the representation of minorities is sustained in Eyal Baharad and Shmuel Nitzan’s “Ameliorating Majority Decisiveness through Expression of

Preference Intensity.” The issue with which Baharad and Nitzan are concerned arises from the fact that in a simple pairwise voting system, the majority’s preference will always prevail, no matter what the minority prefers or how intensely it prefers it. Might voting rules be devised that would ameliorate majority decisiveness and yet be unbiased (anonymous and neutral)? By bringing the tools of formal modeling to bear on this question, Baharad and Nitzan provide a closely reasoned answer to that question—an answer that has some fascinating implications for the way elections are conducted.

In the three remaining articles in this issue, the focus shifts from abstract conceptual and “large-M” methodological issues in political analysis (as in the contributions by Lieberman and Wedeen) and enduring Big Issues of democratic politics (as in the Dovi and Baharad-Nitzan articles) to some nitty-gritty aspects of the political process in the United States. The idea guiding Ethan Bueno de Mesquita and Matthew Stephenson’s “Precedent as a Response to the Complexity of Legal Communication,” is that our understanding of the courts would be greatly enhanced by a better sense of how judges at different levels of the judicial system communicate with and learn from one another. Taking this as their cue, Bueno de Mesquita and Stephenson build a model that clarifies when, why, and how precedent shapes judicial decisions. Although exercises of this type are sometimes seen as so stylized as to be empirically sterile, Bueno de Mesquita and Stephenson’s model enables them to reconcile some seemingly contradictory observations that have long puzzled observers of the courts and to speak to an array of important and divisive issues concerning judicial decisionmaking.

Speaking of “important and decisive”: The series of decisions handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in the early 1960s in cases involving legislative apportionment surely fit that description. In the wake of those decisions, a wave of research concluded that the imposition of the “one person-one vote” standard had brought about little or no change in the distribution of spending across legislative districts. That conclusion was disturbing, for it implied that an apportionment standard that emphasized equality in representation left policy outcomes largely unchanged from a time when some constituencies were grossly overrepresented and others had little voice in legislative decisions. In “Equal Votes, Equal Money: Court-Ordered Redistricting and the Distribution of Public Expenditures in the American States,” Stephen Ansolabehere, Alan Gerber, and James Snyder use a comprehensive dataset on state expenditures before and after redistricting to revisit the connection between representation and expenditures. Their results provide a foundation for a new interpretation of the utility of equal apportionment criteria and serve as a prime example of how rigorous political science research can speak to important and enduring policy issues.

As I compose these notes, debate rages about whether the United States ought to initiate military action in Iraq. Often noted has been the irony that

whereas many leaders of the American military leaders are taking a cautious approach to such action, much pressure to initiate action is being placed on the president by advisors who themselves have not served in the military (the so-called “chicken hawks”). Precisely this irony, as it has played out over the course of American history, is the subject of Christopher Gelpi and Peter D. Feaver’s “Speak Softly and Carry a Big Stick? Veterans in the Political Elite and the American Use of Force.” Is it possible that decisionmakers with a military background have actually served as a force for the peaceful resolution of international conflicts involving the U.S.? Thus stated, the question is too simple, for it ignores the distinction between decisions to initiate militarized disputes in the first place and decisions about the level of force the U.S. uses in the disputes it initiates. Gelpi and Feaver use this distinction to structure their analysis of U.S. involvement in more than a hundred international disputes over the course of two centuries. The result is a fascinating set of conclusions about an often-overlooked set of influences on foreign policy decisionmaking.

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