

Reputations vs Citations: Who Are the Top Scholars in Political Science?

John S. Robey

East Texas State University

When Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus sought to determine which political scientists have made the most substantial contributions to the discipline, they used a reputational technique. Somit and Tanenhaus asked a systematically-drawn sample of political scientists, "In your judgment, which political scientists have made the *most* significant contributions to the discipline from 1900-1945? from 1945 to the present [1963]?"¹ Walter Roettger replicated and updated that study in 1978 and found remarkable stability over time in rankings by reputation.²

Using reputation as a surrogate measure for actual contribution to the discipline has its drawbacks, as Somit and Tanenhaus were well aware.³ For example, subfield specialists will tend to select scholars in their own subfields as having made the most significant contributions. In addition, the concept of reputed "significant contribution" suffers from the same weakness as the concept of reputed "power." That is, an official or scholar within the profession may have a reputation of having made a substantial contribution and yet he or she may have had very little influence in fact.

An alternative to the reputational technique is to calculate the number of times scholars are cited in the literature and to consider those most widely cited as having made the most significant contributions. This methodology assumes that citations indicate those scholars who

have influenced the thinking and work of political scientists the most.

This alternative technique was applied by using as a source of data the *Social Science Citation Index* which lists each year virtually all the citations in social science literature. For example, the 1979 volume covers 1,478 journals and gives selective coverage to 2,858 additional journals which may have been of some tangential interest to social scientists.⁴

Using previous research as a base, 32 post-World War II scholars were identified as having been "significant contributors" by *reputation*. Thirteen additional names of recent presidents of APSA, not mentioned by reputation in past studies as significant contributors, were added to this basic list of 32. Citations of these 45 scholars were then counted, and the scholars were ranked according to the number of times their names were cited between 1970-79 (see accompanying table). Finally, the reputational ranking of the previous research of Roettger was compared with the ranking by citation.

The two techniques resulted in different rankings. For example, Seymour Martin Lipset tied for ninth in Roettger's 1960-70 time period but tied with Herbert Simon for first rank in number of citations. Lowi, Wildavsky, and Dye occupied the first three reputational positions in Roettger's 1970-76 time period but fell to 14, 17, and 19 in the number of citations they received throughout the 1970s.

Obviously, one factor which could account for the different results is that the

¹Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *American Political Science: A Profile of a Discipline* (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), p. 58 (emphasis theirs).

²Walter B. Roettger, "Strata and Stability: Reputations of American Political Scientists," *PS*, 11 (1978), pp. 6-12.

³Somit and Tanenhaus, pp. 72-74.

⁴Correspondence from Ronald R. Hamilton, Director of Field Marketing-Institute for Scientific Information, publishers of the *Social Science Citation Index*, April 28, 1981.

Rank Order of 45 Political Scientists by Number of Citations, 1970-79

Name	Number of Citations	Name	Number of Citations
1. Seymour Martin Lipset (p)*	3425	24. Leo Strauss	556
1. Herbert Simon	3425	25. Heinz Eulau (p)	516
3. Robert Dahl (p)	2235	26. James O'Conner	495
4. Angus Campbell	2184	27. Hans Morgenthau (p)	475
5. Karl Deutsch (p)	1870	28. David Truman	436
6. Gabriel Almond (p)	1799	29. Austin Ranney (p)	386
7. Herbert Marcuse	1698	30. Warren Miller (p)	378
8. David Easton (p)	1644	31. E. E. Schattschneider	370
9. C. Wright Mills	1616	32. Donald Stokes	362
10. Samuel Huntington	1511	33. Sheldon Wolin	339
11. Harold Lasswell (p)	1410	34. James McGregor Burns (p)	315
12. Phillip Converse	1282	35. James Barber	295
13. V. O. Key (p)	1110	36. John Wahlke (p)	226
14. Theodore Lowi	913	37. Leon Epstein (p)	190
15. Charles Lindblom (p)	858	38. Bertell Ollman	170
16. Robert Lane (p)	782	39. Merle Fainsod	168
17. Aaron Wildavsky	766	40. Robert Ward (p)	137
18. W. H. Riker (p-elect)	759	41. Emmett Redford (p)	124
19. Thomas R. Dye	709	42. C. Herman Pritchett (p)	94
20. Carl J. Friedrich (p)	701	43. Ira Katznelson	81
21. Sidney Verba	645	44. Avery Leiserson (p)	51
22. Ira Sharkansky	589	45. Ralph Milliband	32
23. Samuel Beer (p)	558		

*APSA presidents are indicated by the designation "(p)."

time periods to which the two techniques were applied are not exactly the same. Nevertheless, Roettger found considerable stability over time among those reputed to be the top scholars,⁵ and thus it is probable that part of the difference in rankings is in fact due to the difference in the two methods. In other words, the reputational technique seems to produce a somewhat different array of scholars from the technique of counting citations.

The results of this research suggest that there is more than one way to determine which scholars have made the most significant contributions to the profession. As Somit and Tanenhaus pointed out, there are a number of different ways scholars can have an impact on their colleagues. The reputational method probably taps a number of these ways, while the method of counting citations identifies a specific type of contribution. Using citations, while more narrow than the reputational technique, may be a valuable tool in determining "Who's Who" in political science. □

⁵Roettger, pp. 7-8.

Reports

U.S. Undergoing Economic Transition, Social Science Can Help

Former Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall called on the social sciences to help deal with the economic transformation occurring in the U.S. in his plenary address to the Southwestern Social Science Association in San Antonio on March 18.

"We've come to a sea change, a fundamental change in our social, economic, and political organization," Marshall said in his address on "The Sunbelt in Transition: The Impact of Economic Trends." Two sources of this change are the internationalization of the American economy and the communications revolution.

Because of the rapid technological change in communications, local information monopolies have been broken, people's values have changed, and the work force is being decentralized, according to Marshall.