SYMPOSIUM

Second Time Around: A Response

Amitai Etzioni

First, I am grateful to *PS* for putting together this illuminating symposium. Second, given the strict space limitation set aside for my response, please see *My Brother's Keeper: A Memoir and a Message* for all that I would love to say here.

Lowi turns the focus of his scholarship onto PIs. Like many a good scholar, he draws distinctions. He finds all kinds of different PIs—all ring true—and I confess to having walked in many of their shoes at one point or another. Special thanks to Morris for taking my brief point and vastly enriching it with his lessons, rules, and illuminating discussion.

Hacker's question, "Why should you want to engage in public intellectualism?" is a compelling one. My answer is: because I can do no other. I tried to stick to my academic knitting, but these New Years' resolutions typically did not make it past the evening news. PIs, like the rest of us, have complex and overlapping motives. However, if they proceed to absorb the body blows that are their share despite feeling that they could find peace of mind in the grove of academics, they should have their heads and all their other parts examined.

Why should political scientists and sociologists engage in public intellectualism? Because we have much better keys to understanding the world around us than other disciplines—*noblesse oblige*.

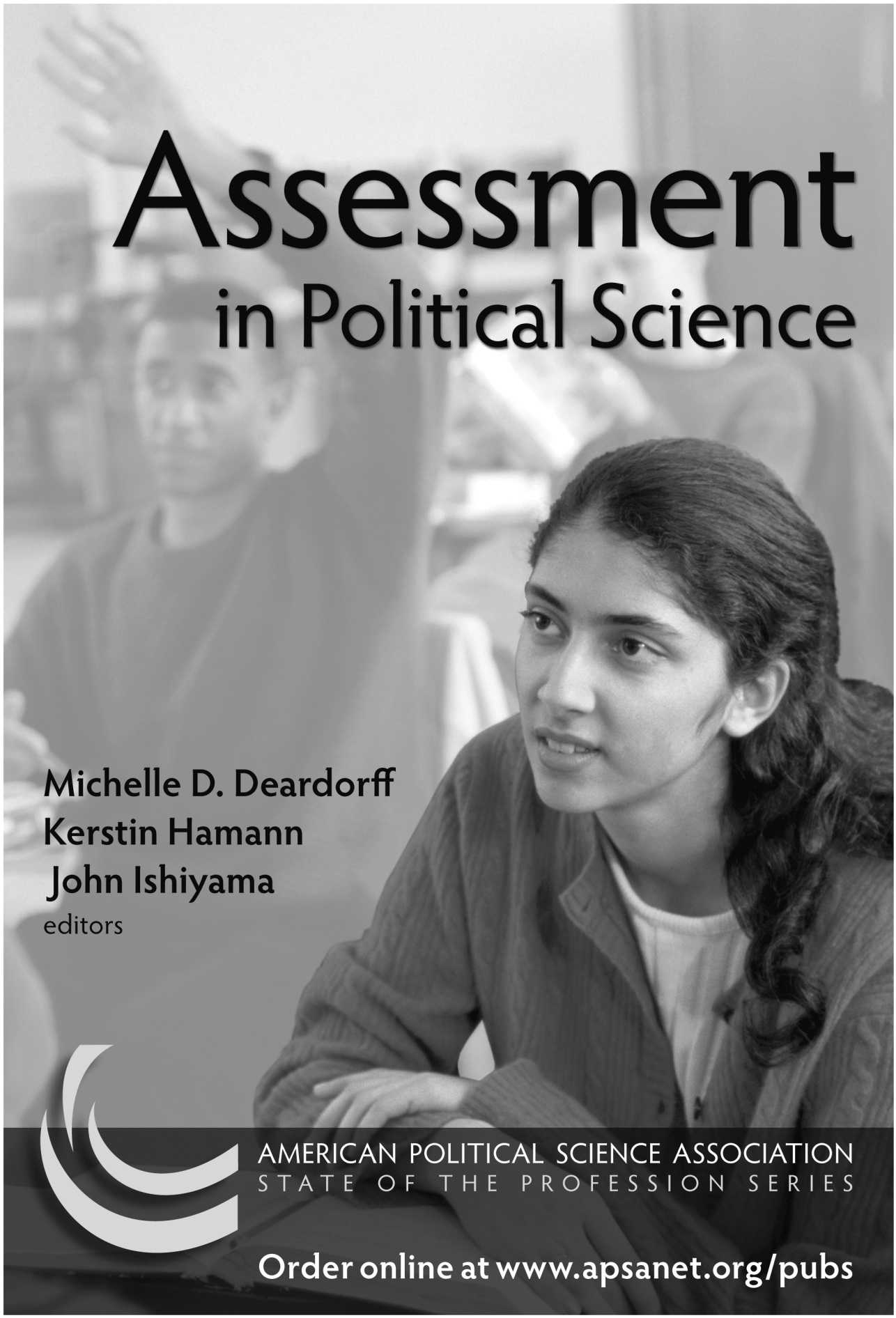
Like adherents to most other bodies of thought, communitarians come in different flavors. Some are authoritarian (they privilege the common good and downgrade rights and autonomy). Some are Burke-like conservatives who champion small platoons. Some are academics who are so embarrassed by abuses of the term that they avoid it like a plague, while simultaneously writing communitarian tomes.

A word to both about communitarianism: Like adherents to most other bodies of thought, communitarians come in different flavors. Some are authoritarian (they privilege the common good and downgrade rights and autonomy). Some are Burke-like conservatives who champion small platoons. Some are academics who are so embarrassed by abuses of the term that they avoid it like a plague, while simultaneously writing communitarian tomes. I labor with those communitarians who seek a carefully crafted balance between individual rights and social responsibilities. I would rather not be lumped in with any of the others—and I assure you, they would much rather not have to account for me.

The lesson that took me the longest to learn is that you must mind the historical context. I challenged NASA too late; the war in Vietnam too early; I called prematurely for bioethics guidelines and demonstrated against nukes long before such ideas were ready to take root. Communitarianism of the kind that I contributed to developing was well-timed and placed. I had just turned sixty. Better later than never. ■

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