Allocating the Credit in Collaborative Research

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For years journal articles from the natural sciences have been characterized by multiple authors, reflecting the collaborative nature of the research. The articles have also conformed to a professional norm in giving credit to the authors and, at least implicitly, indicating their relative contributions. Although such collaborative research has grown significantly in political science, the discipline is still wrestling with any standard to indicate who gets credit and the nature of multiple authors' relative contributions. This is an issue with which political scientists from the most junior to the most senior continue to deal.

Under the chairmanship of Paul Sniderman, the APSA Committee on Professional Ethics, Rights and Freedoms, while continuing to receive individual cases, felt it could make a larger contribution by also focusing on overarching ethical issues that impact a broad cross-section of the Association's membership. In that spirit, and with the enthusiastic collaboration of the APSA Working Group on Collaboration (Kanchan Chandra, New York University, chair; Jennifer Gandhi, Emory University; Gary King, Harvard University; Arthur Lupia, University of Michigan; and Edward Mansfield, University of Pennsylvania), the Ethics Committee sponsored the roundtable at the 2007 Annual Meeting in Chicago, The Ethics of Collaborative Research: Guidelines for Junior/Senior Faculty and Graduate Students.

The basic document under discussion for the roundtable was the report of the APSA Working Group on Collaboration, formed in February 2006 under then APSA President Ira Katznelson. Chandra laid out the background for the roundtable discussion. The motivation was what appeared to be a significant expansion in collaborative work in political science, accompanied by an increase in the number of junior scholars engaged in collaborative projects. The group's charge was to (1) Identify the important ethical and procedural questions raised by this expansion; (2) Gather information on the practices within political science and other disciplines that address these questions; (3) Propose best practice(s) or principles on the basis of which to evaluate best practices(s) where possible; and (4) Create a forum for continued discussion as new projects evolve.

In his July 20, 2007, "Who Gets the Credit" in Inside Higher Ed, author Scott Jaschik set the stage for the roundtable. "In the physical and biological sciences," Jaschik wrote, "it's common for papers in journals to have multiple authors. . . . Increasingly, political scientists are writing together—and that has led the American Political Science Association to start a discussion on the implications this has for the faculty members and graduate students involved. The Association wants to talk about such issues as whose name goes first in a paper—a question that might seem minor, but may not be to a candidate up for a job or for tenure. More broadly, the Association wants professors to talk about how collaboration is taught to graduate students."

Working from datasets made available by the Social Science Citation Index (published articles between 1956 and 2005) and APSA (papers presented at the APSA Annual Meetings between 2002 and 2006), the roundtable underscored some of the basic trends in collaborative work in political science. Although uneven, the data indicate there has been increasing trends towards collaboration, particularly in the major subfields of American politics, international relations, comparative politics, and political theory. There also appears to be an expansion in the scale and in the range of methods employed in collaborative work. Over the last decade 60% of the articles in APSA journals were collaborative. And, in the past the collaboration tended to be among senior tenured faculty while more recently it has included untenured faculty.

This latter trend went to the heart of the roundtable's consideration—the growing asymmetrical relationships of collaborative research among faculty and students and tenured and untenured faculty. Gandhi noted that in this case the asymmetry is particularly relevant when hiring or tenure committees have no definitive measure by which to judge an applicant's contribution to a published work. Many departments do not have clear guidelines and perceptions differ greatly on the credit for individual scholarly production versus collaborative authorship. There was a consensus among roundtable members that collaboration should be encouraged, but there needs to be a broader discussion within the discipline so that the collaboration is effective and ethical. The concentration was on the allocation of credit among unequal power relationships. Co-authorship, everyone agreed, involves some sacrifice of ownership, but the search for best practices is motivated by the objective of establishing some norms that we can comply with over the longer term.

One frequently used norm is listing multiple authors alphabetically, but this is less manageable when there are four or five authors with differing levels of contribution. Gary King ventured that this represents a challenge that will increase over coming years and that the future careers of most of the younger scholars in the audience would involve collaboration. In the last half century much of the information came from such sources as sample surveys and end of the year government statistics. In the years ahead he foresaw unstructured texts such as blogs; increased electoral and commercial activity; geographic location information; electronic health information; and Bluetooth in a cell phone that would calculate how many people are nearby—the amount and type of new data would be breathtaking, but you couldn't stuff all the talents needed to use it into one person—the analysis would require collaboration.

Mansfield endorsed King's conclusion in the case of trends in international relations and comparative studies. He suggested that as much as a third of the work being done in such journals as the Journal of Politics, the British Journal, World Politics, and Comparative Studies are collaborative. The array of specialization and increased technical sophistication of the work being done leads natural to collaborative research with the advent of emails, text messaging, and data transmission. In his experience, at research universities there tends to be more collaboration and as much as 60% involves a full professor. The trends in greater collaboration cut against a conventional wisdom that in the early stages of an academic career there is the expectation that junior faculty undertake more individual research and as individuals become more senior, they tend to invite collaboration.

Lupia felt senior faculty should

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encourage independent thinking among graduate students, along with mentoring from senior colleagues, and that technology such as email and the Internet had greatly enlarged the circle of individuals with whom they can interact. There has been a proliferation of "team" research projects dating back to the University of Michigan's American National Election Studies. More recently, the National Science Foundation created in 2002 a program of Time-Sharing Studies in the Social Sciences (TESS), which is free and available to anyone with a good idea. The program has already run over 100 experiments from different disciplines for several hundred scholars. This amounts to a virtual mentoring community at the stage of research design.

The roundtable illustrated that political science, unlike other the natural sciences with its long history of collaboration and more widely accepted standards for the allocation of collaborative credit, represents a gaggle of different approaches, styles, methodologies, and data collection strategies. Collaborative work in political science is clearly diverse. While mainstream economic journals leave the questions of credit to the authors, there is a strong social norm to list names alphabetically with occasional deviations where there is a wide disparity in contributions. In political science the trends toward collaboration have taken place over decades, but the trends are not equal among the subfields, and there is no established social norm. The pattern in the *American Political Science Review* is that multiple-authored articles generally list the contributors in alphabetical order, but in a number of cases where authors have worked more their names are more frequently listed randomly across various articles. Aggregate figures indicate that in the decade of 1956–65 less than 10% of articles had multiple authors. By 1996–2005 that figure was 40%, but, in subfields such as political theory that has embraced collaborative authorship more slowly, only about 5% of articles have more than one author.

Referring to their working group paper, the roundtable participants noted that when they looked at the collaborative papers presented at the 2006 APSA Annual Meeting, 41.73% were by authors of equal rank, 37.63% involved students with faculty members, and 20.20% were by faculty with and without tenure.

As they had in their Working Group paper, the roundtable did not arrive at any prescriptive recommendations. Roundtable moderator Sniderman did voice the hope that through continued discussion within the discipline a menu of allocating credit for multiple-authored work could be discovered. Google Scholar, for example, now counts all authors, unlike the old tradition of only the first author being listed in the position of honor. In the interest of transparency and equity, the hope is that formulae could be developed whereby political science journals would indicate the relative contributions of authors. The chapter on this issue has not been closed.

News and Notes

Long Island University to Offer Course on Iraq War

Long Island University's political science department will offer a course in spring 2008 that will help students examine the background, conduct, and implications of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. Economic, political, and military interests will be examined; connections will be drawn to the history and politics of the Middle East, the future of U.S. democracy, the role of the political opposition, the perspectives of other domestic and international actors, and more. The course will explore the events leading up to the invasion; internal politics within the Bush administration; the domestic and world reactions to the war; developments in Iraq and the region; the significance of oil in the world economy; the role of the media; consequences of U.S. methods upon human rights standards; opposition to the war; and the impact of the war at home. The participating faculty are John Ehrenberg, professor of political science and department chair; J. Patrice McSherry, professor, political science and director, Latin American and Caribbean Studies; Jose Ramon Sanchez, associate professor of political Science and chair of urban studies; and Caroleen Marji Sayej, assistant professor of political science.

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Here's a preview of some of the articles that will be published in the April 2008 issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics*:

Symposium

Ethics of Multiple Presentations
Nelson Dometrius, Editor

Features

The People's Perspective on the Size of the People's House
Brian Frederick

On the Limits to Inequality in Representation
Stuart Soroka and Christopher Wlezien

The Dakota Effect
Garry Young and Lee Sigelman

Reading China: How Do American China Scholars View U.S.-China Relations and China's Future
Yang Zhong and Che-huan Shen

The Supreme Court Appointment Process: Lessons from Filling the Rehnquist and O'Connor Vacancies
Michael Comiskey

The Profession

Comparatively Evaluating Potential Dissertation and Thesis Projects
Steven Rothman

When t=1 and N=2: Creating a Political Science Program at a New Research University
Thomas G. Hansford and Stephen P. Nicholson

Under the Influence: Intellectual Exchange in Political Science
Arthur Spirling and David Carter

The Teacher

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