Note from the Editors

Wendy Pearlman and *Ana Arjona*

This issue showcases *Perspectives on Politics*' commitment to featuring cross-subfield and methodologically pluralist research on topics critical to political science and politics at large. As we have done for the past two years, we divided the entire issue into thematic special sections to draw attention to cutting-edge themes and foster conversations across articles. This issue's lead special section, "Authoritarian Politics," examines phenomena as diverse as emigration, natural disasters, and YouTube videos to probe dynamics of survival, control, and dissent in autocratic systems. Next, "Theorizing Democracy" foregrounds political theory, offering novel thinking about democratic structures and practice by exploring new institutional designs, the scope of public reason and justification, and future-oriented visions. "Hegemony and Coercion" turns to international relations to reassess dominant IR frameworks from Offensive Realism to Schelling's logic of influence, arguing that traditional assumptions about power and coercion must be revised for today's complex geopolitical and cyber environment. Returning to domestic affairs, "Judicial Politics" brings together articles in American and comparative politics that examine the role of courts in contributing to social and economic policy making, constitutional change, and state-building projects. Finally, "Labor, Policy, and the Public" explores how labor unions and workers can interface with the public and respond to contemporary political, economic, and technical challenges.

Continuing the approach that we initiated in our last Editorial Note, which presented our new policy on post-publication critiques, we dedicate the remainder of this note to discussing another area of editorial policy. We do so both in the conviction that transparency is a key pillar of editorial ethics and because we hope that providing a peek behind the curtain of *Perspectives on Politics* can help readers, reviewers, and authors understand how this part of the knowledge production process in the discipline unfolds.

One important policy to which we dedicate a sizable amount of attention is potential conflicts of interest (COIs). The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), to which our journal adheres, defines COIs as "situations that have the potential to influence people's judgments."[1] They regard editorial COIs, in particular, as situations that arise when "professional judgment may be swayed by secondary interests."[2] Following COPE's guidelines, our team considers a COI to exist not only when such situations affect editorial decision making but also when others might reasonably *perceive* them to affect it.

Developing procedures to identify, avert, and resolve COIs or perceived COIs is critical to ensuring the objectivity, integrity, and fairness of review processes and to guaranteeing that no authors receive preferential treatment because of their relations with the editorial team. Our initial internal review of all manuscript submissions is strictly double-anonymous, which is a key element in safeguarding our review processes from COIs and from bias more generally. That is, we know nothing of author(s)' identities when two members of our editorial team read a submission and decide whether to decline the manuscript for publication, send it out for peer review, or invite the author(s) to revise a submitted research article and resubmit it as a reflection essay. There are times when conducting an internal review of an anonymized manuscript, however, that editors might believe they know the identity of its author(s). This is particularly the case for research close to their own areas of expertise. In such cases, our policy is for the editor to contact the managing editor to check whether the author(s) they have in mind are indeed the author(s) of the manuscript. If they are, the managing editor transfers responsibility for that manuscript to another editor. The same applies to editorial assistants; if, during the course of internally reviewing a manuscript, they suspect and then verify the anonymized author(s)'s identity, responsibility for that manuscript is transferred to another editorial assistant.

Only after two members of our editorial team have read the submitted manuscript and reached a consensus decision on whether to send it out for external review do they de-anonymize that manuscript. Revealing the author(s)' identity at this stage is essential to selecting and inviting reviewers who do not have COIs with the author. To that end, when we search for suitable reviewers, we eliminate from the reviewer pool anyone who is personally connected to the author by having attended the same graduate school in a cohort within two years of proximity; having ever worked together in the same institution; being former students or supervisors; or having coauthored a publication.

It is when we de-anonymize a manuscript to be sent out for peer review that we also assess whether our own potential conflict of interest with the author(s) might affect or be

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perceived to affect the subsequent external review process. We judge a conflict of interest to exist if an author is related to the assigned handling editor by virtue of being a

- personal friend
- departmental colleague
- current or former student who obtained their PhD five or fewer years from the date of the submission
- coauthor within five years of the submission
- current member of the *Perspectives* Editorial Board

In cases in which one editor has a conflict of interest with a manuscript, that manuscript is typically assigned to another editor to oversee the external review process. In cases in which all the editors have a conflict of interest, we ask an Editorial Board member to be the handling editor for that manuscript. For example, this was the case when authors were faculty or graduate students at Northwestern University while the full editorial team was Northwestern-based. It is also the case for *Perspectives* Editorial Board members. COI manuscripts sent to Editorial Board members are kept anonymous, as are manuscripts written by Editorial Board members. When a manuscript written by an Editorial Board member is sent out for review, we ask another Editorial Board member to read the reviews and make a decision, informing them that we have a COI with the author(s) but providing no other information about the reason for the COI. In that way, Editorial Board members asked to handle manuscripts do not know whether we are transferring responsibility because the author(s) is a fellow Editorial Board member or falls into another COI category.

Making decisions on manuscripts involves many difficult judgment calls, and our procedures to guide COIs are no different. It would be unjust to our friends, departmental colleagues, students, former students, coauthors, and Editorial Board members to prohibit them from submitting their work to *Perspectives* simply because we are the editors. At the same time, we are keenly aware that our relationships with such authors can affect, or be perceived as affecting, our assessment of their submissions. COI policies carve a path to balance these competing considerations and are thus one of the ways that we seek to maintain a journal that is open to all the best research in political science while assessing submitted work on its merits and fit for this journal's unique mission.

COI policies raise another issue: Should members of an editorial team themselves be allowed to submit manuscripts to a journal that they edit? Should their books be considered for book reviews at that journal? According to COPE guidelines, editors "should not be denied the ability to publish in [their] own journal," but they "must take extra precautions not to exploit [their] position or to create an impression of impropriety."[3] Because of the difficulty of avoiding a COI in these cases and, especially, the *perception* of a COI, *Perspectives'* policy has been that its editors cannot submit their work to the journal, and their books cannot be considered for book reviews at that journal. Being blocked from submitting to a journal, particularly a top journal in the field, can be an important disincentive to accepting the role as editor. Furthermore, being prevented from submitting one's own research could even be seen as a punishment for carrying out what is already a significant form of professional service that takes time away from one's own research. These are thorny ethical and practical queries that the discipline should continue to deliberate in pursuit of norms and standards that best facilitate political science research that is robust, thriving, and fair.

Notes

1 COPE: Conflicts of Interest, https://publicationethics.org/news-opinion/conflicts-interest.
2 COPE: Editorial Conflicts of Interest, https://publicationethics.org/topic-discussions/editorial-conflicts-interest.
3 COPE: Conflicts of Interest between Authors and Editors, https://publicationethics.org/guidance/case/conflicts-interest-between-authors-and-editors.

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Statement of Mission and Procedures

Perspectives on Politics seeks to provide a space for broad and synthetic discussion within the political science profession and between the profession and the broader scholarly and reading publics. Such discussion necessarily draws on and contributes to the scholarship published in the more specialized journals that dominate our discipline. At the same time, *Perspectives* seeks to promote a complementary form of broad public discussion and synergistic understanding within the profession that is essential to advancing scholarship and promoting academic community.

Perspectives seeks to nurture a **political science public sphere**, publicizing important scholarly topics, ideas, and innovations, linking scholarly authors and readers, and promoting broad reflexive discussion among political scientists about the work that we do and why this work matters.

Perspectives publishes work in a number of formats that mirror the ways that political scientists actually write:

Research articles: As a top-tier journal of political science, Perspectives accepts scholarly research article submissions and publishes the very best submissions that make it through our double-anonymous system of peer review and revision. The only thing that differentiates *Perspectives* research articles from other peer-reviewed articles at top journals is that we focus our attention only on work that in some way bridges subfield and methodological divides, and tries to address a broad readership of political scientists about matters of consequence. This typically means that the excellent articles we publish have been extensively revised in sustained dialogue with the editors to address not simply questions of scholarship but questions of intellectual breadth and readability.

Reflections: Contemplative, provocative, or programmatic essays that address important political science questions and controversies in interesting ways. Authors might offer short, sharp commentaries on political phenomena or policy issues; engage with scholarly arguments to highlight disagreements; put forth new perspectives, concepts, methods, research agendas, or descriptive analyses; or provide insightful discussion on important topics within politics and political science. Although the expectations differ from original research articles, reflections submissions are subjected to the same anonymous review process as original research articles and reflections that include empirical analysis are expected to explain their data and methods. In some cases, our editorial team may suggest that original research article submissions be revised into reflections.

Scholarly symposia, critical book dialogues, book review essays, and conventional book reviews are developed and commissioned by the Book Review Editors, based on authorial queries and ideas, editorial board suggestions, and staff conversations.

Everything published in *Perspectives* is carefully vetted and edited. Given our distinctive mission, we work hard to use our range of formats to organize interesting conversations about important issues and events, and to call attention to certain broad themes beyond our profession's normal subfield categories.

For further details on writing formats and submission guidelines, see our website at https://apsanet.org/publications/journals/perspectives-on-politics/.

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