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Notes from the Editors

We mentioned in the previous issue the approaching end of our term as editors, and the American Political Science Association (APSA) Council—acting on recommendations of a search committee (chair: Joan Tronto) and President Carole Pateman—has now chosen our successors: another editorial team, based at the University of North Texas, and consisting of Professors Val Martinez-Ebers, John Ishiyama, Marijke Breuning, and Steve Forde. We look forward to passing the baton to this next group and will work, as Professor Lee Sigelman did with our group, to make the transition as seamless as possible. We expect them, following past practice, to offer a statement of editorial policy in the May 2012 issue of this journal.

We take the occasion to reflect on another of the "lessons learned" from our own experience as editors, and one that the Council has apparently taken to heart: the enormous value of a team approach, and of group discussion of every article under consideration. Those discussions have forced us to think hard about whether an article has (or can achieve) a broad readership among students of politics, to strip away jargon (what we have come to call "inside baseball"), and to enliven the prose as much as possible—admitting that such a goal might resemble encouraging accountants to be as uninhibited as possible.

Looking back, we also note two important milestones: In this year's Thomson-Reuters rankings, the *American Political Science Review (APSR)* regained its position of having the highest Impact Factor among all political science journals. (It had fallen, in the last years of the previous editorship and into the first year of our own, to tenth position). So, when APSA opened the publishing of its whole set of journals to competitive bidding last year, it wound up remaining with Cambridge University Press (CUP) but at a market-driven remuneration that was 23 per cent higher than in their previous contract—not least, we are told, because the *APSR* is a desirable property whose revenues (as APSA Executive Director Michael Brintnall has noted) subsidize the work of our two sister journals, *Perspectives* and *PS: Political Science & Politics*.

One other decision of the Council, overwhelmingly accepting a recommendation of the Publications Committee, is relevant to the *APSR*. Beginning next year, members will have the ability to "opt out" of print subscription to any or all of the APSA journals. All journals will remain available to all members online. After two years, "opt out" will become the default option, and members will have to opt "in" if they still want to receive the journal(s) in hard copy. Since most of the cost of each journal is in editorial production, the financial savings will be slight (and, you guessed it, will entail no reduction in dues), but the gains to the environment, and to the shelf space of many scholars, will be large. The change also reflects the reality of how younger generation(s) of scholars—and by now many of us geezers also—actually read journal articles. (It's hardly an accident that, by some accounts, 52 per cent of all book sales last year were of e-books, not of paper ones.) We look forward also to that transition.

IN THIS ISSUE

Our first five articles deal with the search for—and the institutional prerequisites of—*good* policies, meaning ones that achieve their intended objective, even in unlikely (and, in one case, unsavory) circumstances.

In our pathbreaking lead article, "Searching for Good Policies," Steven Callander addresses just the kind of policy quandary that paralyzes Washington (and Berlin, and Paris, and London, and Tokyo) today: When a policy (be it a stimulus package, a Greek bail-out, or a bitter dose of austerity) fails initially to achieve its announced objective—or achieves it only partially—does one prescribe a bigger dose of the same medicine, or does one reverse course? Our existing models, Callander notes, basically assume that voters and policymakers can infer the correct direction as well as the extent of needed adjustment from observing two points; one in which "more" and another in which "less" of the policy is adopted. Reality is obviously more complicated, and Callander accepts the possibility of a "Brownian" relation between policy and outcomes, in which a policy movement in the objectively correct direction can produce, in the short term, an outcome worse than the status quo. While such a picture might seem analytically intractable, Callander demonstrates that it produces clear and surprising results, among them: (a) even an institution-free democracy, in which the preferred policy of the median voter is always adopted, can produce a bad outcome, where policy becomes stuck at an objectively suboptimal level; (b) a severe exogenous shock can dislodge a bad policy and encourage experimentation with bold alternatives; and (c), perhaps most paradoxically, candidates' uncertainty about voters' true preferences (and hence their experimental divergence from the median-voter position) yields, over time, a more accurate picture of how policy is linked to outcomes and hence better outcomes.

Although bad policies can persist even without institutions, bad institutions practically guarantee bad results. And among American Indian tribal governments, Laura E. Evans shows in "Expertise and Scale of Conflict: Governments as Advocates in American Indian Politics," institutions clearly matter. Analyzing an extensive and rich trove of newspaper archives, the minutes of county government meetings, and judicial records, Evans shows that some tribal governments are consistently successful in their dealings with adjacent local governments (county administrations), while others rarely succeed. Tribal wealth (e.g., from natural resources or casinos) makes success more probable, but so, independently, do tribal institutionalization and expertise. Even relatively poor tribes win more

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frequently when their leaders divide tasks and specialize, and when the tribal government cultivates the expertise that allows it to present its case (e.g., for paving a road) in the proper form and with supporting evidence. At the same time, such specialization and expertise wane when the tribe becomes the target of lawsuits (especially prevalent in "checkerboarded" areas, i.e., ones where Indian and non-Indian lands are intermingled), since legal wrangles tend to preoccupy the tribe's leaders and exhaust its resources. While this is likely the first *APSR* article to look specifically at Native American governments, Evans is careful to locate her results within the larger literatures (e.g., in urban politics) on local empowerment.

Since Albert O. Hirschman's pioneering work, we have tended to view "voice" and "exit" as polar opposites, and "exit" as conducing in many situations to bad policy. In the public schools, Hirschman argued, giving parents vouchers for private school tuition would encourage the most quality conscious to leave the public schools first, thus taking away precisely those constituents likeliest to agitate for better public education. Hence allowing "exit" would muffle "voice" and make for worse public schools. In "Voting with Your Feet: Exit-based Empowerment in Democratic Theory," Mark E. Warren challenges this long-accepted view—one that has also permeated democratic theory—head-on. Making it easier for dissatisfied members to leave poorly functioning institutions can actually empower members, particularly those whose voice would otherwise be limited. Including "exit-based empowerments" as a central part of democratic institutional design, Warren argues, can actually induce voice and contribute to better policies and to "vibrant and pluralistic democracies." In a world in which citizens can ever more easily exit uncongenial jurisdictions (school districts, cities, states, countries), and in which many fear a "race to the bottom," Warren's challenge is both relevant and (dare one say?) optimistic.

Mexico's seemingly incessant and extraordinarily bloody wars among drug cartels—replete with decapitations, torture, assassinations, and most recently mass murder by arson—can safely be regarded as a bad outcome. But why is there so much bloodshed in Mexican trafficking of narcotics, and so comparatively little in the United States—even in Los Angeles, where demand for drugs is high and distance to the border is little more than 200 kilometers? The surprising answer, David Skarbek argues persuasively in "Governance and Prison Gangs," is that narcotics gangs in Los Angeles have a highly effective and well-articulated governance structure. More startling still is the fact that this "government"—the Mexican Mafia (MM)—is headquartered in, and depends for its enforcement on, the Los Angeles County Jail.[1] Like any other government, the MM taxes, provides public goods, adjudicates disputes, strictly limits violence (e.g., imposing the death penalty for unauthorized drive-by shootings), and—not least—imposes penalties, often enough including death, on those who fail to carry out its decisions. All of this, says Skarbek, would be impossible without a perverse *public* policy that reliably and repeatedly incarcerates street dealers, segregates them in jail by ethnicity, overcrowds the jail, and overburdens (or, very possibly, corrupts) the guards. The result is that every dealer rightly anticipates: (a) that he will at some early point serve a few months in the jail; (b) that he will be confined closely together with co-ethnics; (c) that among his jail mates will almost certainly be MM "enforcers," who gain respect and rank by injuring or killing those on whom the MM has passed sentence; and, most importantly, (d) that prison guards either cannot or will not protect him. Skarbek also neatly analyzes, from an industrial organization viewpoint, the rational structure of the MM, e.g., why it chooses not to integrate vertically, instead "franchising" street-level dealing to subordinate gangs. One could of course break this cycle—by making the jails less crowded, providing more effective protection inside them, or (most controversially) jailing dealers less—but this "better" public policy, by making MM punishments less credible, would likely lead to greater inter- and intragang warfare. As Callander says at the outset of his article, "Policymaking is hard."

Turning to a more familiar and political kind of crime, the Hatch Act forbids federal civil servants from using their positions to influence electoral outcomes; Yet we wink, nod, and assume that exactly that routinely occurs. More precisely, we take somewhat for granted that presidents and their political appointees pressure civil servants to allocate money, projects, and "pork" in ways that will benefit the president's political allies and harm his opponents. Yet that commonplace conjecture has proven almost impossible to test, because too many confounding variables—the district's objective need, the effectiveness with which its citizens lobby—rear their ugly heads. But a recent minor scandal, Sanford C. Gordon observes in "Politicizing Agency Spending Authority: Lessons from a Bush-era Scandal," provides a pretty convincing test, and one that supports at least part of the prevailing wisdom. This was the so-called "PowerPoint Scandal" of 2006, when a White House operative summoned high-level civil servants of the General Services Administration (GSA) to a presentation that urged them to assist particularly vulnerable Republican members of Congress, who were specifically identified. Two months later, the *Washington Post* broke the story, and the officials involved hastily retreated. But, Gordon asks, what happened in the two-month interim? The answer: The GSA considerably sped up new contracts and disbursements in the highlighted districts, relative to those not mentioned in the presentation, only to rein them back once the scandal had been exposed. On the other hand, one agency within the GSA successfully ignored the pressure. Gordon suggests that particular features of an agency make it more, or less, vulnerable to political influence. A deeper question, for anybody steeped in

[1] Not coincidentally, the Los Angeles County Jail is now under investigation by the FBI. *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2011. http://articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/25/local/la-me-fbi-jails-20110925 (accessed September 27, 2011)

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the history of the New Deal, is whether present-day presidents have (or should have) enough tools to hold fractious members of their caucus together.

Our three next articles address essentially questions of *method*: how we best study, or along what avenues we most profitably approach, major problems in the study of politics. In "Rethinking Culture: The Social Lineage Account," Alan Patten makes the case for a middle course, avoiding both the Scylla of essentialism and the Charybdis of rejecting culture as a useful concept. By recognizing that distinct patterns of socialization, or "social lineages," form and define cultures, we can both sensibly study cultures (and changes in them) and can sustain the normative claims of multicultural theorists.

But what if a given "social lineage," including often most of its members, has been extirpated: the Jewish cultures of fifteenth-century Spain, the Africans who were enslaved and shipped to the Americas, the Armenians of modern Turkey, the Jews of twentieth-century Eastern Europe, the Indians of Uganda, . . . The list is depressingly long. Such genocides and ethnic "cleansings" embody enormous injustices, yet how can subsequent generations even address—let alone rectify even partially—such an injustice when its victims (or their great majority) are long since dead? In "'From This Far Place': On Justice and Absence," W. James Booth argues that we must view those victims, although now absent, as proper claimants on justice, and that only such a perspective can define our efforts to address the harms inflicted on them.[2]

An equally longstanding methodological problem now again coming to the fore is how to infer causality from observations, or even from randomized experiments, in the social sciences. In "Unpacking the Black Box of Causality: Learning about Causal Mechanisms from Experimental and Observational Studies," Kosuke Imai and his associates[3] demonstrate that neither standard statistical methods nor randomized experiments suffice to establish causality, unless highly demanding assumptions are satisfied; and, in many cases, the accuracy of those assumptions cannot be tested. Imai et al. offer three possible remedies: 1) identifying the minimum assumptions that standard designs would require; 2) assessing how robust (or not) causal conclusions may be to potential violations of those assumptions; and, 3) offering some alternative research designs that can identify causal mechanisms under weaker assumptions. The authors illustrate the usefulness of their approach by applying it to some well-known existing studies. We suspect that future research will find this article, and its implications, impossible to ignore.

The next two articles in this issue address, from entirely fresh angles, the venerable issue of *democratic governments'* conditions for emergence and survival. While many studies document the importance of free and independent media both for democratic rule and for good governance (e.g., low levels of corruption) within democracies, exactly how independent media arise has remained something of a mystery. In "Newspapers and Parties: How Advertising Revenues Created an Independent Press," Maria Petrova looks closely at the later nineteenth century in the United States to establish that the emergence of a non-partisan press, both temporally and geographically, was mostly due to higher advertising revenues. Those revenues (a) allowed previously partisan newspapers to rely less on public funding (e.g., legal notices) and (b) gave newspapers incentives to appeal to a broader market of readers, rather than just a partisan audience. Detailed analysis of newspaper affiliations (which sometimes changed) and of the emergence of new independent newspapers supports the hypothesis and clever instrumentable variables suggest that press independence is not endogenous. The implications of Petrova's findings may be broad, including for the present explosion of new media (and the waning of traditional newspapers): Profitability, rather than idealism or regulation, seems to encourage media freedom.

In "Democracy, Development, and the International System," Carles Boix revisits the highly contentious issue of whether economic development causes, conditions, or sustains democratic rule. Longer-term panel data running back to the early nineteenth century, Boix finds, establish that higher per capita income significantly raises the likelihood of both democratic transition and democratic survival. The result holds even when one controls for fixed-country or time-period effects, or when one instruments for income. At the same time, income has (as one might expect) a decreasing marginal effect on democracy, and the strength of the relationship is strongly conditioned by the international environment: much stronger during periods of democratic hegemony, weaker when authoritarian powers (e.g., the Holy Alliance) dominate. We suspect that the controversy on this issue, as on the one of the "resource curse" (where we are promised that rebuttals will be submitted for consideration), will continue.

Finally, and relatedly, how do *protests or revolutions* occur under authoritarian regimes, given the well-known problem of collective action—especially where individual protesters or revolutionaries are likely to incur severe punishment? How, even more problematically, is collective action possible when individual citizens do not know whether a future, alternative regime will be better or worse than the current one? In "Collective Action with Uncertain Payoffs: Coordination, Public Signals, and Punishment Dilemmas," Mehdi Shadmehr and Dan Bernhardt exploit the uncertainty of future payoffs to establish some highly counter-intuitive results, among them: (a) that less accurate information about the potential post-upheaval regime can make revolt likelier; (b) that harsher punishment (e.g., live fire into crowds of protesters) can actually lead to more frequent punishment; and (c) that greater repression can correlate with a higher incidence of protest. As is admittedly not always the case with articles we publish, this one has an obvious relevance for current events, particularly in the Middle East.

[2] One perhaps trivial instantiation occurs to us: In Roman and most Anglo-American law, one cannot slander or libel the dead; neither they nor their estates have standing to sue. Yet many jurisdictions (most notably, Scotland) are currently re-thinking this position.

[3] Luke Keele, Dustin Tingley, and Teppei Yamamoto.

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[4] See http://www.aapor.org/standards.asp

[5] One widely accepted guide to such norms is given by the American Anthropological Association's Code of Ethics, particularly Section III. http://www.aaanet.org/issues/policy-advocacy/upload/AAA-Ethics-Code-2009.pdf

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