"The Most Liberal Senator?" Correction

An unfortunate typo has been called to the editors' attention in Joshua D. Clinton, Simon Jackman, and Doug Rivers' article, "'The Most Liberal Senator?' Analyzing and Interpreting Congressional Roll Calls" (*PS*, October 2004, 805–811). The header for Figure 3 and Figure 4 (pages 809 and 810, respectively) mistakenly names the current president of the United States "President Bust." The header should read, in full, "Rank Ordering and 95% Confidence Intervals including President Bush using 62 *National Journal* Key Votes." The editors of *PS* apologize for this unintentional and unfortunate oversight.

Funkify and Diversify *or* The Politics of Dancing—Reflections on APSA in Chicago

"If I can't dance, I don't want to come to your revolution"—Emma Goldman[1]

In her plenary address at this year's Annual Meeting, Mary Robinson cited Jonathan Steele's report for *The Guardian* on this year's ASA meeting,[2] in which sociologists dismissed the U.S. political science profession as being "in a conservative phase." President Robinson, fair-minded observer that she is, had the courtesy to remark that the Annual Meeting of this supposedly conservative profession was replete with innovative discussion and debate around the issues of global inequalities that were our theme, offering some evidence at least of non-conservative tendencies. Yet, there is no doubt that there are some important features of our professional and associational life that merit the conservative label, that work to impede change, to preserve hierarchy and status, to constrain the creation of productive social capital. (Examples of some of these features are readily apparent from the agenda that those in the Perestroika movement and, separately and earlier, the Caucus for a New Political Science have felt it necessary to pursue, and continue to pursue—the mostly symbolic democracy within much of APSA; insufficient diversity in the profession in all senses; too little commitment to social justice and a political science that is relevant to actually-existing politics; the continuing dominance in APSA Council of the high-prestige research institutions who do not represent the majority of the membership; the failure of much of the profession to stand up for the rights of academic workers to organize, etc.). One event at Chicago signaled this associational conservatism quite vividly: at the gala reception after Susanne Rudolph's presidential address, many came, most ate and drank, everybody talked . . . but few danced.[3] Political Science was not having a funky good time.

At the Annual Meeting we perform scholarship, no doubt, as well as a certain amount of the administrative business essential to the running of the organization and its associated groups, and of course for some there are job interviews or discussions with publishers. We also engage in the more amorphous activity of social capital building in the particular sense captured by the slogan "networking a world of scholars"—however, this is a sense that is often almost brutally instrumental. There are instances, of course, of intellectual debate for the sheer pleasure of it, and the catching up with old friends and the making of new. But these instances do not seem to me to be the dominant experience. Rather, we go to APSA to interact with those who can advance our careers directly: we hunt them down, and those of us near the bottom of the career ladder hope that we will not encounter that crushing moment when the target of our suit peers at our name badge, decides we are not important, and directs her or his attention elsewhere.

For what we spend a lot of time and energy doing, I would like to suggest, is performing status. In our interactions in the formal space of the panel discussion, but even more so in the informal space of discussions in the corridors or receptions, those who have status display it; those who do not, seek to establish some small amount of it and at the same time provide the occasion for the other's performance of higher status. This is inevitable, of course—relations of power and domination are inscribed on every human interaction. At the Annual Meeting we spend most of our time performing the "professional" part of our identity repertoire and so it is that set of relations of domination that is most visible, intertwined of course with those of race, gender, class, etc.

But wouldn't it be healthier, and more *fun,* if we delved more deeply into our identity repertoire to engage each other more wholly as human beings? We really need to dance more. On the dance floor the dynamic is different, the playing field more level, domination harder to assert—and whatever fluid hierarchies may temporarily emerge, you can bet that straight white men are unlikely to be on top of them. Even if people kept their nametags on, it would be pretty hard to read them while doing the Twist. On the dance floor we're all just human beings getting a bit of a non-competitive workout, loosening up a bit. Not everyone loves to dance, of course, and no doubt some people had other things to do that evening in Chicago. But it strikes me that part of what keeps some of us off the dance floor at the Annual Meeting is fear. I don't mean the fear of looking a fool because we don't know the moves to the Electric Slide—I was there, I didn't know the moves, I probably looked a fool, it didn't matter. But would I have been up there if I was, in that awful phrase exemplifying the instrumental rationality of the Annual Meeting rituals, "on the market" this year? I like to think I would—but we've already established that I'm a fool. The rational chooser, if she existed, might be less willing to drop the performance of professionalism out of fear that the person dancing opposite would be their interviewer the next day. But so what? In those interviews, after all, two or more people should be sizing each other up as potential colleagues, rather than as boss and employee. Don't you want to have colleagues who are prepared to loosen up a bit? Isn't that interview relationship marked by a power dynamic that could usefully be undermined, to everyone's benefit? And so on through the other types of Annual Meeting interactions: would more junior members of the profession not feel more empowered to speak up in the organized sections' business meetings if they had seen that

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096505055617 Published online by Cambridge University Press

severe-looking chairperson doing the Bus Stop the night before?

The proposal at the Perestroika reception to hold a dance party next year was most welcome, and I hope we can follow through. And there was a spontaneous, albeit brief outbreak of dancing at the New Political Science reception—but we already know that that's a groovy crowd. Dancing with our*selves* at these events is not the issue. It can be read as critique of the prevailing unfunkiness of the Annual Meeting: but we surely don't need reminding that the point is not merely to comment on conditions, but rather to change them. We need to get *everyone* dancing. I urge those of us who have an interest in loosening the prevailing hierarchy within APSA, whether we are working as individuals, or collectively through groups such as NPS or Perestroika, to commit ourselves in future meetings to showing up and getting on down.

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Notes

1. I am indebted to Mary Ann Tetreault for reminding me of this important quotation.

2. "Four days in California," *The Guardian,* Tuesday, August 24, 2004, viewed at http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,,1289361,00.html.

3. Despite the good example set by the outgoing and incoming presidents in leading off the dancing.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096505055617 Published online by Cambridge University Press