American Political Science Review (2020) 114, 4, v–vii
doi:10.1017/S000305542000074X © The Author(s), 2020. Published by Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Political Science Association

Notes from the Editors

The new editorial team of the *American Political Science Review* began its term on June 1, 2020. It was a day marked by Black Lives Matter protests throughout the United States and much of the world following the killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officers. In a speech in the Rose Garden that afternoon, the American president referred to the protesters as "terrorists" and threatened to send the military into cities and states that failed to "control" them. He then authorized the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and flash grenades to disperse the peaceful crowd that had assembled near the White House in Lafayette Square so that he could pose for photographs at St. John's Episcopal Church, holding a Bible. Meanwhile, Muriel Bowser—the Black woman mayor of the District of Columbia, whose residents have no representation in the US legislature—planned her response to the president's bold assertion of power. Also on that first day of June, the government of Hong Kong announced it would ban the annual vigil commemorating the victims of the Chinese military's crackdown on the Tiananmen Square protestors in 1989. More than 6.6 million cases of COVID-19 had been reported worldwide, the death toll in the United States alone had exceeded 100,000, and the stay-at-home orders issued by many governments to control the virus's spread had triggered a global recession.

Our team had come together more than a year earlier to propose to edit the flagship journal of the discipline of political science. What brought us together initially, and what motivated us as we began our work as editors, was our shared conviction that the questions political scientists need to ask include those that were on full display that first day in June. Political scientists need to study power, domination, ideology, political violence, and structural injustice. We need to ask questions about protest and social movements and how oppressed people exercise their agency. We need to study policing and the carceral state, racialized and gendered health and economic inequalities, populism, the political aspects of religion, and political corruption.

In our first editorial meetings that afternoon, as we discussed manuscripts and reviews and the ins and outs of the online peer review system, some of us acknowledged having mixed feelings about focusing on journal editing at such a moment. But then we reminded ourselves of why we were doing this work: because of our commitment to political science research that helps answer the questions that were so vivid that day. We believe that political science risks becoming irrelevant if it cannot help answer these critically important questions. And we worry that all too often our discipline operates with an overly narrow view of what counts as political science.

"That's an interesting idea, but you need to change your focus so you can generate causal inferences. Let's re-think your project."

"We don't have large enough sample sizes to study African-American attitudes about those issues. Why don't you look at white racial attitudes instead?"

"People don't answer survey questions about sexuality honestly. You should study something other than LGBTQ politics."

"If you want to study social movements, switch to sociology."

"That's a normative question! In political science, we ask empirical questions."

No doubt, many readers of this journal have received counsel along these lines from well-meaning advisors, mentors, and colleagues. Our discipline does not shy away from signaling its norms and expectations about what does and does not count as a valid research question and about which methods and approaches are and are not legitimate. As political scientists, we like to tell ourselves that our data and methods are cutting-edge. But all too often, we let our data and methods dictate the questions that we ask. We let our tools tell us what we can and cannot study, when we would be better served by acknowledging the ways our toolkit is incomplete and seeking to expand it.

Our team came together, in part, around our deep respect for those scholars who push the boundaries of our discipline. These scholars ask questions that require talking to people whom political scientists often ignore; reading as "political" phenomena that many in our discipline view as outside the realm of politics; and adopting approaches, epistemologies, and methods that many political scientists would reject as inappropriate or inapplicable. Those who wield disciplinary power often send such scholars none-too-subtle signals, which announce, "You're welcome to join us, but only if you do political science the way we do it." That's how our discipline *disciplines.* It's how gatekeepers tell would-be members that, if they want admission to a top PhD program, if they want to get or to keep that tenure-track job, if they want to be read and heard and recognized—then they need to use *this* set of tools and no others, and they need to ask the questions that these tools can answer. That's how our discipline trains us, as students of the political. It's how it turns many of us away from investigating a wide range of crucially important political problems.

We believe that research should be well-designed and rigorously executed. And, of course, we believe that a common set of questions, approaches, and methods define our discipline; that's what it means to be a discipline. In addition, we believe that many of the questions political scientists traditionally have focused on are important ones. However, they don't come close to exhausting the range of questions that we must ask in order to truly understand politics. Our team is committed to making space for work that adopts approaches, epistemologies, and methods that challenge dominant

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542000074X Published online by Cambridge University Press

disciplinary norms and boundaries and to making room in the *APSR*'s pages for work by scholars who ask questions about political phenomena to which political science has too often given short shrift.

We approach these commitments with deep humility, with sincere respect for the journal and its history, and with a profound awareness that there are limitations to what any single editorial team can do. We also approach this task with the knowledge that journal editors often function as gatekeepers, preventing scholars who ask the "wrong" questions, or who answer them using unfamiliar tools, from gaining access. We recognize that, inevitably, we will perform a gatekeeping function to some degree, but our hope is that we will also be able to serve as a gate*way*, creating space for work that asks critically important questions about power and politics of the sort that were so palpable on that first day in June. We hope that under our editorship, the *APSR* will reflect the diversity of the subfields, geographic areas of study, methods, approaches, and identities that are encompassed by the discipline of political science at its most pluralistic.

As of the date of this publication, we have been editing the *APSR* for five months. The work has been challenging and rewarding. Our team is nonhierarchical, interdisciplinary, and collaborative. In place of the typical model of a single lead editor directing a group of associate editors, each of whom is assigned the manuscripts that correspond to a disciplinary subfield, we've adopted a rotating co-lead editorship, which is staggered to ensure continuity. Our team meets weekly to discuss manuscripts and to deliberate about decisions. Each manuscript that our team desk rejects is read by at least two editors, who carefully consider whether it might survive our peer review process. We often deliberate about those manuscripts that we do send for review as well, discussing whether and how they are exemplars of well-conceptualized, well-executed, problem-driven research that addresses timely or timeless questions about power and politics.

Our team has also adopted a set of rigorous ethical standards for research that involves human participants. We are the first editors to implement the new Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research adopted by the American Political Science Association Council in April 2020. Six members of our Editorial Board who have been leaders in recent discussions within the discipline—Catherine Boone, Scott Desposato, Macartan Humphries, Lauren Maclean, Layna Mosley, and Peri Schwartz-Shea—have agreed to serve as our Advisory Board for Ethical Research. Scholars who have submitted to or reviewed for the *APSR* since June 1 will have noticed the changes in the journal's ethics procedures. Details are available through our submissions guidelines and FAQ page. Because research ethics is an important focus of our editorship, we plan to devote our next "Notes from the Editors" to an in-depth discussion of this topic.

At the same time, we've begun the important work of modernizing the journal's outreach to and communication with the APSA membership and broader audiences. Among the first steps we've taken on this front are leveraging social media through our new Twitter and Facebook accounts and facilitating blog posts that feature *APSR* authors' research and inform readers about the editorial team's vision.

Look for our new cover design, which will be in place beginning with the first issue of 2021. Starting in the new year, each issue of the *APSR* will feature cover art that makes it visually distinct from the association's other journals. In addition to conveying some of each issue's key themes, our covers will signal the scholarly diversity, inclusivity, and collaboration that is the hallmark of our team.

Finally, our team has been working with the editors of other journals in the discipline to identify short-, medium-, and long-term responses to the unique challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic poses for scholarly research and publishing. Working with Cambridge University Press, we have been collecting data about the pandemic's effects on research productivity, patterns of submissions to the journal, reviewer availability, and time-to-decision. We plan to devote a future "Notes from the Editors" to sharing these data, discussing some of the best practices identified by political science editors across multiple journals, and outlining our own response.

We want to emphasize that none of what our team has accomplished thus far, nor anything that we accomplish over the course of our term, is or will be a result of our efforts alone. Although space constraints prevent us from being able to thank all of the many people who have helped us, we want to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the staff at both the American Political Science Association and Cambridge University Press, who have devoted enormous amounts of time and energy to assisting us in our work. We are particularly grateful to APSA's Executive Director, Steven Rathgeb Smith; Director of Publishing, Jon Gurstelle; Publishing Associate, Henry Chen; President, Paula McClain; Past President, Rogers Smith; and President-elect, Janet Box-Steffensmeier; as well as CUP's Executive Publisher, Mark Zadrozny; Politics Journals Editor, David Mainwaring; and Senior Online Peer Review Controller, Wendy Moore.

We are deeply grateful to Thomas König and the rest of the members of the Mannheim team for working with us to make this transition a smooth one, and we want to emphasize that they deserve credit for the articles in the current issue, all of which were submitted under their editorship. The Mannheim team's Managing Editor, Alyssa Taylor, generously agreed to stay on during our first month. She often took emergency calls at what were, no doubt, exceedingly inconvenient hours in Germany. More generally, she provided indispensable guidance and reassurance that first month as we began our work.

Our own Managing Editor, Dragana Svraka, has been an indispensable member of our team from day one. We are deeply appreciative of her dedication, and we look forward to working with her in the coming years. Further, we appreciate our terrific team of editorial assistants, who have helped us move manuscripts along: Zoe Ang, Jessica Burch, Carolyn Anh Dang,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542000074X Published online by Cambridge University Press

James Fahey, Jack Greenberg, Kimberly Killen, Monica Komer, Jenna Pedersen, Radha Sarkar, Kristen Smole, Thomas Vargas, and Yufan Yang. Finally, we are grateful to the distinguished members of the *APSR* editorial board, who have agreed to work with and to advise us over the next four years, and to all of the authors and reviewers whose scholarly work makes it possible for the *APSR* to publish cutting-edge research about politics and power.

Throughout the course of our term, we welcome suggestions and feedback from our colleagues. We know that our success will depend on the active engagement and contributions of scholars across the discipline, and we invite you to work with us, forging a partnership to sustain a leading journal and to maintain and to improve the quality and integrity of the *American Political Science Review*, while broadening its contributor pool, readership, and relevance.

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