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Notes from the Editors: Increasing Qualitative Submissions

One of the main goals of our editorial team when we became editors of the *American Political Science Review* was to increase the *substantive*, *methodological*, *and representational diversity* of the *APSR* while continuing to publish excellent work. As we explained in our 2019 Vision Statement, we seek to broaden the range of research topics that are published in the journal and to diversify the subfields, geographic foci, and methodological approaches represented in the *APSR*. We also seek to "increase the diversity of authors, reviewers, and citations along various lines, including race, gender, sexuality, ability, national origin, and scholar's type of home institution."

One of the areas we want to develop further in the journal is the publication of a broad range of qualitative research. (see Editors' Blog "Publishing Your Qualitative Manuscript in the APSR") Within the broader field of political science, except for American politics, most political science research in the form of books and articles draws on qualitative methods, sometimes along with other methods (Emmons and Moravcsik 2020). Yet this preponderance of qualitative political science research is not reflected in the pages of the *APSR*.

We have several reasons for expanding the range of methods in the journal. First, the journal should be more representative of the full range of methods that researchers use in the field of political science.

Second, the journal should acknowledge the renaissance in qualitative research methods that has occurred since the 2000s with the development of more systematic and analytically explicit approaches to using qualitative evidence (Bennett and Checkel 2014; Bennett and Elman 2007; Jacobs, Kapiszewski, and Karcher 2022). Today, many scholars combine qualitative research with quantitative, experimental, and formal methods. As the flagship journal of the APSA, we need to reflect these developments.

A third reason to broaden the methodological scope of the *APSR* is to help expand the substantive range of the articles. We maintain a firm commitment to methodological pluralism, knowing that entire subsections of the field proportionately submitted fewer articles to the journal because there was a perception that the journal did not publish qualitative articles. In fact, some of the best qualitative comparativists in the field have told members of our editorial team that they have never even considered submitting a manuscript to the *APSR* because of this perception, and this no doubt applies to many others. This perception has persisted even though some of the most cited and enduring *APSR* articles ever published have employed qualitative methods or multimethod research.

There has been a small increase in qualitative submissions since our editorial team took over. This includes methodology submissions that focus on qualitative methods, as well as small-*n* case study submissions, manuscripts using critical theory, poststructuralist theory or methods, interpretive work, and normative theory. Unlike previous teams, we ask the corresponding author how they would characterize the evidence used in their submission. Using this indicator, 5.9% of our submissions have included only qualitative evidence, 7.9% include both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and 24% of submissions do not use qualitative or quantitative evidence. The rest use only quantitative evidence.

However, since taking over the editorship of the journal, the biggest change has been a jump in the fraction of accepted articles that draw on qualitative methods, which has almost doubled, increasing from 11.7% of acceptances under the previous team to 21.5% under our team. We have published exemplary qualitative articles, such as the 2022 article by Danielle Gilbert ("The Logic of Kidnapping in Civil War: Evidence from Colombia"); Kerry Goettlich's "The Colonial Origins of Modern Territoriality: Property Surveying in the Thirteen Colonies" (2021); Milli Lake's "Policing Insecurity" (2022); and Calvin TerBeek's "'Clocks Must Always be Turned Back': Brown v. Board of Education and the Racial Origins of Constitutional Originalism" (2021).

We suspect that the increase in acceptances of qualitative research has to do with the fact that scholars are increasingly warming up to the idea that they can entrust their best qualitative work to the *APSR*. (Notably, the increase has not come at the expense of other methodologies because we are now using the journal's full page allocation, which is substantially more than the number of pages used by previous teams.) Anecdotal feedback suggests that this is occurring. For example, one member of APSA's Urban and Local Politics section wrote to us, saying, "It's so great that it [*APSR*] has been turned back into a readable journal. I may even pluck up the courage to submit something there myself. Until the new team took over, I just assumed that historical and/or qualitative work would simply be desk rejected, so took myself out of the running."

Recently a scholar of United States foreign policy who does archival work wrote to us after their article was accepted for publication in the *APSR* to express appreciation for the way in which his manuscript was handled: "Even if the piece had ultimately been rejected, my experience with the journal meaningfully exceeded expectations, in that the reviewers were demanding but consistently very fair, and that the editors gave every opportunity to address critiques and shortcomings rather than just pulling the plug."

Of course, some authors find their articles rejected and express frustration with the process, as might be

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expected, and we have no illusions that everyone is satisfied. But we have taken numerous steps to ensure that qualitative articles are treated fairly.

To begin with, our editorial team members work with a wide range of methods on a very broad range of substantive interests. As a team, our methodological expertise ranges from formal theory to GIS/geospatial analysis to oral history interviews. More specifically, team members have drawn on experiments, large-scale social media and cross-national data analysis, propensity matching, and public opinion and elite surveys in their published work. Also, we draw on a broad range of qualitative methods that employ different epistemological approaches including semistructured interviews and oral histories; ethnography (including participant observation and participatory mapping); archival research; small-*n*, structured-focused case studies and process tracing; and interpretive and poststructural methods. We hope that the strong background of our editorial team members in qualitative as well as quantitative methods will encourage manuscript submissions that draw on qualitative research.

The fact that our editorial team includes scholars who are experienced in working in difficult parts of the world on challenging topics using qualitative methods makes us all the more sensitive to the challenges of ensuring transparency about the research process, particularly concerning the ethics of research with human participants. We have new manuscript submission guidelines and a new submission interface to promote adherence to the American Political Science Association's 2020 guidelines regarding ethical practices, transparency about research methods, and effective scholarly communication in the journal. We encourage scholars to consult these guidelines and are happy to respond to queries about them during the submission process.

Some qualitative scholars have raised concerns that they find our word limit constraining, particularly people working with archival material and interviews. Our word limit of 12,000 words easily exceeds the word limit permitted by most history and anthropology/ethnology journals, which range from 8,000 to 10,000 words. Authors can also use online appendices for supplementary material as well as the *APSR*'s Dataverse.

To ensure that qualitative manuscripts are treated fairly, we select our reviewers based on their competence in the type of methodology employed by the authors in addition to their expertise in the substantive concerns of the manuscript. This means that the people who are reviewing the manuscripts are people who are knowledgeable about the type of work that is being conducted.

In summary, we encourage submissions that employ a variety of methods because we believe that the cross-fertilization of different approaches strengthens the contribution that the discipline can make to scholarly understanding and public policy in these challenging times. It improves both the kinds of questions we ask and the depth and quality of our answers.

The Editors, *APSR*

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