American Political Science Review (2022) 116, 3, v–viii
doi:10.1017/S0003055422000557

Notes from the Editors
A Partnership Toward Excellence: From Submission to Publication

In this Notes from the Editors, we provide an insider's perspective on our editorial process. We discuss three articles from this issue that show our continuing commitment to substantive, methodological, and representative diversity—one of the six principles comprising our editorial vision—and the review process that led to their publication.[1] We hope that our explanation of how we collaborate with authors and reviewers to advance submissions to publication will help to demystify the review process and encourage scholars from across the discipline to submit their best work to the *APSR*.

ADVANCING OUR EDITORIAL MISSION

In "Policing Insecurity," **Milli Lake** argues that efforts to enhance state capacity to break cycles of violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo through police reform had the unintended effect of entrenching a wartime political order of coercion and violence toward civilians rather than supporting the transition from war to peace. Focusing on a particularly conflicted region of North Kivu, Lake draws on a decade of immersive research (2008–2018), including 200 interviews with civilians, state officials, and international architects of security sector reform, myriad observations of civilian encounters with police in offices and checkpoints, and 43 life history interviews with actively serving police officers. Her method is explicitly interpretivist and grounded in feminist praxis, which facilitates creating a dialogue that treats her respondents as experts. In her analysis of the life history interviews, she shows how police officers themselves understand their work, laying out "dual logics of victimization and appropriate behavior." Civilians experience their encounters with these street-level agents of the state as underscoring their everyday precarity that includes threats of violence and coercion, thereby undermining efforts to build trust in state institutions.

Drawing solely on qualitative evidence, the article contributes to our commitment to increased methodological diversity in the pages of the journal. It also highlights our commitment to increased discussion of the ethics of research with human participants. Lake's analysis is a model of inductive theory building, drawing on earlier field research to inform later data collection and further theory refinement. The supplementary materials include an exceptional discussion of methodological and ethical choices in a context of ongoing insecurity, as well as short, anonymized profiles of the 43 police officers.

Political scientists have long examined how interest groups and activists engage political parties. **Andrew Proctor**'s article, "Coming out to Vote: The Construction of a Lesbian and Gay Electoral Constituency in the United States," explores a fascinating variation on this question by showing how both groups and identities can form in relation to parties. For some time, the LGBT community has been strongly affiliated with the Democratic Party—indeed, "in June 2018, only 2.9% of LGBT elected officials in the country were affiliated with the Republican Party," and LGBT voters have overwhelmingly tended to cast their presidential votes in the D column (Michelson and Schmitt 2020). Although many have come to take this as given, this situation was not inevitable, nor has it always been the case. Proctor brilliantly shows how early activists and their interactions with both parties contributed to identity formation within the LGBT community. Activists "contested gay liberation, civil rights, and civil libertarian constructions of lesbian and gay people and politics," and these constructions initially resonated with some constituencies within both parties. As the Christian Right gained influence in the Republican Party, however, the libertarian identity was foreclosed and the Democrats, on the defensive nationally, stepped back from public support for lesbian and gay causes. Activists created new room to maneuver through the formation of the National Association of Gay and Lesbian Democratic Clubs, which emphasized civil rights constructions, contributing to the crystallization of gay and lesbian political identity around these issues and frames.

This article signals another instance of our editorial team's commitment to methodological diversity. Proctor uses a qualitative approach to uncover mobilization and identity formation, tracing the development of identity and group constructions by examining political discourse and the strategies used by activists, party officials, and elected leaders, and in organizational and party communications. The initial submission intrigued us because we saw both the author's argument as an interesting contribution to the literature on parties and political mobilization and because we appreciated the focus on LGBT political mobilization, an understudied phenomenon in U.S. politics.

The final article we spotlight in this Notes from the Editors is "Historical Border Changes, State Building, and Contemporary Trust in Europe," by **Scott Abramson, David Carter, and Luwei Ying**. The authors provide evidence that historical border changes in

[1] Our thanks to the authors and anonymous reviewers, all of whom granted us permission to discuss this process.

Europe have had long-lasting effects on individual levels of social and political trust. They find that local border disruptions in Europe prior to the nineteenth century, as measured by georeferenced data on historical boundary changes, disrupted individual trust among fellow nationals and their confidence in the effectiveness of local governance. These findings have implications for several fields in the social sciences given that scholars believe individual trust is critical for cooperation among citizens and therefore affects public goods provision, military service, economic growth, and government efficiency. The article is fascinating reading not only for how it develops this causal link across time and European states but also because it is theoretically rich and invites a range of questions for further investigation, including whether areas that experienced high levels of border changes may also be exemplary sites of pluralism and "innovation" (20). Abramson, Carter, and Ying thus invite us to think about pressing issues, such as public goods provision and diversity, in deeply historical ways.

The article also underscores our commitment to diversifying the substantive content of the journal. To date, our editorial team has published 87 articles in international relations, comprising 11.7% of the journal's content. Under the previous editorial team, international relations comprised 5.9%. Not only have we published more articles from this subfield; we have also highlighted two by featuring them on our covers ("Women Thinkers and the Canon of International Thought," by Kimberly Hutchings and Patricia Owens [2021], and "Punishment and Politicization in the International Human Rights Regime," by Rochelle Terman and Joshua Byun [2022]). We also developed an International Women's Day virtual collection in 2021, guest-curated by Peace Medie, who included several articles on gender and conflict and one by Zehra Arat (2015) on feminism, women's rights, and the United Nations. In taking these steps, we hope to convey that the *APSR* is an outstanding venue for international relations scholars to submit their best work, that they will have a productive review experience, and that our editorial team will promote selections of this excellent work once published.

Now we "pull back the curtain" on the review process to provide our readers with a glimpse of what it looks like at the *APSR* and what they should expect if our editorial team puts their manuscript under review. We now turn to that process.

A PARTNERSHIP: THE *APSR* REVIEW PROCESS

The review process is a partnership. It involves not only authors and reviewers but also editors. Editors do more than relay the content of reviews to authors; we make judgments and decisions and offer advice at critical moments. Our editors collaborate with the authors and reviewers to advance a manuscript through the review process. We also collaborate with one another as needed.

The four reviewers of the Lake article—a specialist in the Great Lakes area of Central Africa, an expert in security sector reform, a scholar with expertise in qualitative field research during conflict, and a Latin Americanist who works on similar issues—drew on their years of field research in settings of conflict, violence, and transition to offer constructive and detailed suggestions on the original submission. Their initial comments focused on the need to clarify primary concepts and mechanisms, particularly the causal pathway from enhanced police capacity to increased predation on civilians and its persistence. The "major revisions" decision letter synthesized the many suggestions from the four reviews, emphasizing the importance of clarifying central concepts, the core claims of the argument—particularly the causal pathway at its heart—and the conditions under which the pattern of "policing insecurity" is likely to occur. Moreover, it called for a sharper statement of the manuscript's contribution by stronger engagement with relevant literature and for fuller discussion of the project's research method and ethics.

Author Milli Lake notes that "these comments pushed me to think more carefully about these claims, more effectively communicate the unique insights that feminist and interpretivist approaches offer, sharpen a key contribution of the article, which situates the people most affected by war as those with intimate knowledge and expertise over the realities that shape their lives, and figure out how best to present extensive qualitative and interpretivist work in an article length contribution (and appendix)" (personal correspondence to the editor).

Comments on the resubmitted version focused on clarifying the scope of the argument, concepts, and alternative explanations, as well as balancing the discussion of the research design, setting, method, and ethics between the text and the supplementary materials. The two subsequent "minor revisions" decision letters focused on addressing remaining reviewer concerns and also further clarifying the argument (including some restructuring) and adding additional discussion of research ethics in the supplementary materials.

The review process was a model of how peer review can work at its best, drawing on insightful and detailed reviews and editorial judgment about which suggestions should be emphasized in revisions. The result of this partnership between authors, reviewers, and editors is an extraordinary article, one that draws on remarkable qualitative data and a transparent discussion of the research process to advance scholarly understanding of the challenges of transitions to peace in this and similar settings.

The Proctor article went through four rounds of revisions in conversation with the editors and three reviewers who were experts in LGBT politics and political mobilization. Although all three reviewers saw promise in the initial submission, they initially split sharply, with one reviewer expressing great enthusiasm, one finding the core argument to be unpersuasive, and one pressing for a reformulation of the central question. However, all three reviewers provided

extensive suggestions on how to hone the central question, how to define concepts in clearer ways, and how to situate the contribution in the literature. In particular, two of the reviewers encouraged the author to explain constituency formation by looking inward at group dynamics and at groups' engagement with external factors. Inspired by the three reviewers' different takes on the main argument, we asked the author to ponder, "Is the story one of LGBT entrepreneurs probing the system to find the places where they can gain entrée and then doubling down on these connections? Is it one of the dynamic exchanges between advocates and the parties? Is it fundamentally about how an interest/advocacy group becomes a constituency and what factors facilitate this? Or fundamentally an account of how a group with interests that initially mapped across the partisan spectrum came to be associated with and linked to one party?" We then advised the author that "By focusing more tightly, you can better determine which parts of your story need more evidence and argumentation and put your efforts there."

Upon submission of the revised manuscript, it turned out that the path to publication for this article would be no more linear than the ultimate argument in the article. One of the reviewers was less satisfied with the revised theoretical framework, noting that the clarifications the author had made raised new concerns. The other two reviewers, although more satisfied, continued to press for clarifications about the dynamics of party coalition formation and the malleability of the political categories into which lesbians and gay men fell early in the process. In considering the reviews and the manuscript, we identified conjunctions with the issues that the reviewers raised. We believed that if the author could tackle them, an additional revision might result in a clearer theoretical contribution and sharper, more persuasive interpretations of the evidence.

The next revision went back to the two reviewers who had raised larger or more complicated issues. They were satisfied with the improvements. In our own reading of this version, we asked the author to clarify a few points, to simplify the abstract, and to provide more explanation for why the analysis would be of interest to scholars of social movements. The author had to work hard to satisfy both a substantively diverse set of reviewers and our editors, but Proctor persisted in engaging all the advice he received throughout the process.

The Abramson, Carter, and Ying article went through three revisions before we offered the authors a conditional accept. Our team inherited this manuscript from the previous editors, who had invited four reviewers. The first round of reviews revealed major divisions and doubts among the reviewers. This divergence of opinion meant that the editor on our team made a series of critical decisions about how to proceed from the outset. She did not do this alone. Our editorial team routinely consults with others for feedback and advice. In this instance, the assigned editor collaborated with another team member, noting that although she thought this manuscript required a lot of work, it had the potential to make a contribution to a broad audience of the discipline and she wanted to pursue it. The editor received feedback on her draft decision letter and subsequently consulted with several other editors during one of our weekly half-team meetings, weighing the pros and cons of issuing the authors a revise and resubmit.

In her decision letter, the assigned editor guided the revision process. Although she agreed with the reviewers who found the manuscript's central argument about changing borders and their lasting effect on social and political trust to be compelling, she stressed to the authors that "in order to consider the paper for publication again, you will have to make very substantial revisions." The assigned editor then drew on the reviews to detail ways in which the authors would need to revise the manuscript, including developing theorization of the mechanisms, establishing a better grounding in the existing literature, and providing more discussion about how and why border changes would influence individual level social and political trust and why we should care. The editor also invited the authors to critically assess their Eurocentric focus for its generalizability and to provide more information on why their measurement of primary concepts, such as border changes, was appropriate for the study. Finally, the editor offered advice on how to improve their presentation of the empirics and their writing style, as well as how to make the conclusion punchier to ensure the submission would be both legible and relevant to a broad political science audience. The editor made it clear that proceeding with the manuscript would be a heavy lift for the authors but encouraged them to meet the challenge.

The second round continued to show divisions among the reviewers, with two strongly opposed to moving forward and the other two strongly in favor of proceeding. At this stage, the editor again drove the review process based on her assessment of the reviews and the potential of the manuscript. She not only asked the authors to respond to all the comments from the reviewers, particularly on the mechanisms, and by streamlining their findings to focus on what was most surprising, but also continued to recommend ways to tighten the writing and improve the framing. Upon evaluating the second revision, two of the reviewers—including one who had initially rejected the manuscript—recommended that the editor accept the paper for publication given the substantial revisions. Thus, the review process was a product of our editorial team's collective approach and also shows the critical role that each editor plays by collaborating with the reviewers and the authors to produce outstanding research.

This Notes from the Editors focused on three articles in this issue of the *APSR* that highlight how our team is expanding the substantive and methodological diversity of the journal. Just as the articles exemplify these components of our mission, so too do our reviewers, who hail from a variety of institutions, disciplines, disciplinary subfields, and countries, diversifying the types of people who usually review for the *APSR* in multiple ways. This Notes from the Editors thus demonstrates how we are continuing to advance our team's editorial mission and exemplifies why we are so excited about the terrific work in this issue.

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