

Note from Editors

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Political scientists are tasked with a deeply meaningful and consequential responsibility: explaining the political world. This encompasses a wide array of phenomena, from the behavior of presidents, voters, rebels, and bureaucrats to the origins, transformation, and demise of institutions, regimes, and wars across history and the world. Moreover, our discipline delves into profound normative questions surrounding domination, freedom, equality, representation, and sovereignty, among others.

Scholarly journals play an essential role in this endeavor. Together with books and other publications, journals hold the knowledge that political science gives to the world. They disseminate that knowledge, shaping the collective understandings upon which new knowledge is produced and, sometimes, pointing to paths toward positive change. Yet journals are not strictly neutral channels connecting authors and readers. Journals can serve as gatekeepers that elevate certain questions, assumptions, epistemological positions, theoretical approaches, and empirical methods—and marginalize alternatives. They can harden categories that divide the discipline into self-contained specializations, inhibiting exchanges of ideas across them. Along the way, journals send strong signals to early-career scholars about how to position themselves and what constitutes good research, and thereby influence both individual career trajectories and our shared academic enterprise.

Perspectives on Politics was founded with a clear-eyed awareness of these dynamics. Its mission is to provide a synthetic forum that bridges political science subfield and methodological divides in order to advance both scholarship and community. Doing so promotes research and reflection that is both of the highest scholarly quality and purposefully cross-cutting, broadly engaging, accessibly written, methodologically pluralist, and boldly relevant. As founding editor Jennifer Hochschild wrote in the inaugural issue about twenty years ago, *Perspectives* aims to be a journal “that reaches across and outside our discipline and seeks to draw all of its members, and others, into a conversation about politics, policy, power, and the study thereof.”¹ As the next editor, James Johnson

expressed it, “This journal is an experiment, an attempt on the part of APSA to encourage political scientists to find ways to communicate with others beyond their narrow specialty or sub-specialty.”²

Subsequent editors Jeffrey Isaac, Michael Bernhard, and Daniel I. O’Neill embraced this sense of purpose and built the journal’s reputation for innovation, inclusion, and excellence. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all of these past editors for their dedication and vision in making *Perspectives* the unique and influential journal that it is today. Their leadership set a high standard that we are committed to upholding and extending during our three-year tenure as co-Editors-in-Chief. We are grateful to the American Political Science Association (APSA) and to the *Perspectives* editor selection committee, chaired by Fotini Christia, for encouraging us to submit a proposal and for entrusting us with this charge. Jeffrey Isaac, Michael Bernhard, and Daniel I. O’Neill generously shared their experiences with us, providing crucial insight into the multifaceted work the editorship entails. Editor-in-Chief Bernhard, Associate Editor O’Neill, Editorial Assistant and Interim Book Review Editor Karla Mundim, and the rest of the editorial team at the University of Florida made every effort to help us hit the ground running in our new role. Their exceptional support not only enabled a seamless transition, but also provided a model of what it means to care deeply about this journal and its continued upward trajectory.

We thank APSA Executive Director, Steven R. Smith, APSA Director of Publications, Jon Gurstelle, and our publisher, Cambridge University Press. Their guidance and assistance have been instrumental in navigating the publication process. We are indebted to our extraordinary Managing Editor, Dr. Jennifer Boylan, whose invaluable knowledge of the journal, inspiring patience, and dedicated efforts have been and will continue to be essential for every aspect of our operations. We thank the many people at Northwestern University who are enabling our editorship, especially William Reno and Stephen Monteiro of the Political Science Department and Adrian Randolph, Matthew Johnson, and Amy Post of the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. Finally, we are very fortunate to be

able to count on a top-notch team of editorial assistants, Northwestern University doctoral students Jinxue Chen, Elizabeth Good, Jack McGovern, and Sarah Moore. We could not do this work without them.

At the time of writing, we are approaching two months since assuming the editorship and we are excited about the journey ahead. We will present our editorial vision over the course of several upcoming issues. This letter marks the first installment of that unfolding conversation, where we would like to share some of our core values as well as some innovations that we are undertaking.

Public Sphere as Process as Well as Principle

In the “Statement of Editorial Philosophy” opening the March 2010 issue, then Editor-in-Chief Isaac coined a powerful term to capture this unique identity of *Perspectives on Politics*: a political science public sphere.³ Assuming the editorship in 2017, Bernhard and O’Neill cited “maintaining and developing the political science public sphere” as the guiding objective of their vision.⁴

We likewise embrace the mission and challenge of continuing to build *Perspectives* as a political science public sphere, acknowledging the two meanings of the expression. On the one hand, we will ensure that the journal remains a public sphere for the discipline. *Perspectives* offers a unique common space where political scientists with different subfield specializations, orientations, strategies of inquiry, and substantive concerns can speak to and learn from each other. It is a dynamic platform that exposes scholars to ideas that they might not otherwise encounter and that encourages conversations that might not otherwise occur. The journal’s barrier-breaking character invites creative, outside-the-box research that can challenge conventional assumptions and invigorate innovative research agendas.

On the other hand, we will sustain efforts to make *Perspectives* an effective vehicle for political science’s engagement in the larger public sphere. The journal invites research that speaks to issues that matter and discusses them in ways that have the potential to reach beyond the academy.

In addition to these two dimensions of political science public sphere, we are adding a third. We seek to deepen the journal’s public sphere spirit not only in its product, but also in the very process of leading it. We both come with our own personal and intellectual perspectives. To help *Perspectives on Politics* live up to its name, however, we must actively seek out and learn from multiple points of view. During the first year of our editorship, we plan to convene a series of online focus groups and open forums to solicit the input of political scientists of wide-ranging backgrounds and learn what they value in the journal, would keep, might change, would newly undertake, etc. This consultation, deliberation, and active listening will

enable us to take into account the needs and priorities of varied audiences as we refine and implement our vision. This will be another step forward in expanding the journal’s pluralism, a value that Bernhard and O’Neill rightly emphasized as one of the key four principles of their editorial strategy.⁵

Research Ethics

A growing scholarship is dedicating increased attention to research ethics in political science. Like our predecessors, we want *Perspectives on Politics* to be a significant part of this movement. As an APSA journal, an apt place to begin is APSA’s *Principles and Guidance for Human Subjects Research*.⁶ This landmark statement was the result of a three-year deliberative process involving consultation with diverse stakeholders via conference round tables, a survey, an online feedback tool, and other forms of engagement. The APSA council approved and adopted the principles document in 2020 and it became an informal part of APSA’s *Guide to Professional Ethics, Rights, and Freedoms* in 2022.

We take up two themes in APSA’s *Principles*: the call for ongoing reflection, openness, and discussion about ethical dimensions of political science research, and the call for journal editors to assume their due role in that process. To that end, we are undertaking several steps to develop and implement a new set of research ethics protocols for *Perspectives*. First, we consulted with our sister journal, the *American Political Science Review*, to learn about their efforts to ensure that the research they publish is consistent with APSA’s *Principles*. Building on the APSR’s experience, we decided to implement a more extensive set of queries related to research ethics for authors to address when submitting manuscripts. Our submissions portal will soon ask authors if their research involves human participants. If so, authors will be prompted to respond to a series of questions to ascertain that the research complies with APSA’s *Principles* and if not, to explain why. We will also start inviting all reviewers to assess manuscripts’ research ethics and transparency as part of their overall evaluation of the work. In addition, we plan to institute a third step: asking authors to affirm, at the end of published articles that include human participants, that they have complied with the APSA Principles. This will send an important signal to readers about the care taken in producing that particular work, increase general attention to the fundamental importance of ethics issues, and contribute to fostering ethics norms across political science as a whole.

Second, we invited members of our Editorial Board with special expertise in research ethics to join a new Research Ethics Advisory Committee. We thank Charli Carpenter, Juliet Hooker, Anja Neundorf, Trisha Phillips, and Joe Soss for accepting to serve in this important capacity. Representing different areas of substantive and

methodical expertise as well as all four political science subfields, this committee provides input when we come across particularly complex and thorny ethics concerns. Their guidance will play a pivotal role in maintaining the integrity of the research that we publish.

Innovations on Manuscripts

We have instituted several innovations with regard to manuscripts. As journals move to overwhelmingly digital formats, it is time to reevaluate old procedures that were once necessitated by physically printed copies but no longer apply. One is limits on works cited. Inspired by recent changes at the *American Journal of Political Science* and *Comparative Political Studies*, we will no longer count references as part of articles' overall word count. Numerous studies demonstrated that published works undercut scholars of certain backgrounds, namely women, people of color, and early career scholars.⁷ In removing references from the maximum of 12,000 words allowed for research articles, we hope that authors will cite all relevant sources, giving due credit to scholars' contributions regardless of their background, location, or career stage.

We have also rethought our expectations for Reflection essays. Shorter than conventional research articles, Reflections are contemplative, provocative, or programmatic essays that address important political science questions and controversies in interesting ways, typically running 6,000 to 10,000 words. Like articles, Reflections are first subjected to a process of double-blind internal review, whereby they are carefully read, commented on, and discussed by two members of our editorial team. If they pass this process, they are then sent for external peer review and must pass peer review. We want to emphasize to authors and reviewers that Reflections are not lesser than traditional research articles, but different. They offer a space where scholars can make important innovations and interventions, but can do so without the format, structure, or length standard in research articles. They should make clear contributions to political science or political science's engagement in the public sphere.

Our Message to Authors

The bedrock of our work as editors is reading the manuscripts that authors submit to the journal, deciding whether to send them out for external review, and then shepherding manuscripts through the peer review process. With this in mind, we would like to share a few thoughts with potential authors.

Every topic of relevance can find a fitting place within *Perspectives*' pages insofar as it is clearly linked to broad questions about politics. We encourage authors to articulate the significance of their chosen topics by transcending narrow niches of knowledge and demonstrating how their work contributes to the enrichment of the discipline at large.

For manuscripts that rely on empirical evidence, we prioritize methodological rigor irrespective of whether the work adopts qualitative or quantitative approaches. For projects that incorporate mixed methods, we urge authors to provide a clear and comprehensive explanation of how their research design effectively utilizes each method and type of evidence.

Finally, we want authors to know that we will do our best never to lose sight of the overriding goal of gathering and interpreting readers' assessments, including our own: to help scholars, and through them the field, to produce the best possible work. We hold all submitted manuscripts to the highest standards of scholarly distinction. At the same time, we want the process of submitting to *Perspectives* to be one that leaves authors feeling encouraged, not discouraged. Regardless of whether scholars publish in *Perspectives*, we want the journal to be a positive part of their intellectual trajectories. How editors communicate their decision to decline submissions for peer review can shape the discipline no less than how they construct issues from accepted articles. We regard with the utmost seriousness both parts of that responsibility.

This Issue

We thank the University of Florida team for all the content featured in this issue, which was reviewed, developed, and accepted under their tenure. We also salute that team for instituting the powerful innovation of curating accepted works into subsections that provide a resource for anyone who wants to find, in one convenient place, the best that political science can offer on pressing questions for our times and our discipline. Continuing that tradition, we have selected materials for this issue to center around a special subsection, in addition to a number of other research articles and a mini-section of reflection essays.

Methods, Ethics, Motivations: Connecting the How and Why of Political Science

We want *Perspectives* to offer space for scholars to think intentionally about how and why we do political science. What are the aims of theory-building and testing? How do we assess the validity of arguments about what is and ought to be? What ethical principles and professional purposes should inform our work with research participants and training of future generations of political scientists? How do these choices shape what knowledge and understanding the discipline does or does not produce, and for whom? These are meta-discussions about the profession that usually transpire only informally, if at all. *Perspectives* is an ideal place to give them the prominence that is overdue.

We thus dedicate the first special subsection of our editorship to questions about methods, ethics, and motivations in political science. The discipline is continually developing increasingly advanced tools of data collection,

data analysis, causal inference, and interpretive sophistication, as well as practices for constructing and defending arguments. The research articles and reflection essays in this section not only make important contributions to these essential methodological debates, but also connect the “hows” of research to the larger “whys” related to the purposes, audiences, and normative commitments for which we do research in the first place. Together, they create a rich conversation across a broad range of methods of analysis and kinds of engagement, encouraging deep thinking about the assumptions and approaches that direct political science work.

The subsection begins with a fundamental question: how do the methods we use influence the quality of the data we gather and the ethical dilemmas that we confront in our research? David R. Stroup and J. Paul Goode outline the advantages and disadvantages of researchers’ roles as either insiders or outsiders in conducting ethnographic research in authoritarian contexts. In their concluding recommendations for best practices, they suggest how work assuming an outsider stance can be both ethically sound in protecting respondents and methodologically strong in yielding rich and valid data. Summer Lindsey probes similar complexities in how social contexts and human relationships impact the data that we gather from interlocutors. Delving into the complex dynamics of focus groups, she proposes a novel method to measure private preferences in such settings and applies that method to analyze attitudes toward punishment in Democratic Republic of Congo. The paper uncovers significant differences between private, public, and group preferences, raising crucial ethical questions about the potential polarization of research participants in group discussion contexts.

Moving from ethnography and focus groups to surveys, Ariel Malka and Mark Adelman investigate another data validity concern: expressive survey responding. The reflection essay challenges the notion that many partisans in the United States endorse politically congenial misinformation solely for expressive psychological benefits and argues that evidence of this behavior is more limited than commonly assumed. Their findings suggest that behavior in the survey context may not differ significantly from real-world behavior. In another reflection essay, Matthew Barnfield shifts to yet another method of data collection and analysis in his critique of the use of misinformation in experiments. Arguing that misinformation entails a problematic deception of respondents and actually compromises causal inference, he asserts that debriefing is inadequate. Better ethically and methodologically is to use experimental treatments that, in Barnfield’s words, “tell the truth.”

Barnfield’s contribution moves the conversation from data validity and ethics in data collection to considerations of data analysis and causal inference. Gary Goertz and Stephan Haggard delve further into the question of causal

inference by codifying an emerging method known as large-N qualitative analysis (LNQA). This innovative approach prioritizes establishing regularities across a large sample or the entire population of cases, shifting the focus away from average treatment effects. LNQA utilizes within-case process tracing to test causal mechanisms and places particular emphasis on defining scope conditions. The authors highlight how LNQA has already been employed by various scholars and identify several strengths inherent in this method. The paper brings to the fore the importance of labeling and formalizing already-existing research practices to facilitate discussion about new methods’ strengths and weaknesses, as well as efforts to improve them.

Moving from how we collect and analyze data to how we share information about these processes, Nikhar Gaikwad and Veronica Herrera address the critical aspect of research transparency in the context of text-based sources. Their research article reveals that only a small minority of articles utilizing such sources provide comprehensive information about how sources were selected and consulted, and how they support specific claims. They present several recommendations to enhance transparency when using text-based sources, extending beyond data quality and knowledge accumulation to encompass scholarly exchange, collaborative academic community-building, and graduate training as well.

Two pieces in this collection consider ethics, methods, and motivations as pertain to the rightful role of academics in nonacademic spaces. Complicating views about the incompatibility of academic objectivity and political activism, Michael L. Fraser argues that both scholars and activists should seek out what Weber calls “inconvenient facts,” or evidence that may indicate that one’s preferred claims are incoherent, inconsistent, objectionable, or inaccurate. Even when activists, activist scholars, and nonactivist scholars are motivated by different goals, engagement with inconvenient evidence stands as a single methodological virtue that all should pursue.

Questions about academia’s proper relationship with activism dovetail with similar questions about its relationship with policy-engagement. Turning to the latter, Cullen S. Hendrix, Julia Macdonald, Ryan Powers, Susan Peterson, and Michael J. Tierney survey nearly 1,000 international relations scholars and find that, contrary to assumptions about the field’s irrelevance to the policy world, the majority both engage with policy and believe that they bear responsibility for the effects of that engagement. The authors explore how such policy engagement does or does not vary across methodological approaches, ranks, and genders, and raise new questions about how engagement is or is not encouraged by professional benefits such as credit-claiming or university promotion.

Taken as a whole, the articles in this subsection draw new connections between the methods for analyzing the

political world, the ethical principles guiding those methods, and the larger purposes that motivate scholarship. These works challenge conventional wisdoms, such as those that presuppose a disconnect between scholarly work and either activism or policy engagement. They posit new ways of calculating tradeoffs between the costs and benefits of research for protecting participants on the one hand and producing knowledge on the other. They also suggest new ways of assessing and increasing the quality and validity of data, analysis, and inference. Like the APSA *Principles* that we referenced earlier, these articles do not intend to impose prohibitions or requirements as much as provoke reflection and conversation on issues of far-reaching significance across all subfields of political science and also beyond both the discipline and the academy at large. In other words, this collection of articles embodies the very spirit and mission of *Perspectives on Politics*. This is only the beginning of a conversation that we hope to continue on these pages in future issues.

Additional Research Articles

The next collection of articles offers an eclectic exploration of diverse issues and cases. Susan L. Moffitt, Cadence Willse, Kelly B. Smith, and David K. Cohen examine whether centralization enhances subnational state capacity and reduces subnational inequality. Focusing on public education in the United States, they find that concentration of power in the federal government erodes subnational *administrative* capacity while also increasing subnational *technical* capacity, particularly in low-poverty counties. These findings highlight the significance of local contexts and policy design in determining centralization's impact on both the ability to govern and addressing persistent inequalities.

Inversing assumptions that insularity inhibits expansion of geopolitical power by constraining conquest, John M. Schuessler, Joshua Shiffrin, and David Blagden argue that states separated from other states by large bodies of water may be uniquely able to construct spheres of influence. Insular countries can translate the lowered cost of providing their own security into resources to project power, and also take advantage of their attractiveness as a seeming less-threatening security providers to other countries. Applying this framework to the case of the United States since World War II, they suggest that linking geography to literatures on hegemony and hierarchy reveals how the sources of the United States' overseas presence may be broader than critics of American grand strategy contend.

Steffen Murau and Jens van 't Klooster challenge the conventional understanding of monetary sovereignty, which is based on outdated assumptions about the global monetary system. In its place, they introduce a novel concept called *effective monetary sovereignty*, which takes into account the constraints imposed by the global credit money system and

emphasizes states' ability to utilize their monetary governance tools. By proposing a more realistic approach to monetary sovereignty, the paper paves the way for future research on state behavior within the context of financial globalization. Additionally, it prompts new normative questions about the kinds of policies that states should adopt and the options that should be available to them.

How should we go about studying the increasingly widespread and significant phenomenon of social media politics? Asfandyar Mir, Tamar Mitts, and Paul Staniland propose a coalitional approach. The authors argue that, by examining how political actors adopt narratives that bring them closer to their allies or undermine their rivals, this framework advances our study of the behavior of groups such as political parties, military, media, and dissidents, as well as of the relationships between them. Collection and analysis of Twitter and Facebook content from before and after the controversial 2018 general election in Pakistan reveals both organic and purposeful clustering in the social media ecosystem, yielding real-time evidence of political cooperation or competition that is otherwise difficult to observe.

Haifeng Huang, Chanita Intawan, and Stephen P. Nicholson explore a new way to measure trust in government in the Chinese context. Using the Single-Target Implicit Association Test, the authors find not only that the Chinese public exhibits a high level of implicit trust in the government but also that such trust is empirically unrelated to explicit trust, as reported on surveys. The authors find that implicit trust has a positive effect on system justification and support for the government in times of crisis. Their study contributes to explaining China's exceptional durability as an authoritarian regime and also points to recommendations for refining measures of political trust in political science more generally.

Christopher F. Karpowitz and Kelly D. Patterson move from the level of the international system to that of the individual. Noting how empirical political science can learn from political theory, they develop a new multi-dimensional measure of individualism that focuses on the relationship between the self and external authorities in moral decision-making. They test this measure on U.S. survey data from 2018 to 2022 to adjudicate between competing theories about how individualism affects other-regarding action and contribution to public goods.

Mini-Section: Reflections on Collective Action

This issue's Reflection essays constitute a mini-section about the causes, dynamics, consequences, and desirability of collective action. Amidst renewed interest in Albert Hirschman's conceptualization of exit, voice, and loyalty, Leonard J. Schoppa challenges the notion that only low-cost exit options can empower individuals. He focuses on how citizens can influence the provision of

public goods and services, arguing that costly exit can also serve as a significant means of empowerment by stimulating collective action. This argument implies that policies offering limited choices to citizens may lead to a lack of both exit and voice, resulting in inadequate response to improve the provision of public goods.

Lachlan Montgomery Umbers further explores the conditions under which collective action can be effective. Invoking political theory, he crafts a moral and philosophical justification for unions as essential tools for solving collective action problems that afford workers protection from domination. He explains not only why workers must be ensured a right to unionize and take industrial action but also why duties of fairness defend compulsory unionization.

Finally, Hahrie Han, Andrea Louise Campbell, and Elizabeth McKenna turn from the inputs of collective action to its outputs. They conceptualize “civic feedbacks” as a novel mechanism that focuses attention on the downstream effects of grassroots actions and how they explain varying levels of political influence among organizations. Their analysis of a campaign for early childhood education in Cincinnati, Ohio, demonstrates a multi-step process through which a seemingly marginal organization developed constituent capacities, facilitated recruitment and retention of supporters, and leveraged their resources and commitment to achieve political standing and centrality. As a result, the organization successfully altered the network of elite relationships, showcasing the profound impact of civic feedbacks on political dynamics.

Notes

- 1 Hochschild 2003, 1.
- 2 Johnson 2008, 431.

- 3 Isaac 2010, 7.
- 4 Bernhard and O’Neill 2017, 947.
- 5 Bernhard and O’Neill 2017, 948.
- 6 American Political Science Association (APSA) 2020.
- 7 Dion et al. 2018; Dion and Mitchell 2020; Smith and Lee 2015

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