

Notes from the Editors: #APSR

Everyone knows that social media can be an “outrage machine”: a dark hole of blistering criticism and rejection that fosters “compare and despair” syndrome by inviting us to judge our inner selves against others’ Instagram pics (Haidt and Twenge 2021). However, it also has the potential to connect people in new and dynamic ways, helping to build community across distance and difference.

When our editorial team came to the journal in June 2020, one of our goals was to harness this potential: to use Twitter, Facebook, and other forms of online communication to engage and to connect the *APSR*’s authors, reviewers, and readers. Some of our first steps included redesigning the journal’s cover and website and activating *APSR* Twitter and Facebook accounts. We created an Editors’ Blog and an [Authors’ Blog](#), as well as regular social media features. One of our favorite innovations is #TuesdayTips (in which we tweet advice based on commonly asked questions about the publication process), which was motivated by our conviction that an important part of creating an inclusive community of scholars is demystifying the publication process.

In this “Notes from the Editors,” we take stock of our communication and community-building work thus far, discussing how we have built on existing communication networks, outlining steps we have taken to expand communication and outreach, and sharing some early results of those efforts.

BUILDING ON ESTABLISHED PRACTICES (BUT IN A PANDEMIC!)

Of course, the *APSR* has not exactly been invisible in political science. To the contrary, our efforts build on the work of previous editorial teams, which have made important efforts to reach out to the journal’s constituents in a variety of ways.

For example, most political scientists are familiar with the Meet-the-Editors panels at the American Political Science Association meetings and other professional conferences. These panels help prospective authors learn more about the editorial team—putting faces to the names—and their vision for the journal. They provide opportunities to ask questions and to learn about the submission, review, and publication processes. Conferences provide additional avenues for communication and outreach, as editors make themselves available to respond to individual queries, encourage authors to submit work that they present on panels, and visit research sections and other business meetings to invite specific groups whose members they would like to encourage to submit and review for the journal.

Although in-person communication is invaluable, editors of the *APSR* and other journals have long recognized that because not everyone can attend conferences, editorial outreach must take other forms as well. Editors’ Notes, like the notes you’re now reading, are one way for editors to communicate directly with the journal’s constituency. They are always ungated and available on the journal’s website. The preceding editorial team helped to improve access by establishing FirstView, which gets articles to readers quickly and efficiently.

Previous teams also advocated for and implemented Open Access to some *APSR* articles. Although Open Access in its current form introduces inequities in access to audience—because it helps circulate the research of scholars at institutions that pay open access fees and in countries (specifically European countries) where governments require it—it also helps provide access to research for scholars who are not affiliated with institutions that have subscriptions. Access to the journal is one way to address inequities in the profession. By expanding the journal’s constituency, it also creates the basis for a more inclusive community, a critical component of our communication strategy.

Our team is grateful for the important work that previous editors have done to build networks and practices for communicating with the journal’s readers, authors, and reviewers, and we have consciously built upon their work. For example, more than half of the articles in this issue are Open Access, and we have continued many long-standing traditions—although often adapted because of the COVID pandemic.

Instead of hosting conference meet-and-greets with drink tickets and ridiculously overpriced appetizers in freezing cold conference hotel rooms, we communed on Zoom, hosting our 2020 APSA editors’ panels from our Hollywood Squares. We attended other conferences and business meetings online as well, waiting for our chance to grab a few minutes of your time to urge you—yes, you, the person quietly lurking in your Hollywood Square, who hasn’t read the *APSR* in years and until now never even considered submitting to the journal—to submit your best work to us.

We invited research section leaders and section chairs to share flyers about the journal and our team’s vision with their members. We collaborated with other APSA journals to create two special virtual issues, one on [Protests, Policing, and Race](#) and the other on the [Crisis of American Democracy](#). Editorial board member [Peace Medie](#) guest edited the *APSR*’s own virtual special issue, [An International Women’s Day Collection](#). All these efforts continued the strong traditions of our predecessors in reaching out to and connecting with members of the profession.

EXPANDING COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

But we wanted to do more to get you—yes you, the one lurking in your Zoom corner—to read and submit to and review for the *APSR*, so we overhauled the journal's main [website](#) to make it more accessible, informative, and visually appealing. We also redesigned the journal's [cover](#), which reflects our team's values. Each cover is a visual expression of diversity, inclusivity, and collaboration, which draws on themes from lead articles or groups of featured articles. Aesthetically, we seek to convey dynamism and to evoke emotion with the cover of each issue.

We also introduced Authors' and Editors' Blogs, including our "Conversation with Authors" series, in which we interview authors to help make their published research more accessible to a broad audience. We believe many of these [Authors' Blog](#) posts and interviews will be useful in the classroom as either stand-alone pieces or as complements to the articles they discuss. The "Conversations with Authors" posts help readers learn about how a project came into being, which can be a particularly useful tool for graduate students and junior faculty. The [Editors' Blog](#) is a place where we address publication-specific topics (for example, our fall 2020 editorial report) as well as timely political issues like demands for racial justice.

But perhaps our biggest change was the introduction of *APSR* [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

Why social mediafy the *APSR*?

According to the Pew Research Center, social media use among adults in the United States increased from just 7% in 2005 to 65% ten years later. A 2016 survey showed that researchers, professors, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows use Twitter and Facebook to stay up to date on current research in their fields (92%), get novel ideas for their research (83%), and increase their visibility (73%). A more recent survey shows that

social media helps scholars widely share their research and that it is particularly helpful for early career scholars and for those who are not typically favored by the gatekeeping practices and hierarchies of academe (Jordan and Weller 2018). A 2020 study of six academic journals (including the *APSR*) found that Twitter use is correlated with higher citation counts and greater visibility for scholars who are traditionally marginalized (Klar et al. 2020).

Our approach to social media is informed by our mission. We seek to be engaging and distinctive and to encourage people who don't usually read the journal to join the conversation, read the journal, review for us, and submit. Our goal is to make the *APSR* accessible to a diverse and pluralistic community of political science scholars, to build trust between the journal and political scientists who have been underrepresented in the *APSR*, and to encourage a dialogue on social media that we hope will translate into long-term offline collaboration.

To that end, we've built a fantastic Communications and Outreach Committee that includes a social media editor and two graduate student assistant social media editors. We also have help from the Public Scholarship Program, which emerged through [APSA's Presidential Task Force on New Partnerships](#). APSA's public-engagement team created a proposal for a part-time fellowship that would allow graduate students to receive training on writing for a public audience, practice those skills, and receive a stipend to do so. Graduate students like Dara Gaines translate articles from APSA publications into everyday language and APSA publishes the summaries, [like this one](#) on executive power in crisis, on Political Science Now.

The community that we set out to build is already coming together. As [Table 1](#) and [Table 2](#) show, our Twitter and Facebook accounts have garnered thousands of followers, likes, and shares. Our numbers have steadily increased over the past year, nearly doubling in followers on both platforms. Clicks on both platforms also increased dramatically.

TABLE 1. #APSR Analytics

	Followers	Tweets	Likes	Retweets	Engagement	Clicks
2020	4.3K	176	3.8K	1.2K	5K	6K
2021*	7.6K	201	5.5K	1.8K	7.4K	14K

Note: *January 1 through August 2, 2021.

TABLE 2. Facebook Analytics

	Followers	Posts	Reactions	Shares	Engagements	Clicks
2020	371	132	2.2K	191	2.6K	881
2021*	535	197	743	221	991	1.3K

Note: *January 1 through August 2, 2021.

TABLE 3. Blog Posts

Blog title	Published	Page views
Women Thinkers and the Canon of International Thought	6-8-2021	54
Pride amid Prejudice	5-12-2021	96
Minimal Secularism: Lessons for (and from) India	3-28-2021	102
What Happens to Fundraising when the Neediest are Also the Most Stigmatized?	3-15-2021	97
Conversations with Authors: The #BlackLivesMatter Movement and Identity Frames	2-5-2021	181
Political Secularism and Muslim Integration in the West	1-29-2021	146
Conversations with Authors: Group Specific Measures and Novel Designs to Mitigate Gender-Based Violence in India	1-11-2021	83
Conversations with Authors: Institutionalized Police Brutality	12-15-2020	137
APSR Editorial Report: Fall 2020	10-19-2020	796
Implementing New Norms for Research with Human Participants	8-24-2020	458
Moving Beyond the Rhetoric of Diversity and Inclusion	7-27-2020	1140
Reparations as Reconstruction, Not as Alibi	6-20-2020	249
Administrative Records Mask Racially Biased Policing	6-23-2020	658
A New Era for the American Political Science Review	5-31-2020	883

Note: *May 31 through August 9, 2021.

And don't forget about those blog posts! We have seen significant engagement with both the Author Blog posts and the Editors' Blog posts. The numbers of page views, summarized in Table 3, have encouraged us to continue both.

Of course, by themselves data such as these—showing how many followers the journal has on Twitter, or how many likes a Facebook post gets, or how many hits a blog post garners—cannot indicate whether we are achieving our mission. If the number of readers of a particular blog post is small, for example, but people who have felt marginalized in the discipline read and engaged it, then that's a success as far as we're concerned. Our goal is to create a space to foster as broad and inclusive a community of political scientists as possible online, especially because it provides invaluable space for underrepresented groups in academia (Montgomery 2018). Although social media can be an outrage machine (Burns 2017; Duggan 2017), #APSR is welcoming to diverse groups, especially women and BIPOC users. We seek to keep the conversation productive while building community.

Let us know how we are doing! Send us a message at apsr@apsanet.org, follow us on [Twitter](#), and "like" us on [Facebook](#). And when you're ready, send us your best work.

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