

# Introduction and Comments

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Professional journals provide one crucial tool for communicating our ideas. They largely determine the range of those to whom we speak and the terms in which we speak to them. Among the daunting tasks of editing a journal, especially a relatively new one, is determining who the audience for the publication might be. To whom is the journal meant to speak? What sort of forum do we hope it will provide?

One approach to such questions is exemplified by the newly launched *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* whose editors—Keith Krehbiel and Nolan McCarty—explain in their introduction to the inaugural issue that they decided to start the journal partly out of a shared sense of dissatisfaction with the way “generalist” journals in the discipline operate. They intend to run *QJPS* on the model of many journals in such disciplines as economics and (though this is less likely to have been an inspiration in this instance) philosophy, by relying on a group of Associate Editors for hands-on work in the process of editorial decision-making. Although Keith and Nolan are quite gracious in their praise for those who edit general journals in the discipline, there is implicit in their remarks a sharp criticism, namely that the editorial processes at such journals are ill-suited to the task of evaluating papers on the mathematical frontiers of the discipline. I do not want to address whether this criticism is entirely warranted. I want instead to underscore the inference this criticism supported in their minds. The conclusion they drew from this perceived mismatch was that “more specialization was needed.” Hence, their decision to establish a new journal run on what, for political scientists, appears to be an innovative model. Reactions of this sort, it must be said, hardly are unique to those who endorse the sort of “analytical” work that *QJPS* aspires to publish. For instance, I regularly have heard friends and colleagues in my own field of political theory voice analogous concerns about the exigencies of trying to publish their research in the best general journals. One consequence of that dissatisfaction has been the proliferation of new journals specializing in normative political theory (nearly half a dozen, depending on how you count) in recent years.

The turn to specialization can generate undeniable benefits. I recognize these and nothing I say here is meant to deny them. Unchecked, however, it also carries with it

significant costs. It is important, I think, not to underestimate these. For example, the increased number of journals to which it gives rise arguably places unsustainable pressure on the limited pool of qualified referees. Specialization also amplifies the centrifugal pressures of diverse methodological predilections and substantive preoccupations in the discipline. It thereby risks creating a situation in which smaller, more homogenous groups spend most of their energies writing for and reading one another, more or less without regard for whether and how their ideas might make a broader impact. In such a situation contending ideas or methods are likely to confront one another with diminishing frequency or significant delay. One quite probable, if unintended, consequence of all this is to dissipate the very stock of common references, shared standards, and relatively settled expectations—however tenuous these may be at present—upon which the successful working of review processes at general journals depends. Specialization, in other words, may well exacerbate the very difficulties facing the discipline’s general journals that it is invoked to remedy in the first place.

Quite fortuitously, the papers in this issue of *Perspectives* each exemplify an intellectual strategy quite different from the turn to specialization. They all began the editorial process under the regime of my predecessor, Jennifer Hochschild. However, I made the final decision to publish each of them. I make this plain in part because I want to once again credit Jennifer for her hard work getting the journal up and running. I also mention it because I want to highlight what I think is an important continuity between Jennifer’s vision of *Perspectives* and my own.

Like Jennifer, I see the journal as a way of opening unlikely conversations, of inviting or provoking political scientists to talk to one another across the diverse preoccupations, methodologies, and conventions of sub-specialities within subfields, within the discipline. Like her, too, I see *Perspectives* as affording an opportunity for political scientists of various persuasions to speak to and, perhaps even more importantly, to listen to and learn from scholars outside the discipline and, sometimes, from those outside the academy. The aim of such interactions decidedly is not, in my view, to generate some consensus in the discipline. Rather, the aim is twofold. It is, first, to focus and structure our disagreements and disputes in sharper and

potentially more productive ways. It is, second, to highlight the intellectual burden we confront of speaking to others who may not consider our own preoccupations obvious, our own methodological predilections unassailable, and our own conventions commonsensical.

In this issue Ira Katznelson and John Lapinski examine the reasons why research in two sub-specialties in the field of American politics—studies of Congress and of American Political Development—largely has proceeded in isolation from each other. They explain why this pattern is detrimental to both specialties and exhort their colleagues to make a concerted effort to close the intellectual gap that separates them. Barry Friedman, who is on the faculty at New York University School of Law, assesses the extant “positive” literature on judicial behavior, finding it lacking because scholars in the subfield fail to look “beyond their own discipline to the one place most apt,” namely to the work of legal scholars who analyze “the mechanics of law and legal institutions.” Friedman invites those who study judicial politics to re-examine the skepticism regarding the effectiveness of law that, on his view, is a pervasive and baleful influence on the subfield.

Gary Segura worked extremely hard with Jennifer to coordinate contributions to the symposium on patterns of social and political incorporation of Latino immigrants in the United States. You will note that most of the papers in the symposium are written by distinguished sociologists who bring their own knowledge and insights to bear on a set of questions that has recently exercised political scientists. Jonus Pontusson offers an insightful critical analysis of work by two economists on the disparate patterns of inequality and redistribution in Europe and the United States. Samuel Popkin reviews two recent works on the

political economy of markets for and organization of news media in the United States. Finally, a pair of extended discussions of Anne Norton's *95 Theses on Politics, Culture, and Method* focus by turns on the way she addresses the discipline and the difficulties “conventional” political science might have in absorbing her insights.

In short, each contribution to this issue explicitly talks, often quite critically, but with what I think is unflinching thoughtfulness and respect, across the divides of specialty, field, or discipline. In so doing, these papers and essays exemplify the sort of intellectual ballast the discipline needs if we are to successfully navigate the perils posed by excessive specialization. I hope *Perspectives* can continue to provide such ballast.

Since I have been advocating the value of increased communication in the discipline, I want to call your attention, in closing, to the appearance of a blog, *Political Science Journal Monitor*, that aims to provide a locus of critical discussion of journals and how they operate in the discipline. I admit to being somewhat ambivalent about this enterprise. I welcome the forum for feedback and the chance for political scientists to speak to one another. Yet I also remain apprehensive. The unmoderated format of the blog, combined with the ability of readers to post anonymous comments, risks replicating the unattractive qualities of web sites like “Rate My Professor” to the extent that it allows for incivility as well as for charges and claims that may be partial, ill-informed, or outright false. That said, I wish the anonymous coordinators of the blog well in their endeavors. The risks here seem to me to be offset by the potential value of the new forum. You can locate the blog at <http://politicalsciencejournals.blogspot.com>.

## Notes from the Managing Editor

### Forthcoming

The following articles and essays have been scheduled for publication in a forthcoming issue of *Perspectives on Politics*.

**Marc Howard.** “Comparative Citizenship: An Agenda for Cross-National Research”

**Carolyn M. Warner and Manfred W. Wenner.** “Religion and the Political Organization of Muslims in Europe”

**Anna Seleny.** “Tradition, Modernity, and Democracy: The Many Promises of Islam”

**Ronald Inglehart, Mansoor Moaddel, and Mark Tessler.** “Xenophobia and In-Group Solidarity in Iraq: A Natural Experiment on the Impact of Insecurity”

**Deborah Avant.** “The Implications of Marketized Security for IR Theorizing: The Democratic Peace, Late State Building, and the Nature and Frequency of Conflict”

**Clarence Stone, Marion Orr, and Donn Worgs.** “The Flight of the Bumblebee: Why Reform Is Difficult but Not Impossible”

**Romand Coles.** “Of Tensions and Tricksters: Grassroots Democracy between Theory and Practice”