The American Political Science Association and the Enterprise of Political Science

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about how political science is organized in the United States, about the role of the American Political Science Association, and about how certain elements of the structure of the discipline have shaped its directions. It looks in particular at one of the most important, but often under examined, elements of academic practice that has served to shape the discipline, by integrating its disparate parts. This practice - peer review - serves a more complex role in academic practice than is often appreciated, by giving disciplines identify, boundaries, and constraints. Peer review arises out of a collaboration between academic disciplines and the larger society to assure the integrity of scholarly processes and the transmission of knowledge. One of the predominant ways in which the American Political Science Association has contributed to shaping the discipline is in a generally expansive and inclusive mode of managing peer review.

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Preliminary Version
This paper is about how political science is organized in the United States, about the role of the American Political Science Association, and how certain elements of the structure of the discipline have shaped its directions. It looks in particular at one of the most important, but often under examined, elements of academic practice that has served to shape the discipline, by integrating its disparate parts. This practice - peer review - serves a more complex role in academic practice than is often appreciated, by giving disciplines identify, boundaries, and constraints.

It is through management of peer review that learned societies like the American Political Science Association contribute to shaping disciplines, affecting how the community of peers is defined. Peer review arises out of a collaboration between academic disciplines and the larger society to assure the integrity of scholarly processes and the transmission of knowledge. The extension of peer review from a basis in assuring integrity to one of identifying excellence enhances its power, and produces complexities in its application. To understand these processes in political science, it is necessary to look at how the discipline has developed relative to society and other institutions.

What is American Political Science?

To begin with, this paper focusses on the structure of the discipline. There is a significant difference between individual scholarship, which is exceptionally varied within American political science, and the structure of the discipline. To phrase this as an aphorism: political science is not what political scientist do. The individual act of scholarship – doing research or teaching – is distinct from the discipline in which that work rests. As I presented in an earlier IPSA paper:

… even if the scholar is credentialed and the work is authentic, i.e. the work meets tests for scholarship, I will argue here we do not have political science until we also take into account how this knowledge production is trusted by others and integrated into some structure of knowledge. What makes political science, as with any discipline, distinct from individual scholarly work is a sense of common enterprise - of trusted relations that create authenticity. These relationships govern how work is evaluated, how contests about it are resolved, and how it diffuses. (Brintnall 2006)
While it is tempting and frequently attempted to characterize American political science by the content of ideas, I argue here the field is shaped more by institutional and structural elements than intellectual ones. These shaping elements are simple, though powerful, when they interact, and key ones are the following:

- **US political science is large and diverse** – that is, in spite of attention to prominent intellectual camps or approaches within the discipline, the peer community has remained large coherent across a wide and diverse variety of perspectives.

- **US political science is centered in academic environments** – that is, the discipline is highly shaped by the ways US higher education institutions and policy have developed. Concepts of academic freedom, for example, that are aligned with the role of college of universities have been strong shaping factors, as have the labor markets and the institutional culture of these institutions in general.

- **US political science increasingly operates in a broader enterprise of institutions** – that is, a wide variety of other institutions shape disciplinary work, largely focussed around the academic center, but this enterprise is gradually changing the shape of disciplinary work.

The paper next turns to some exposition of these elements, and then discusses how the field stays integrated in these context of this complex environment.

**US Political Science is Large and Diverse.** To amplify these points briefly, I first term to an earlier account of the breadth of US political science from work presented by myself, Dianne Pinderhughes, and Tony Affigne at the recent IPSA Montreal meetings. (Brintnall, Pinderhughes, and Affigne 2008) Our work there presented a profile of “US political as an institution” that is excerpted here:

> If contemporary political science in the US can be understood as a network of extensive and diverse institutional characteristics, how then might we describe it?

> First, we might ask how many political scientists there are in the United States. If we assume a small degree of invincibility, and presume that all scholars who have earned their degrees in the last 40 years are still with us, then with some other modest assumptions, we can estimate that there are 20,495 political scientists in the United States. (Actually, 25,254 doctorates in political science and related fields were awarded in the last 4 decades - 4759 of these went to non-US citizens.) (NORC various years, compiled by Michael Marriott for
About 1,100 new PhD’s are produced annually in the US today, in combined fields of political science, public administration, international relations, and public policy analysis.

Of these 20,000, some doctorate holders, about half - 10,386 hold regular academic positions in US institutions. One-third of these academics are in doctorate-granting research departments, about a quarter are in departments offering a masters degree, including professional degrees in policy and public administration, and the rest are in undergraduate institutions of varying sizes.

In spite of some global suspicions that all US political scientists do political science the same way, there are in fact broad differences in focus among the 10 thousand US academics. The APSA asks political scientists to identify two major fields of the discipline (thus the following percentages will total to more than 100 percent.) On this basis, 38 percent of academics claim American politics as one of their fields and an equal number 37 percent claim comparative politics; another third claim international politics. 17 percent identify political theory or philosophy as a major field for them; and about 10 percent claim to specialize each in public law or methodology.

The breadth of political science in the US can be measured in ways other than numbers of individuals and their characteristics and interests. Collaborative work is on the increase. The discipline is richly structured, with perhaps 154 journals with lead editorial and publishing bases in the US. The APSA itself has 36 active Organized Sections. And, the discipline has 8 other regional political science associations, some quite large; and innumerable smaller specialty ones. The major ones vary in their organizational type; some meet specifically as regional associations of Political Scientists (e.g. the Southern). Others meet in varying interdisciplinary arrangements or with a distinctive subspecialty (e.g. the Southwestern Political Science Association and the Northeastern Political Science Association). Others because of their regional characters attract larger proportions of specific racial/ethnic groups.

While US political science is often described by observers outside the country as monolithic in its orientation, one way or another; inside the US it is more often criticized as being too fragmented. Indeed neither claim is strongly true, as there is both great diversity of
One way to understand recent developments is by considering the pattern of subfields established within the discipline since 1995. In the American Political Science Association, subfield specializations are represented through a network of semi-autonomous organized sections, all of which sponsor research paper panels at the annual meeting, and several of which publish journals. 39 such sections currently represent a combined total of 20,776 members. The largest is comparative politics with 1619 members, while the smallest - health politics and policy, founded in 2008 - has about 200 members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Politics</td>
<td>1619</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Methodology</td>
<td>1051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative and Multi-Methods Research</td>
<td>999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy</td>
<td>974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior</td>
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As can be seen in Table 2 (below), the discipline's seven newest sections reflect important emerging subjects including racial and ethnic political studies, international political history, democratization, and human rights, the study of sexuality and politics, and for scholars of public policy, attention to political dimensions of health care provision in the United States. Renewed attention to diverse methodological approaches is also reflected in the creation and rapid growth of the qualitative and multi-methods group, which is now the third-largest field in the entire Association - suggesting a greater degree of methodological diversity than is typically ascribed to U.S. political science.

The picture which emerges from this brief review of subfield development is one of change and diversification, where new directions coexist relatively peacefully with older tendencies. Traditional methods and subjects remain central to the discipline, but emergent approaches have been allowed to develop quickly, in response to changing interests and needs among the broader community of political science scholars.
The intellectual breadth of scholarly work reflected in this complex and diverse and academic structure is especially amplified in two recommended synoptic works – the retrospective issue of the American Political Science Review edited by Lee Sigelman; and the future oriented collection of presentments edited by Gary King, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Norman Nie. (Sigelman 2006; King, Schlozman, and Nie 2009)

**Academic Base.** As a second defining theme, political science in the US is also heavily academic, embedded, as are most disciplines, strongly in the university system, and shaped by the growth of those institutions. These academic roots contribute, in some ways, to the diversity of the discipline, as the US academic systems developed along multiple tracks – with the early private institutions channelling European academic traditions, and the emerging land-grant institutions advancing more practical and applied approaches to academic work. The discipline itself drawing from varied academic roots: history, law, sociology, and economics. (Schmidt 1998)

Again, as recounted in the paper cited earlier:

The growth and role of universities in the US in the last century is a large story. (Bender 1997) Universities grew substantially in the US both as relatively stable and secure centers for research applied to national purpose, and also as homes for intellectual life generally. Intellectual independence and social reform found a home together in largely utilitarian institutions, reinforcing (if perhaps muffling) the normative voice. Energies that might have become a voice for radical politics instead became married with mainstream social reform. (Ricci 1984; Elshtain 2001; Gunnell 2006) We might quip that political scientists who could have been America's Marxists became behavioralists instead, in part because of the ameliorative climate of the American university.

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**Table 2. Newest Organized Sections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Name</th>
<th>Membership</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race, Ethnicity and Politics (1995)</td>
<td>572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International History and Politics (2000)</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Democratization (2001)</td>
<td>625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Rights (2001)</td>
<td>380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative and Multi-Methods Research (2002)</td>
<td>999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality and Politics (2007)</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Politics and Policy (2008)</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The oldest universities are privately held, originally religious, institutions, though most of these are now secular or only nominally religious. Private universities are also often among the wealthiest (Ivy Leagues); although, they are not necessarily typical. Public institutions - so called land grant institutions - were created by the federal and state governments in the 19th century: "a land-grant college or university is an institution that has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive unique federal support." (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2007) The USDA lists this as meaning more than 100 colleges and universities; they were created in a series of acts beginning in 1862 and 1890:

"On July 2, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law what is generally referred to as the Land Grant Act. …[L]egislation introduced by U.S. Representative Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont granted to each state 30,000 acres of public land for each Senator and Representative under apportionment based on the 1860 census. Proceeds from the sale of these lands were to be invested in a perpetual endowment fund which would provide support for colleges of agriculture and mechanical arts in each of the states." (Higher Education Resource Hub 2007)

The growth in these institutions was especially prominent after the American civil war.

New eras of growth have been added in the private and public sectors, but these categories help frame the character and the size of American higher education that distinguishes it from other nations. Therefore, the character of political science varies substantially within these types of institution, but it is also through them that the discipline has grown within the nation.

The academic grounding of American political science has numerous implications for how the field has developed in the US. One account emphasizes how these pathways led the field to be heavily gendered, as it turned away, the Progressive Era, from emphasis on street level democracy experiments reflected in the settlement houses, guided by community activists in largely female directed organization, and embraced instead institutional practices of governance based in government budget offices and university departments, that were largely male dominated. (Silverberg 1998b; Elshtain 2002)

Since the late 1960’s, in part to address the kinds of exclusion that early institutional practices appeared to reinforce, the discipline has turned to a center point, the American Political Science Association, to manage a single labor market consistent with commonly adopted ethical norms of nondiscrimination. And as we shall see shortly, in grounded US political science into a
schema of academic practice, including the remarkable mobility afforded by a far-sighted academic pension plans; and the embracing protections of US systems of academic freedom. All three practices - coordination of the labor market, pension mobility, and academic freedom – are closely tied to the university system itself, and have bound the discipline closely to the academy.

*Enterprise of Political Science.* The academic institutions do not stand along. There are indeed multiple networks of interaction that shape this disciplinary space – intellectual communities, geographic communities, and enterprise communities. These varied communities interact to shape disciplines within particular communities, though not afford rigid boundaries – as elements of disciplinary work flow in different ways. For instance, academic labor markets may set some boundaries, but academic publication markets may cross-cut them in others. (Brintnall 2006)

From this abbreviated and cryptic start, we might then ask what defines American political science, in its collective sense. Three predominant themes stand out, among many: the US political science is large and diverse; that it is shaped by its academic home; but that it is leavened by a set of long-term multi-institutional arrangements.

While the university remains the institutional home for political science, and for most scholarly fields, the activities are embedded substantial enterprise of institutions that shape it collectively. (Brintnall, Pinderhughes, and Affigne 2008) A summary list of some of these organizations that are important within the larger academic enterprise are the following.

- Scholarly societies and networks of societies. This category of course includes the role that the American Political Science Association has played, as a kind of spine for the last century in coordinating academic work, discussed below. (Gunnell 2006; Hauck 1998)
- Academic Accreditation and accrediting bodies. (Eaton 2006)
- Corporate boards of universities, and the various public and business influences they bring to academic life. (Newfield 2003)
- Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), that monitors approve, and review research involving human subjects, to limit harm and seek informed consent of the subjects.
- Foundations and funding sources. Foundations have played essential roles in the development of the disciplines in the US, advancing policy related work and comparative studies. (McGann 1992; Bulmer 2001; Fleishman 2007)
- Commercial markets and publishing. It can also be said that the scope of the US publishing industry was one of the reasons that has differentiated the extent and possible direction of scholarship in the US compared to Europe and other regions. (Lyons 1973)

- Think tanks and "policy shops." Recently, academic type scholarship has embedded itself in institutions outside of the academy that bring scholarly work more closely in line with other publics, often ideologically defined ones. The growth of think tanks and policy "shops" has embedded the practice of academic work into policy, private sector, and social interest communities in new ways. (DeMuth 2007; Elshtain 2001)

What glues this disciplinary structure together.

Each of these many institutional entities in the academic enterprise has a long story in how it shapes the discipline, and the directions it is moving. The question I wish to pursue here however is what glues the discipline in the face of these diverse, and in some cases, such as the universities, profoundly influential roles. This incidentally turns on its head the question often asked of American political science. For me the predominant questions are not how or why the discipline is narrow, because it is not; but how the remarkable diversity and variety of work and work settings are held together with some sense of disciplinary coherence.

Heuristically, there are two principles for binding individual scholars together in a disciplinary structure: trust and academic freedom. The first reaches across national boundaries; the second, oddly, tends not to.

Trust. One of the core issues of disciplinary definitions is what causes scholarly work to cohere, and to maintain some kinds of common identity, whether within a national context or across them. This question is important for many reasons. For one thing, knowledge building requires trust. No scholar can work adequately from her or his observations alone. Inevitably scholarly conclusions must be based on observations made by others, and by a basis of trust in the reliability and validity of that other work. Disciplinary structures help provide vehicles for such trust. Indeed one of the most objects of the IPSA project, and of the underlying UN initiatives to establish international societies, was to create the structures that would build such systems for trust across national systems of scholarship. (Trent 1979; Livingstone 2003) The disciplinary structure affords mechanisms for trust that allow scholars to bind to each other.

Academic Freedom and Peers. There is another reason for integrative mechanisms for scholarship, and this is to manage the relationship of scholars to the public. This process starts
with the concept of academic, and in particular it’s distinction from free speech along. There is extensive on literature on academic freedom in the US, and its basis in law. (e.g. see for starters (Olivas 1997)) Here I want to touch some basic principles.

A good place to start is the US Supreme Court case of Sweezy v. New Hampshire (354 US 234 (1957)). In this case, the state government tried to compel Sweezy to answer questions about a lecture he gave at the state university concerning the Progressive Party of the United States and their alleged subversive activities. The Court went beyond articulating support for free speech to specify distinct principles of academic freedom. Chief Just Warren wrote:

*These are rights which are safeguarded by the bill of rights and the fourteenth amendment. We believe that there unquestionably was an invasion of petitioner's liberties in the areas of academic freedom and political expression - areas in which government should be extremely reticent to tread.*

*The essentiality of freedom in the community of American universities is almost self-evident. No one should underestimate the vital role in a democracy that is played by those who guide and train our youth. To impose any strait jacket upon the intellectual leaders in our colleges and universities would imperil the future of our nation. No field of education is so thoroughly comprehended by man that new discoveries cannot yet be made. Particularly is that true in the social sciences, where few, if any, principles are accepted as absolutes. Scholarship cannot flourish in an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust. Teachers and students must always remain free to inquire, to study and to evaluate, to gain new maturity and understanding; otherwise our civilization will stagnate and die.*

As a matter of principle, this is great news for scholars. As a matter of practice, it brings some distinct special elements to the academy. First of all, academic freedom pertains to the “corporate body” of the faculty, not the individual scholar. That is, this is system of protection of institutions of transmission of knowledge, not unconstrained individual rights. And academic freedom exists to serve society not scholars, by affording a means of managing intellectual authority, as an alternative having knowledge controlled by other authorities — clerical, partisan, legal, etc. It is a social compact to manage transmission of knowledge, most specifically in the classroom to new generations, but more generally for society as a whole.

The problem then remains of who regulates the scholars. And the answer of course is that they are called upon to regulate themselves. As Robert Post puts it: *rights of academic freedom are ... designed to facilitate the professional self-regulation of the professoriate, so that*
academic freedom safeguards interests that are constituted by the perspective and horizon of the corporate body of the faculty. (Post 2006, 64)

The mechanism for this self-regulation is peer review; and the disciplinary structure becomes the mechanism for the definition of “peer.” This has many implications for understanding scholarly practice in general, and for understanding, for example, the place of the American Political Science Association in defining US political science. Among other things, this notion of academic freedom as linking scholars to the societies and legal systems that enforce it becomes a key element in understanding how science can have a geography and a nationalism.

Managing Peer Review. A major role of the learned society in concept then is to manage peer review, in conjunction with the college and university. It creates a partnership in principle, and tension in practice. Academic freedom is a concept grounded in the role of the university, but most often practiced in the context of specific disciplinary communities. The learned society plays a key role in maintaining that community. In turn, most other institutions in the scholarly enterprise have adopted peer review as a tool for evaluating scholarship – either in seeking excellence or protecting against academic deception. (Lamont 2009)

Peer review serves multiple functions. Its authority is grounded in the social bargain related to academic freedom – academics are free to teach if they self-regulate according to credible standards of knowledge production. In this sense, the underpinning of peer review is defensive – to protect against inauthentic or “bad” work. But as a practical matter it serves other roles. Peer review has become one of the primary mechanisms for identifying excellence. Peer review underpins selection of articles for publication journals, for awarding grants, and for determining tenure and promotion.

And as a practical matter, peer review becomes a process to create peers! As the system is employed for reasons of academic freedom and for seeking excellence, it provides an important tool for scholars to encounter each others work, outside of their own academic institution. In this way, the act of peer review tends to reinforce the community that the principle of peer review is meant to protect. It thus tends to sharpen boundaries between disciplines, so as to give credence to the definition of “peer.”

APSA and Peer Review. With this broad conceptual framework in mind, we can then ask how the American Political Science Association has shaped in the discipline in the US, not so much in terms of the subject matter of research, but in the definition of the disciplinary community itself.
The APSA role has played a traditional disciplinary role in many key areas. First, it has articulated standards of professional conduct through its *Guide to Professional Ethics in Political Science* and the work of this committee on Professional Ethics, Rights, and Freedoms. This is a customary role for peak learned societies in the context of the public bargain regarding academic freedom. Maintenance of these standards is one of the features distinguishing the APSA from other political science associations in the country.

Academic practice that comes under the protection of academic freedom involves a strong element of obligation. Peers must be willing to engage in the often tedious work of assessing others work. The Association has served as a forum for reinforcing that sense of obligation, though perhaps it has done too little to encourage the skills needed for good review, or for rewarding the practice of it.

Second, APSA has maintained the labor market for political scientists, by incorporating into principles for the discipline that all entry level academic positions in political science be listed in one place, managed by the Association. This central listing helps to define the peer community, and in particular was intended to assure that the peer community was open to all based on merit, and not artificially limited by old-boy networks, and so forth.

The APSA has also played lead roles in defining scholarly boundaries for the peer community in political science, and here the Association has been central to phases of change, that have been very important in, with at least key exception, sustaining the breadth of the discipline above as described above.

In the late 1960’s and 1970’s the Association became the forum in which new ideas about scholarship, and groups of scholars traditionally underrepresented in the community, became active. This era was transformative intellectually. This intellectual change occurred across the scholarly community – not particularly within the APSA. But the discipline was also transformed as a community - with growing attention to participation of women and racial and ethnic minorities. And this change did occur within the association – internally in some cases as APSA formed committees on the status of women, blacks, and later Latino/s, Asian Pacific Americans, and Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and the Transgendered – and in parallel with the Association, as for example, the National Conference of Black Political Scientists formed. In this way the community of peers was broadened. (Silverberg 1998a; Reed 2003; McCormick 2009)

In subsequent years, a vigorous agenda of organized sections emerged within the association. As the topics being addressed within the discipline broadened, tensions emerged in
the Association over whether increasingly disparate topics could share common intellectual space (and by implication continue to function as peers.) APSA’s role in this area of intellectual proliferation was to create a kind of internal federal system, in which small groups could maintain some autonomy, while continuing to share the larger collaborative framework of the Association. In a period of some tension, the APSA Annual Meeting was effectively taken from the hands of a single organizer and put in the hands of 40 some sub-organizers, each in conversation with others but each also relatively independent.

This helped hold help sustain intellectual community in the face of diverse intellectual approaches - particularly broad groups of scholars concerned with political philosophy with those more engaged with empirical study. Several communities started to drift outside this framework - namely public administration and international studies. The former in many respects drifted back in, as other “peer” venues were not fully responsive. The latter founded a separate organizational home, and has created an alternative, vigorous, intellectual community in the International Studies Association – though it still is unsure of whether it functions as a specialized intellectual setting or a more generalized peer community.

With journals, APSA however has been slower, and less direct, in its adjusting to the more diverse peer community for the discipline. Nominally, the Association maintained a single peak journal until the year 2000 – still seeking to bring all voices into one small tent. This was mitigated in part by the gradual emergence of a variety of journals managed by the organized sections - giving the association a kind of stealth publishing diversity. By the early 2000’s, APSA broadened its peak publishing base with a second journal, inviting peer review work for somewhat different perspectives.

Today, peer review continues to provide a variety of management challenges for disciplines, and continues to shape its own environment. At the level of its practical applications, a survey of 14 political science journal editors found a largely unquestioned reliance on conventional peer review for identifying excellence, and general satisfaction with it. Editors did identify increasing threats and difficulties of the commons – especially overload for reviewers, and increasing delay and opt out of the process.

At the macro level, peer review can also become a bottleneck – as the recent debates in political science dubbed “Perestroika” have argued. Peer review becomes restrictive rather than integrative if the peer community itself is open only to certain intellectual pursuits or if the channels for review are themselves to narrow. Political science in the US was charged with these structural problems. (Monroe 2005) The intensity of these debates has mitigated – in part for
reasons described above, including activities within APSA to broaden journals and to organize a forum that brought together diverse perspectives on graduate education into a common Association statement on shared values. (American Political Science Association 2003) While aspects of work in the American Political Science Association were implicated in the criticisms raised by the Perestroika critique, at the same time the Association also became the forum in which they could be addressed – either for taking new steps, such as opening additional journal outlets, and for framing arguments in favor of aspects of the status quo, such as showing the kinds of inclusiveness provided by current processes for selecting officers.

Creating Peers. Curiously then, one can point to a further role of peer review, beyond its function in affirming basic professional standards and in seeking excellence in scholarship, teaching, or service. This simply is that a function of peer review is to create peers. By relentlessly engaging members of the discipline with each other, in review of their work and career, one can sustain a cycle of professional development and sharing of technique, standards, and insight.

Future of associations and peer review. The future of disciplinary based learned societies in an age of enterprise scholarship and interdisciplinarity is an important question, with threats and opportunities for traditional learned societies. At one level, forces that work outside the disciplines, such as interdisciplinary centers, and that disaggregate the traditional disciplines, such as policy or thematic initiatives, loom as challenges for traditional disciplinary associations.

At another, however, the new environments for scholarship redefine roles for learned societies, creating new opportunities for service to the disciplines, arranged specifically around helping to maintain the values and effectiveness of peer review in coordination with diverse institutions. A variety of the needs and opportunities to help reshape peer review for the future are the following.

Some of these challenges speak to improving peer review as it is conducted today, and some point to new systems of review. Promising ideas include the following:

- widening pools of peer reviewers. APSA journal editors consistently report they are reaching more broadly for reviewers – into colleges, into scholars in practice, and internationally. Inter alia, these efforts can counted to bridge national disciplinary boundaries and to expand the sharing that comes from “creating peers.” The Association is working to facilitate these exchanges, particularly by building further bridges to scholars in less resourced countries, not so often in the scholarly ambit.
- **improved reward structures and socialization for peer reviewers.** Peer review as a scholarly service and obligation has been expressed for decades. Systems for more formal recognition of this service, and for meritorious work, have been infrequent. The Association can lead in this recognition.

- **training peer reviewers.** Peer review tends to function as though scholars know how to perform it well, presumably because it is performed on them so often. But in fact there detailed and complex challenges to peer review and its conduct. (Lamont 2009) This is perhaps no more clear than in the work of Institutional Review Boards (IRB’s) that apply professional review standards to protection of human subjects in research. Reviews across IRB’s are highly variable, and cautious uncertainties may drive Boards to restrict more research than is necessary, weakening advancement of knowledge. Training for all peer reviewers can be enhanced, and could be lead by Association initiatives.

- **public members.** Peer review risks academic narrowness, in which work is properly shaped by issues related to methodology, reliability, and validity, but is not tested for how, as Joseph Nye puts it, “how our work relates to the policy world in which we live” (Nye 2009) While this is a very large question, one small response in the world of peer review may be to add public members to review teams, as most accrediting bodies do. Public members, with appropriately structured roles, may be able to ask questions that are overlooked within strictly academic teams.

- **applying greater social science into understanding the peer review process itself.** Often scholars fail to apply to their own work the kinds of findings they urge others to acquire from them. Social psychologists have findings about small group decision making that may improve peer review decisions. (Connolly, Arkes, and Hammond 2000) Indeed there is a learned society just for this topic: the Society for Judgment and Decision Making. The primary application of peer review, as a basis for integrity and protection against external influence in academic freedom, has perhaps conditioned us to resist any third party or decision making system involvement in the process, as a perceived threat. Learned societies may be able to lead in extending this knowledge into the peer review process in ways that are compatible with its principles.

- **separate integrity from excellence.** The tension between use of peer review to assure integrity of academic processes – as in it use in accreditation systems – and to seek excellence – as in its use to choose grant recipients – can sometimes lead to inappropriate outcomes. E.g. accreditation often does not encourage excellence, since the incentives are to comply with standards not exceed the. And grant reviews can sometimes allow bogus work to slip through,
because the capacity to verify details can be lacking. Some approaches are separating these functions. For example, one of the US regional accrediting bodies is proposing to free institutions that have prior records of successful compliance from standards from regular accreditation reviews if they adopt separate “self-improvement” tracks intended to achieve quality advancement. (Lederman 2009)

- new technology. Finally, of course new technologies provide vastly different ways to align groups of peers. Whole disciplinary communities can vote on quality issues – as happens now on some commercial sites where readers signal thumbs up or down about books or other products, and newcomers can read the resulting poll. Wikipedia has become a controversial, but increasingly accepted, act of peer created and reviewed knowledge. APSA has taken the first steps in launching a social networking community for political scholars, defined by professional membership in the community. How it develops as a forum for discussion, and perhaps ultimately peer evaluation of scholarship, represents the newest platform in the Association’s role in advancing breadth and inclusion within the discipline.
References


