

## Monitoring Scholarly Journal Publication in Political Science: The Role of the *APSR*

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*Authors' Note:* This article constitutes the 1989-90 annual report of the managing editor of the *American Political Science Review*. Samuel C. Patterson has been managing editor of the *Review* since 1985. Shannon K. Smithey was an *APSR* intern during 1989-90.

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As the leading scholarly journal in political science, the *American Political Science Review* bears a heavy burden. It must publish the very best research and scholarly writing in the discipline; it reaches an audience much larger than that of most other political science journals; and, publication in its pages carries substantial prestige. A system of peer review has emerged that, while imperfect, strongly reinforces high standards for the publication of work in the *Review*. It is not easy to get published in the *APSR*. Moreover, the *Review* is shouldering the major burden for reviewing books in political science. Doing so in a substantial and timely way in the face of a growing avalanche of published books is a significant challenge for the future.

Accordingly, it behooves us to consider the performance of the

*Review* regularly and with care (see Patterson, Ripley & Trish, 1988; Patterson, Adolino & McGuire, 1989; Ingram & Mills, 1989). If we are to appraise whether or not the *APSR* serves the political science profession as it should, we need to monitor its quality and performance in some detail. Who submits papers to the *Review*, and what kinds of work are published? How effectively is the process of evaluating manuscripts working—is the peer review system adequate, and does the editorial function perform as it should? Is the *Review* doing the job of scholarly review of books as well as it can? Inasmuch as the *APSR* publishes only roughly a tenth of the papers submitted to it, what happens to the research work not published in the *Review*?

We address the problem of monitoring the contribution and performance of the *APSR* in two ways. First, we have analyzed the work submitted to and published in the *Review* in the course of the past year, comparing 1989-90 experience with several of the previous years. The data for conducting this regular performance monitoring come from the continuous records maintained as the inexorable flow of manuscripts undulates through the editorial process.

Second, we have conducted a study of the fate of manuscripts submitted to, but not published in, the *Review*. Early in 1990 we mailed brief questionnaires to the authors of nearly 600 rejected manuscripts. These data provide interesting information about the disposition of scholarly products in political science at one point in time, indicating publication preferences, evaluations, and pecking orders for a discipline blessed with a plurality of outlets for scholarly and scientific research.

## The Manuscript Deluge

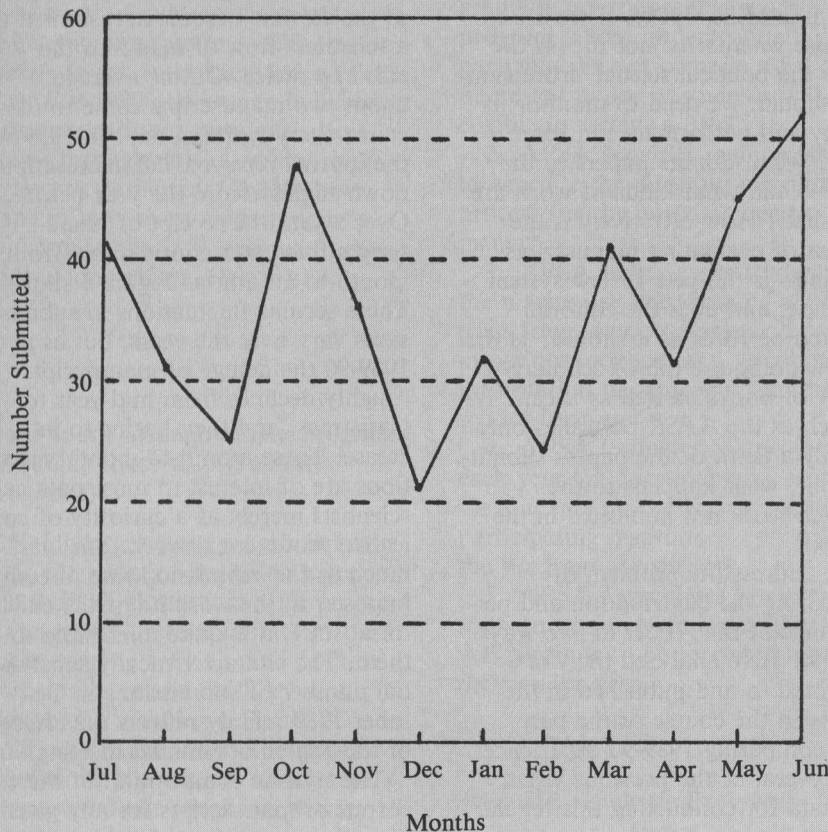
The managing editor and the staff of the *Review* become accustomed to a relentless flow of mail into the editorial office. On the average, about two manuscripts come to the editor every working day. In 1989-90 the journal received 428 manuscripts, down slightly from the year before. Over a year the receipt of manuscripts fluctuates considerably from month-to-month, as Figure 1 shows. These secular fluctuations in submissions vary over the years, but as in 1989-90 the deluge of manuscripts roughly declines from mid-year to Christmas, and then begins to increase. These month-to-month variations are of interest to most political scientists merely as a curiosity of collective professional work. But inasmuch as the submission rate directly imposes on the worklife of the editorial staff, it is quite interesting to them. The characteristically substantial number of submissions in October 1989 mainly reflects the effect of the September annual meeting.

The stylistic composition of the corpus of manuscripts for any given recent year tends to resemble manuscript characteristics of previous years. For instance, the lion's share of submitted papers (averaging about 80% in recent years) are first-time, full-length manuscripts—pristine, unadulterated by the hands of any referee, fresh, and ready for the rigorous peer review imposed by the *APSR* refereeing processes. Some submissions—recently 50-60 papers each year—are revisions, usually where authors have been invited to "revise and resubmit." Moreover, as the journal has continued to publish research notes and controversies so that these features have become more visible, a growing number of scholars are submitting these entries to the

### Nominations Sought for 1991 APSA Awards

Nominations are invited for the APSA awards to be presented at the 1991 annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Dissertations must be nominated by departments and submitted by January 15, 1991. Books must be nominated by publishers and submitted by February 1, 1991. Members are invited to nominate individuals for the career awards. Further details may be obtained by contacting the national office.

**FIGURE 1.**  
*APSR Manuscript Submissions by Month, 1989-90*



editor. The *Review* received only 10 papers submitted as research notes in 1987-88, but this grew to 24 in 1988-89 and to 27 in 1989-90.

**Field Origins of Submissions**

Often political scientists voice concern about the distribution of the publication resources of the *Review* across the major fields of study. Some complain that too much of the space of the journal is devoted to research on American politics, or that, conversely, there is not enough comparative politics or international relations in the *Review*. These concerns are perennial, perhaps nurtured mainly by the unchanging facts that vastly more scholars conduct research on U.S. politics, and it is generally much more open to detailed study than most politics. When the subfields of public policy and public administration are included in the American politics bailiwick, about two-fifths of APSR submissions have, in recent years, fallen under the "American politics and public policy" rubric (see Table 1).

However, other fields are also substantially represented in the pages of the *Review*. More than a fourth of recent submissions to the APSR have been exogenous to strictly U.S. topics and data, and concern political institutions and behavior across or among national political systems. Since comparative analysis is the characteristic method available to most political scientists for the purpose of establishing the validity of empirical claims, it is perhaps sur-

prising that more work in comparative and international politics does not come to the national journal. We will not attempt an explanation for this, but merely note that the proportion of submitted manuscripts coming from comparative politics and international relations scholars has not changed very much over a number of years.

Roughly a third of all submissions to the *Review* are broadly theoretical or methodological. A healthy component of this input reflects wide interest in normative political theory. At the same time, an increasing number of scholars have come to practice "positive theory," theorizing from analytical games and formal models. No major national journal could resist the advances of such seductive sirens of theory. Yet, some scholars complain that the *Review* publishes too much that is arcane and obscure—exegesis from the fulminations of Thucydides (sometimes in the original Greek), or the hieroglyphics of formal mathematical models. Such submissions are most accomplished and successful when their authors establish the more general relevance and significance of their analyses or models. But no thoughtful political scientist would want to exclude the best theoretical work of the day from the pages of their leading journal.

**Manuscripts Accepted for Publication**

What is published in the *Review* is, in fact, very largely a function of what is submitted. This relationship is as it should be. It is not appropri-

**TABLE 1.**  
*Submission of Manuscripts to the American Political Science Review, by Field\* (in percentages)*

Field	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Average 1985-90
American Politics & Public Policy	40.4	44.2	39.6	40.5	45.8	42.0
Comparative Politics	14.1	11.5	19.3	17.9	18.2	15.7
Normative Theory	22.6	23.0	17.2	17.6	16.6	19.8
International Relations	8.6	10.8	9.7	11.9	9.1	10.1
Methodology & Formal Theory	14.3	10.5	15.9	11.5	10.3	12.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of Manuscripts	545	427	391	447	428	2,238

\*Field coding categories have been combined in some cases over the years, and in a few cases may not be strictly comparable. The annual reports of the managing editor should be consulted for details of coding changes.

ate for editors of a scientific and scholarly journal to manipulate its contents so as to favor one school of thought over another, or advantage one subfield over others. The only appropriate bias allowed to editors is the quality of scholarly research. A scholarly journal is, and ought to be, part of the last bastion of the protestant ethic, a meritocracy of excellence.

Although there are variations yearly, in general the subfield distribution of acceptances for publication in the *Review* parallels the distribution of submissions, as Table 2 shows. The *Review* accepts about 50 manuscripts a year for publication, including articles, research notes, and controversies. That only 39 manuscripts were accepted in 1989-90 is partly a function of cutoff dates for accounting, and thus a somewhat larger than usual number of 1988-89 acceptances (brought on by whether manuscripts are accepted in June or July). We do not detect a real decline in acceptances.

Small changes from year-to-year are not very significant, but they are mildly interesting. For instance, more normative and less formal theory work was accepted for publication in 1989-90 than in the preceding year. And, comparative politics acceptances dropped after a peak in 1988-89, while international relations acceptances rose proportionally. But these year-to-year fluctuations are captured more meaningfully in the rates of acceptance for each subfield. How well do scholars in the subfields fare in acceptances for publication in terms of the editorial decisions made on submitted manuscripts?

Over the long haul, as Table 3 indicates, acceptance rates do not differ much between subfields—they range around 12 percent. In the last five years, the overall acceptance rate ranged from 10-13 percent. The somewhat higher average acceptance record for normative theory accrues because of an especially good year for theorists in 1989-90, which may merely reflect the upsurge of interest in political philosophy lately. American and comparative politics acceptances are down in the current year, and international relations is up. The relatively large decline in comparative politics acceptances is

**TABLE 2.**  
Acceptances for Publication in the *American Political Science Review*,  
by Field (in percentages)

Field	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	Average 1985-90
American Politics & Public Policy	47.1	44.0	47.1	36.4	35.9	42.3
Comparative Politics	13.7	14.0	13.7	20.0	10.3	14.6
Normative Theory	17.6	20.0	17.6	18.2	30.8	20.3
International Relations	11.8	10.0	5.9	10.9	12.8	10.2
Methodology & Formal Theory	9.8	12.0	15.7	14.5	10.3	12.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.1	100.0
Number of Acceptances	51	50	51	55	39	246

partly a consequence of the rather notable increase in submissions in that field; 76 editorial decisions were rendered on comparative politics manuscripts during 1989-90, compared to only 69 and 68 manuscripts respectively during the two previous years. Beyond this, short-term fluctuations are not easy to explain, and may be idiosyncratic.

### Editorial Processes for Manuscript Review

Peer review is the keystone of the journal editorial process. Over the last thirty years or so, the peer review system has evolved in political science (see Giles, Patterson & Mizell, 1989; Patterson, Ripley & Trish, 1988). Currently, scholars who submit papers to major journals anticipate two or three substantial appraisals of their work by referees who are competent in the scholarly bailiwick of the paper. Creeping specialization in political science undoubtedly has meant that referees' assessments have come to bear greater and greater influence on editors' decisions about what to publish and what to reject.

Accordingly, selecting the referees for a manuscript is a crucial step in the review process. This is, in fact, not very difficult. Very frequently the manuscript itself reveals who its most likely referees should be—in the citations of the important research or writing within the vineyard in which the manuscript's author is toiling. As often, trips to the library, the editor's familiarity with professional research and practice, and consultation with members of the editorial board all make contributions to the selection of proper referees. Occasionally authors themselves nominate referees for their work, which the editor may consider. Over time a file of capable and reliable specialists accumulates.

If the first and foremost feature of a competent peer review system is referee selection—the capacity of an editor to select the appropriate referees, and the commitment of referees to render fair, cogent, constructive, professional appraisals of manuscripts—the next most important feature of manuscript review is effectiveness. An effective review process is efficient; it delivers thorough and skillful reviews to

**TABLE 3.**  
*APSR* Acceptance Rates for Substantive Fields

Field	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90*	Average 1985-90
American Politics & Public Policy	13.1	12.1	14.6	11.2	8.5	11.4
Comparative Politics	9.9	14.3	10.3	15.9	5.3	10.3
Normative Theory	8.0	10.2	12.2	13.0	16.9	14.0
International Relations	15.0	11.0	7.5	11.5	13.9	10.9
Methodology & Formal Theory	8.9	17.6	14.5	14.8	9.8	13.3
Overall	10.5	13.0	12.7	12.3	10.2	11.9

\*1989-90 rates are based on the total number of decisions in each field: American politics and public policy, 177; comparative politics, 76; normative theory, 71; international relations, 36; methodology and formal theory, 41.

**TABLE 4.**  
Elapsed Time in the *APSR* Manuscript Review Process, 1989-90

Steps in Manuscript Review	Average Number of Days				
	1985-86*	1986-87*	1987-88*	1988-89**	1989-90**
From receipt of manuscript to referee assignment	4.0	7.0	11.0	12.2	10.5
From assignment to receipt of last referee report	53.0	47.0	36.0	37.4	39.4
From receipt of last referee report to editorial decision	2.0	4.0	5.0	8.2	6.0
From receipt of manuscript to final decision	59.0	58.0	49.0	52.2	52.3

\*Median.  
\*\*Mean.

authors in a relatively short time. It has come to be widely understood in political science that a reasonable turnaround time for reviews is three months (economists who submit often marvel at the efficiency of political science journals).

The record of the *Review* in conducting the editorial process is given in Table 4. For a number of years the *APSR* staff has monitored its performance in conducting the routine work of processing manuscripts. A careful log is kept and coded so that regular monitoring can readily occur. When new manuscripts arrive at the editorial office they must be logged in; a "setup" must be prepared, including assignment of a manuscript number and preparation of forms. Graduate student interns then do a preliminary reading and fill out a report. Referees are assigned; and, finally, letters must be prepared and review materials assembled to be mailed to these referees. As Table 4 shows, it takes about ten days to complete referee assignments for the average manuscript.

Many political scientists and a number of scholars from other disciplines provide the *Review* with substantial professional advice without charge and in a timely manner. During 1989-90, 550 scholars served as referees for the *APSR*, reflecting a 79 percent response rate. More than 100 of these referees participated "above and beyond the call of duty" by serving as referees for more than one manuscript. Of course, some of those from whom reviews are solicited are unable to or choose not to participate as referees. For half the manuscripts submitted in 1989-90, at least one referee declined to respond, resulting in an average of .73 cancellations per submitted paper. The average cancellation was returned to the editorial office in two-and-one-half weeks.

The average brace of participating referees report back to the editor in about five weeks. Some scholars take longer. The editorial office maintains a "tickler" system, reminding tardy referees by mail and telephone to return reviews. At certain seasons of the year (summertime, between

Christmas and the new year), scholars can be hard to find. And, many *APSR* referees are non-Americans, contributing as part of the international community of scholars. Despite the additional time imposed by the international postal system, referees in other countries often are more prompt than domestic scholars. Overwhelmingly, the referee process works very well.

Once referees' appraisals and judgments are in hand, the editor's final decision is, on the average, rendered within about a week. For 1989-90, the average turnaround time for manuscripts was about 52 days, a record of performance difficult to improve upon.

### The Avalanche of Books for Review

Imagine being mailed hundreds of books in a year's time! Just opening the packages alone would be fairly time-consuming. During 1989-90, the *APSR*'s book review editor received 1,713 books for review, and sent 420 of them out to reviewers (156 of these were in the American politics field; 112 in comparative politics; 83 in international relations; and 69 in political theory). Altogether, 325 book reviews were received from 238 reviewers representing 200 different colleges, universities, and a few other affiliations.

A grand total of 459 books were reviewed in the *Review* in 1990 (Vol. 84), more than were published in any volume during the second half of the decade. About a third of these books were in the American politics field, and another fourth were comparative politics books (see Table 5). A fifth of the books reviewed were in the field of international relations, and another fifth were in political theory and public policy.

The *Review* is receiving and reviewing a growing number of books. It shoulders the main burden of reviewing scholarly and professional books in political science and related fields, other journals having eliminated or shrunken their book review sections. The burden of meeting this professional need with existing resources is growing more difficult. More pages for book

**TABLE 5.**  
Subfield Distribution of Books Reviewed in the *APSR*, 1985-90

Field	Percentage of Books Reviewed					
	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990
Political Theory	21	18	17	19	18	16
Political Economy	*	7	9	6	*	*
American Politics	32	26	27	28	31	36
Comparative Politics	28	25	31	28	27	25
International Relations	19	24	16	19	24	19
Public Policy	*	*	*	*	*	5
Total	100	100	100	100	100	101
Number of Books Reviewed	453	380	351	320	402	459

\*Included in other subfields.

reviews, a fifth book review issue, a separate book review publication, mobilizing other general journals to develop or enlarge their book reviewing are among the options as the professional problem of adequately reviewing scholarly books is addressed in the future.

### The Experience of Authors Not Published

Journal manuscript review is a fairly complex process of sifting and winnowing to select exemplary work for publication. Only about 10 percent of manuscripts submitted to the *Review* are accepted for publication. In the main, the authors of these papers are very satisfied with the *Review*. For them, the editorial process has led to success, and their research and writing is widely disseminated.

What about those scholars who submit manuscripts to the *Review*, but whose work is not accepted for publication? What has been their experience? What has become of their work? More than for scholars whose work is published in the *Review*, for the “rejected” authors the review process may provide constructive and helpful critiques of their work. This function of peer review, the “seminar by mail,” is valuable in its own right. But how valuable?

We sought to gather data from scholars who submitted papers to the *Review* that were rejected. In the spring of 1990 questionnaires were mailed to 596 rejected authors drawn

from the manuscript files of the previous two years. This two-page questionnaire mainly sought responses indicating the fate of the rejected manuscript and the author’s satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the review process. The response rate was quite high: 63.8 percent responded (N = 380). Importantly, the major subfields are appropriately represented in the sample, as the following comparison indicates:

	Sample	Non-Respondents	Submissions 1988-90
American politics & public policy	40.9%	38.6%	43.1%
Comparative politics	16.9	19.1	17.6
Normative theory	20.3	16.7	17.9
International relations	10.6	11.2	11.0
Methodology & formal theory	11.3	14.4	10.4
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Analysis of these data provides us an opportunity to track the fate of manuscripts rejected by the *APSR*. And, from these data we can get evaluations of the review process from its potentially severest critics—those it rejected.

### What Happens to Rejected Manuscripts?

A naive person, told that a scholarly journal receives hundreds of papers every year from mostly academic scholars and publishes about 10 percent of them, might think there was tremendous wastage,

if not widespread incompetence, in the scholarly profession. Seasoned scholars (and, certainly, editors) know, of course, that this is not the case. The journal world is pluralistic, with a remarkable variety of journals available to scholars seeking to publish their papers. What one journal rejects, another may publish with enthusiasm. Still, systematic analysis of the fate of rejected manuscripts has been neglected, so we really have not known the extent and locale of ultimate acceptance of papers rejected by any one journal.

### Patterns of Journal Submission

Our data from 380 rejected authors helps to remedy this ignorance. The basic evidence is presented in Table 6. Most rejected authors at any one time are “repeaters”—only a third of our respondents had never before submitted a paper to the *APSR*. Of those who submitted to the *Review* previously, two-fifths had been published in the journal. In short, many of these rejected authors were experienced in journal submission, rejection, and publication. For more than half, the paper had been exposed to the profession in the form of a convention paper prior to submission to the *Review*. And, fully 90 percent had not submitted their paper to another journal prior to submitting it to the *APSR*.

A substantial proportion of these rejected authors submitted their rejected manuscript to another journal; and, quite a number were eventually successful in getting their papers published. More than 57 percent indicated that the *APSR* review process had been helpful in strengthening their paper for submission elsewhere (only 8% report resubmission to the *Review*). Nearly 7 out of 10 rejected authors submitted their papers to other journals following rejection by the *APSR*, and three quarters of those who submitted elsewhere ultimately got published. Almost a third of this sample of rejected authors, undaunted by their rejection, subsequently submitted other papers to the *Review*, and about a third of these did so successfully.

Rejected authors appear to fall into three broad groups. About a

**TABLE 6.**  
Experience of Scholars Whose Manuscripts Are Not Accepted for Publication in the *APSR*, 1990

Manuscript History	% of Respondents
First submission to the <i>APSR</i>	32.6
Submitted a paper in the previous five years	60.3
Previously submitted a paper published in the <i>Review</i> (% of those who submitted, N = 229)	40.2
Submission was a convention paper	52.9
<i>APSR</i> was the first journal to which the paper was submitted	90.0
Used comments of referees or managing editor to revise the manuscript	57.4
Resubmitted the paper to the <i>Review</i>	7.9
Submitted the paper to other journals following rejection by the <i>APSR</i>	69.2
Paper submitted to other journals was eventually published (% of those who submitted, N = 263)	75.3
Submitted manuscripts to the <i>Review</i> subsequent to rejection	30.8
Subsequent paper submitted to the <i>APSR</i> eventually published (% of those who submitted, N = 117)	31.6
Total number of cases	380

**TABLE 7.**  
Why Scholars Submit Manuscripts to the *Review* (in percentages)

Reason for Decision	Most Important Factor	In the Top Three
Prestige of the <i>Review</i>	61.1	88.7
Opportunity to reach a wide disciplinary audience	31.6	76.6
Theoretical importance of the work	21.6	59.7
Opportunity for peer review	6.1	26.1
Previously published in the <i>Review</i>	3.7	9.7
Speedy turnaround time	1.6	8.0
Other	1.6	2.9

third are *novices* who have not submitted work to the *Review* before, many of whom are trying out their research and writing skills for the first time in the arena of scholarly journal publication. In contrast, 25-30 percent are *hardcore professionals*—those who submit papers regularly, whose previous work has been published in the *Review*, and who are salubriously socialized to the professional norms of submission-rejection-revision-resubmission. Not only have these authors published in the *Review* in the past, but also they fully expect to do so in the future. Between *novices* and *hardcore professionals* lie most research-oriented

political scientists—the *working scholars*, who try out the *Review* occasionally but whose work is more often published in other political science journals.

Editors and journal staffs, in the daily fray of processing manuscripts, finding appropriate and willing referees, editing copy, and reading galley and page proofs, can come to think that scholars submit papers to the journal because of the quality of the services provided by its editor, staff, and referees. This does not seem to be the case, at least for our sample of rejected authors (see Table 7). The prestige of the *Review*, the opportunity it provides to reach a

wide audience, and the perceived theoretical importance of the author's research rate as the most important factors in decisions to submit to the *APSR*. Previous experience, the opportunity for peer evaluations, turnaround time, and other considerations are considered much less important.

**Before and After APSR Rejection**

Experiential and motivational factors in manuscript submission are interesting, but the major thrust of our analysis was to map out the route and destination of papers submitted to, and then rejected by, the *Review*. We asked our survey respondents to indicate to what journal or journals, if any, their manuscript had been submitted before they submitted it to the *APSR*. Then, we asked respondents who had submitted their paper to another journal after rejection by the *Review* where they had submitted it. Finally, we asked respondents where their paper had ultimately been published, if indeed it had been published. Journals were classified according to standard categories (see Brunk, 1989).

The results from these inquiries are shown in Table 8. Of the few who had submitted their paper to a journal prior to their submission to the *Review* (about 9%), about a third had submitted to a general journal, and more than 40 percent had submitted to one of the principal field journals (in U.S., comparative, or international politics, or theory). The other half had submitted to a scattering of journals, including some in economics, sociology, psychology, or law.

After rejection by the *APSR*, almost half of these authors submitted their work to one of the other general political science journals. Four-fifths of these submissions to general journals (and 37% of all submission *ante APSR*) went to the *Journal of Politics* or the *American Journal of Political Science*. Not unexpectedly, most of those authors who did not submit their paper to a general journal following *APSR* rejection submitted it to one of the subfield journals—*American Politics*

**TABLE 8.**  
What Happens to Manuscripts Rejected by the *American Political Science Review*?<sup>a</sup>

Type of Publication	Submitted to Other Journal Prior to <i>Review</i> %	Where Submitted After Rejection by <i>APSR</i> %	Where Published %
General journal <sup>b</sup>	29.4	48.1	27.6
American politics journal	11.8	5.8	5.2
Comparative politics journal	8.8	16.3	14.1
International relations journal	5.9	14.0	8.3
Theory journal	14.7	10.5	5.7
Political economy journal	5.9	6.6	7.3
Specialized journal <sup>c</sup>	14.7	5.0	4.2
Law journal	14.7	3.9	2.6
Public administration and public policy journal	2.9	3.9	4.7
Political behavior journal	2.9	3.5	4.2
Economics journal	11.8	1.2	1.0
Sociology or psychology journal	5.8	3.1	2.6
Book chapter	—	.8	12.5
Number of respondents	34	258	192
Total % of respondents	8.9	67.9	50.5

<sup>a</sup>Percentages total to more than 100% because some authors submitted to, or published in, more than one type of publication.

<sup>b</sup>Includes the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Politics*, the *Western Political Quarterly*, *Polity*, and the *Political Science Quarterly*.

<sup>c</sup>Includes *Technology Review*, the *Journal of Mathematical Social Science*, *Industrial Relations*, *Human Communications Research*, *Ethnic & Racial Studies*, *Signs*, *Science*, *Technology & Human Values*, *Industrial & Labor Relations Review*, the *Journal of Communication & Political Persuasion*, and others.

**TABLE 9.**  
Where Papers Rejected by the *APSR* Are Subsequently Submitted, by Field

Type of Publication	American Politics	Comparative Politics	International Relations	Formal Theory & Methodology	Public Policy	Normative Theory
General journal*	69.9	30.2	18.5	48.3	57.9	34.8
American politics journal	12.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	15.8	0.0
Comparative politics journal	8.6	58.1	7.4	0.0	5.3	13.0
International relations journal	5.4	14.0	74.1	3.4	5.3	6.5
Theory journal	2.2	2.3	0.0	6.9	0.0	47.8
Political economy journal	7.5	0.0	3.7	27.6	0.0	2.2
Specialized journal	2.2	4.7	7.4	10.3	0.0	6.5
Law journal	6.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.7
Public administration and public policy journal	2.2	0.0	3.7	0.0	26.3	4.3
Political behavior journal	4.3	4.7	3.7	3.4	0.0	2.2
Economics journal	2.2	0.0	0.0	3.4	0.0	0.0
Sociology or psychology journal	2.2	0.0	0.0	10.3	0.0	4.3
Book chapter	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.2
Number of cases	93	43	27	29	19	46
% reported published	65.6	88.4	66.7	82.8	68.4	80.4

\*For some details about categories, see Table 8.

*Quarterly; Comparative Politics or Comparative Political Studies; World Politics, International Organization, or International Studies Quarterly; Political Theory or Public Choice.* A bare majority of rejected authors' work is ultimately published elsewhere, some in other general journals, some in the major subfield journals, some in a wide variety of other journals, and some in books.

### Subfield Variations in Post-Rejection Submission

Table 9 provides the distributions of post-rejection submissions by political science subfield. Apparently submission to the other general journals is most prevalent among those in the American politics field (69.9%), but also substantial among public policy (57.9%) and formal theory (48.3%) specialists, as well. The next step for comparative politics specialists tends to be to the comparative journals (58.1%), and those in the international field are even more prone to submit next to a journal in the IR field (74.1%). Interestingly, the ultimate publication rate for manuscripts rejected by the *Review* for those who submit elsewhere is substantially higher in comparative politics, and in normative and formal theory, and lowest for American politics, IR, and public policy.

These results present no great sur-

prises regarding the fate of papers rejected by the *APSR*. Their authors' work is hardly a waste of scholarly and scientific energy, nor is it unredeemable. To a considerable extent, the work of those rejected by the *Review* is arrayed across a multiplicity of journals, roughly in accordance with the prestige level attributed to the various journals (see Giles, Mizell & Patterson, 1989).

### Assessment of the *APSR*

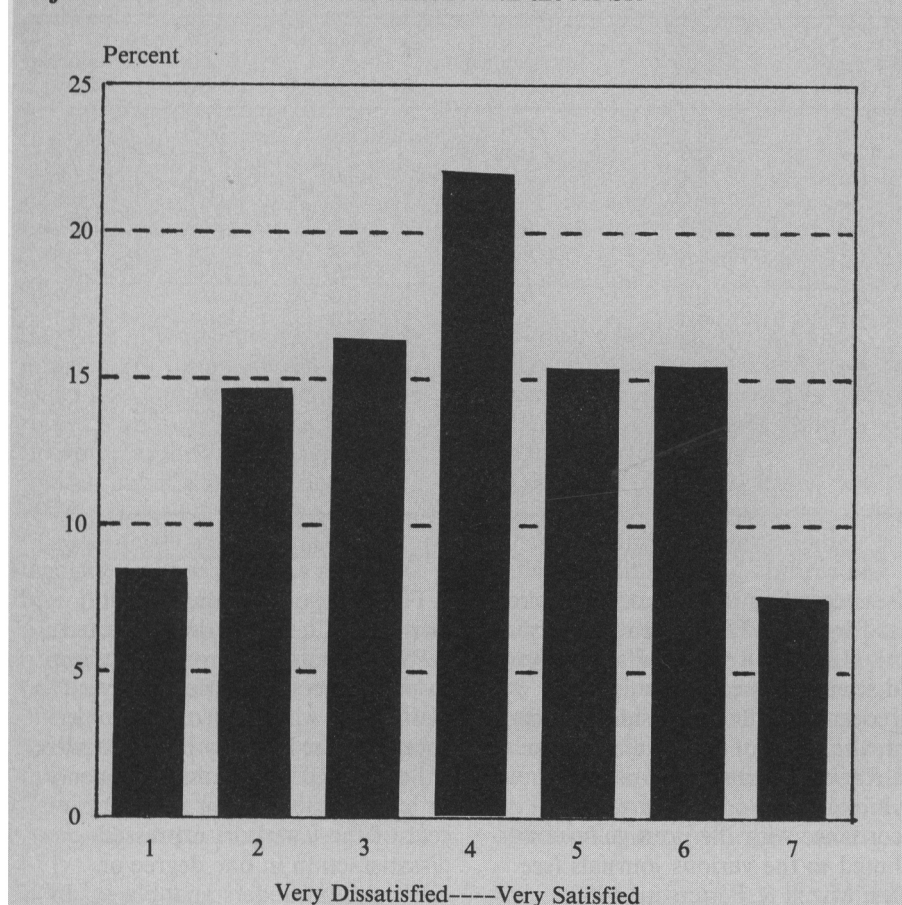
No one who has experienced rejection of their scholarly paper by a journal is really satisfied with the result. On the whole, scholars believe in their work and want to see it published. A scholarly paper is an extension of the self, and criticism of it, however constructive, may be deeply felt. That is why those who have never experienced rejection of their research papers are unqualified to serve as a journal editor; those who dish out rejection should know how it feels. In one way or another, many of the 380 rejected *APSR* authors who returned questionnaires to us expressed their disappointment, unhappiness, irritation, or dissatisfaction. Given that they had been rejected, the remarkable thing about this cohort of scholars is that many were relatively satisfied with the process, and considerable proportions indicated satisfaction with particular aspects of peer review and editorial processing.

Figure 2 portrays the overall satisfaction level for these rejected *APSR* authors. Only a small minority were "very" satisfied or "very" dissatisfied with their overall experience with the *Review*, but most were either neutral on the matter, or more or less satisfied with it. But 40 percent of these authors expressed dissatisfaction in one degree or another, and understandably so. In open-ended comments about the review process, rejected authors sometimes expressed complaints and negative appraisals. One minor chord concerns the fairness of referees. One scholar wrote:

As a convention paper, my article was very successful. I was even approached by publishers who proposed turning it into a book. Indeed, I have published books and articles before and consider my work highly publishable. However, though the managing editor was fair considering the reviews he received, the reviews themselves were not fair.

Comments about referee fairness commonly focus upon the belief that evaluation was along too-narrow lines, that the referees misunderstood what the author was trying to say or do, or that referees lacked competence and objectivity. Some think a conspiracy is afoot to keep something out of the *Review*—work in comparative or international politics, nonquantitative work, Marxist thought (wrote one respondent:

**FIGURE 2.**  
Rejected Authors' Overall Satisfaction With the *APSR*



“. . . the *Review* is effectively closed to certain approaches within the discipline”). Some envision a club of insiders who regulate what is published in the journal (one respondent wrote: “I get the impression of a fairly ‘tight’ group of scholars reading each others’ work and getting it into the *Review* on the basis of the right network”).

Despite understandable criticism and ill-feeling among rejected authors, quite a number conveyed a wistfully positive appraisal of their experience with the *Review*. Many found their referee reports constructive and useful. About 40 percent reported significant revision of their paper, at least partly on the basis of the referees’ evaluations. “The three reviews,” one author wrote, “were extensive, cogent, and helpful. . . . I can honestly say that the reviews pointed out where I failed to ‘tell my story’ . . . .” Another wrote:

We found two of the three comments very useful, and incorporated them in subsequent revisions.

Indeed, this manuscript was eventually published in a journal suggested by the editor, and was significantly revised to take the comments of all the reviews into account. Many thanks!

In the open-ended responses, many authors exploited the opportunities we gave them to express negative feelings. Nevertheless, when we coded and counted open-ended comments, we found that about two-fifths were neutral or positive in assessing *APSR* referees or the overall service provided by the journal. This seems the more remarkable given that these neutral or positive evaluations come from those whose work had been criticized and rejected.

We were able to make some fairly simple attempts to ferret out correlates of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the *APSR* review process. We do not seem to be alienating first-time submitters more than veterans. But authors whose papers ultimately were accepted for publica-

tion in another journal were more dissatisfied with the *Review* than were those not published. Probably acceptance by another journal makes the *Review*’s rejection all the harder to swallow.

Moreover, we detect a “discouragement factor” in rejected authors’ comments about their experience with the *Review*. A few volunteered that they would never submit a paper to the *APSR* again. More systematically, the correlation between satisfaction-dissatisfaction and asserted unwillingness to submit future papers to the *Review* is positive and substantial. Those who were highly dissatisfied with the *APSR* experience overwhelmingly said they would not submit a future paper to the journal.

Rejected authors’ particular satisfactions or dissatisfactions with *APSR* referees or the review process do not differ substantially among subfields. Overall satisfaction levels are quite similar across subfields, as well, although comparativists and IR scholars are generally somewhat more dissatisfied with the *Review* than others. Those in the comparative and IR subfields are more dissatisfied than satisfied overall, while the satisfaction-dissatisfaction ratios are greater than 1.0 for those in other subfields.

Despite the fact that there exists quite understandable overall disappointment and dissatisfaction with the *Review* among rejected authors, they register remarkably high levels of expressed favorability regarding specific features of the manuscript review process, and explicit qualities of peer review. While only about a third indicated they were generally “satisfied” with their referees’ critiques, large proportions recorded satisfaction with the editor’s comments, reports to them on the status of their manuscript in the review process, the courtesy of the *APSR* staff, and, most notably, with the turnaround time for a decision regarding their manuscript (see Figure 3).

By the same token, respectable majorities of these rejected authors rated the referee evaluations for their paper methodologically sound, accurate, helpful, and germane, the nearly half said they thought the



referees showed mastery of the research field and subject matter. Perhaps political scientists have grown accustomed to efficient journal service, but outsiders often note the unusual response they get from journals like the *APSR*. For instance, one economist wrote:

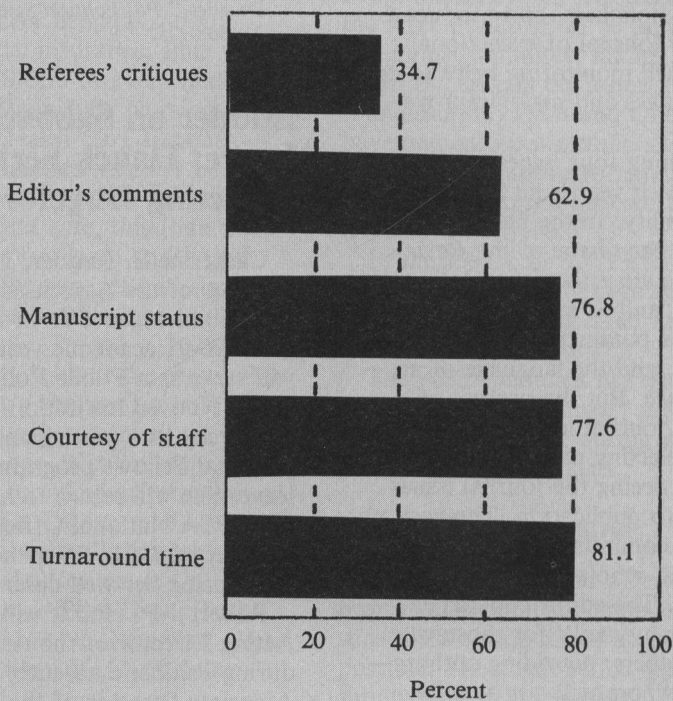
[The editor] was extremely helpful in seeing to it that an earlier submission went through a thorough yet speedy review process. He even took the time to talk to me by phone to apologize for the fact that he had run into a tardy referee! As an economist I am not used to such professional treatment by colleagues, and I dare say few other economists get such courteous treatment from economics journals. . . . I don't get nearly as quick turnaround time with the economics journals either . . . and the quality of the referee reports has been higher . . . with political science journals. . . .

**Conclusion**

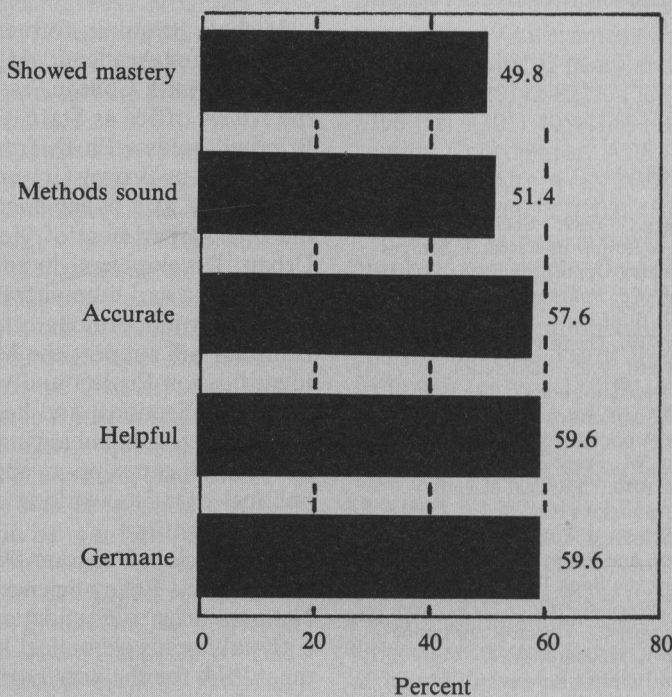
Peer review is widely accepted in scholarship and science as a practical, if imperfect, way to strive for excellence in research and writing. Certainly it has come to be accepted in the discipline of political science that scholarly journals should choose manuscripts for publication not on the basis of the author's status, the approach or subject matter of the work, or the proclivities of the editor and editorial board. Rather, publication in scholarly journals should depend upon professional evaluation of work by peers who share with the author expertise of theory, methodology, and substance. In the real world of workaday refereeing and editorial decision-making, errors in judgment may be made, and the system of peer review has not yet reached the ideal. Perhaps the peer review system is something like Winston Churchill's characterization of democracy—"the worst form of government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time."

The *APSR* is performing its job of conducting professional peer review, efficiently processing manuscripts, and publishing excellent research and

**FIGURE 3.**  
Rejected Authors' Satisfaction with the Review Process



**FIGURE 4.**  
Rejected Authors' Appraisals of Referees



writing. Those who are responsible for the excellence of the *Review* need to monitor their performance in order to perfect good judgment, insure fairness, uphold high standards of professionalism, and produce a quarterly journal of exceptional merit. Such monitoring helps to correct mistakes and make improvements.

Publishing four issues of the *Review* each year is an important responsibility. In the hands of scholars, each issue of the *Review* should be attractive, stimulating, interesting, and as readable as possible within the parameters of technical necessity, and the language of art and science. But the process of editing a journal involves more than merely selecting papers to publish, and then seeing the journal issues through to publication. The vast majority of communications between editor and scholar involve manuscript rejection. The editor conducts a "seminar by mail" for those who submit papers, providing authors—most of whom will not be published—constructive and useful critiques of their work. The "seminar by mail" should contribute to improving the quality of research and theory, and assist authors in strengthening their work so that it can be resubmitted to the *Review* or submitted elsewhere. Our analysis of the experience of rejected authors gives us some purchase on the effectiveness of this process.

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## Rudder on Sabbatical Leave; Hauck Serving as Acting Director

Catherine E. Rudder, Executive Director of the Association, will be on sabbatical leave from APSA for the 1990-91 academic year. Rudder will serve as a Public Policy Fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University as a participant in their National Fellows program during her leave. She will return to her work at the APSA National Office in the summer of 1991. *PS* wishes Cathy well during her well-deserved leave.

Robert J-P. Hauck will serve as Acting Director of the Association during Rudder's absence. Hauck is Associate Director of the APSA, and has been with the national office since 1982. He assumed his responsibilities as Associate Director and as Editor of *PS* in 1987.

## New Professional Staff Join APSA

Michael Brintnall, formerly Vice President for Academic Affairs at Mount Vernon College, has joined the APSA office as Staff Associate. Brintnall holds a Ph.D. from MIT, has taught at Brown University, and has worked as a policy analyst for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in addition to his teaching and administration at Mount Vernon. Among other duties, Brintnall will support the Minority Identification Project and work with Organized Sections, and he has a special interest in enhancing ways the Association can support applied political scientists working outside of academic settings.

Frank Scioli, Program Director, Political and Policy Sciences at the National Science Foundation, is presently taking his sabbatical leave at the APSA for the year beginning

September 1. Scioli holds a Ph.D. from Florida State University. Scioli has taught at the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle, and at Drew University. He joined NSF in 1975. Among other duties, Scioli will staff the Research Support committee while he is at APSA.

## Group Disability Income Plan Now Available to APSA Members

The American Political Science Association has announced the availability of the Group Disability Income Plan during this Special Enrollment Period. This low-cost Plan is only one of the many benefits available through your APSA membership.

All APSA members and/or their spouses may apply if they are under age 60, have been actively working full-time (at least 30 hours per week) for the past 90 days, and have not been hospitalized in the past six months.

Members will receive a monthly benefit of \$1,000 every month for up to five full years when disabled by a covered accident and up to one full year when disabled by a covered illness. Payments start on the 31st day of disability to tie-in with any sick leave pay that might be received from an employer.

This coverage pays in addition to any other insurance, including Social Security, Worker's Compensation and any other group plans, as long as total benefits do not exceed 70% of your monthly salary, exclusive of bonuses and overtime pay.

If for any reason the member is not completely satisfied with their policy, it may be returned within 30 days for a complete refund.

The APSA Group Disability Income Plan is extremely economical due to the mass-purchasing power of the APSA membership. *And*, according to IRS ruling, all benefits are totally free from taxation.

You will be receiving complete information regarding the APSA Group Disability Income Plan through the mail. If you have any questions, please contact the Insurance Administrator: Albert H.