

Introduction and Comments

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Only connect....” E. M. Forster’s admonition in *Howards End* resonates with this issue of *Perspectives on Politics* in several ways. The connection that Forster pushes most insistently is “building ... the ... bridge that should connect the prose in us with the passion.” Writing, reviewing, and editing an article for *Perspectives* is mostly about the prose. But the sorts of articles that belong in *Perspectives* have a passion—for politics, for inquiry, for a particular population or problem or region of the world—not too far below the surface. The trick, of course, is to use the passion to inspire, but not to control, the prose.

Less fancifully, many of the articles in this issue of *Perspectives* are structured around one or another form of connection. “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality,” the report of APSA’s Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, chaired by Lawrence Jacobs and Theda Skocpol, is the first major result of a new initiative by the American Political Science Association to enable the discipline of political science to speak directly to urgent problems in the “real world.” The draft report was extensively reviewed and the APSA Executive Council officially accepted the final version, so “American Democracy ...” did not undergo the usual review process at *Perspectives*. Its message is powerful: the dramatic rise in income inequality over the past several decades in the United States is associated with considerable inequality in political voice. The rise in economic inequality is also, the report argues, associated with public policies that increase inequality rather than offsetting it, as is the case in many other advanced industrial societies. Racial, ethnic, and gender inequalities persist at unacceptably high levels and interact with economic inequality, with the result that some Americans are especially disadvantaged in the political arena.

The APSA Constitution precludes any policy recommendations from an entity speaking for the association, so the task force limited itself to description and analysis. Its commentators, however, had fewer limitations, and heeded the admonition to “only connect” through vigorous advice on how to use “American Democracy ...” in the public arena. John DiIulio urges all readers to make personal and immediate connections—to employ their time, talents, and passions in developing programs of benefit to their communities.

His examples leave the rest of us with no excuses for shirking. Lawrence Mead, in contrast, argues against the explicit conclusions and implicit implications of the task force report by providing evidence that material inequalities in the United States have declined below the point where government can be held responsible for ameliorating them. Individuals must act on their own behalf, and public policies must enable, even require, them to do so. Margaret Weir has the same impulse as John DiIulio—to find ways for individuals, organizations, and governmental bodies to attack the high and rising levels of political and economic inequality. Her suggestions lie at a higher level of generality or broader geographic scope than do his, but there is nothing incompatible about them. Finally, Linda Faye Williams criticizes the task force for paying insufficient attention to deep inequities of race, ethnicity, gender, and place. She, too, urges particular policy reforms, and infuses the whole exchange with a sharp sense of urgency, even passion.

The first two of the regular articles respond to the exhortation to “only connect” in a different way, by bringing the research of life scientists to bear on political concerns. In “The Feeling of Rationality,” Rose McDermott lays out the recent extraordinarily exciting advances in neuroscience, epitomized by our striking cover photo of different kinds of activity in different parts of the brain. She then shows why political scientists should care about this new knowledge. Depression, leadership, perceptions—the very connection between emotion and cognition—are now literally visible, and their causes and consequences can be much better understood. If political scientists can incorporate the results of neuroscience in careful and creative ways, we will open up new avenues for empirical research (analogous to the new field of neuroeconomics), more subtle ways to understand rationality, and more effective means for educating and advising leaders.

John Alford and John Hibbing connect political science to a different branch of the life sciences in “The Origin of Politics.” Through reexamining older theories of Darwinian evolution and newer, systematic twin studies, they show that at both societal and individual levels, genetic inheritance matters much more than social scientists typically think. Infants are not born with *tabulae rasae*. But neither are their lives determined by their genetic inheritance; Alford

and Hibbing give the old cliché about the interaction of nature and nurture much more precision, depth, and elegance by examining just how these interactions occur through a process of “guarded cooperation.” They also give their argument a theoretical, even polemical, edge by arguing that political scientists should subsume the quasi-theories of behavioralism and rational choice into the broader and deeper evolutionary theory that they introduce. Political science may yet witness its own version of the Darwinian revolution that roiled biology and Christianity more than a century ago.

The latter two of the regular articles offer yet another model of connection—in this case, across subfields and research topics within political science. Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, in “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics,” pull together an array of theories, examples, and typologies in order to galvanize a new arena of study. As they point out, “everyone knows” that informal, nongovernmental institutions matter in our own lives, in our understanding of daily political practice, and in our interpretations of everything from the French Revolution to the role of corruption in electoral outcomes. But we have lacked a systematic framework for making sense of the multiple connections among nongovernmental institutions and between them and the formal polity. Now we have such a framework—made especially valuable by its ability to combine clear conceptual distinctions (e.g., between complementary and substitutive interactions among institutions) with a persuasive theory of change and stability. This article leaps over the multiple stages of theory development that so often accompany the opening of new fields of inquiry.

Emily Gill looks at “Religious Organizations, Charitable Choice, and the Limits of Freedom of Conscience” in order to give philosophical depth and nuance to the controversial policy issue of channeling federal funds through faith-based social service organizations. Should the Catholic Church be able to use taxpayers’ dollars to fund a program counseling pregnant teens? Should the Unitarian Church be able to do so? Or the Bahai, or the Nation of Islam, or the Unification Church? Might any or all of these organizations do a better job on such a sensitive issue than overworked, burnt-out employees of a public welfare office? Gill wades carefully but firmly into these murky waters by laying out alternative conceptions of the appropriate relationship among protestations of individual faith, group-based affirmations of faith with an institutional presence, and public funding in a liberal democratic society. She concludes that corporate freedom of conscience too often interferes with individual freedom of conscience, and that the former must give way to the latter or at least be considerably constrained by individual rights.

It is clear how the symposium on “The Supreme Court Forecasting Project” is responsive to the refrain of “only connect!” Lee Epstein actually did what many of us argue about, by framing a direct comparison between two modes

of analysis representative of two disciplines in order to determine the better predictor of measurable outcomes. Political scientists designed a simple model to predict the results of the United States Supreme Court’s decisions in the 2002–3 term, while law professors used their expert knowledge of the Court, the justices, and particular legal disputes to make a parallel set of predictions. I’m pleased to report that the political scientists won (barely) on the bottom-line predictions, but almost equally pleased to report that the law professors won (barely) in their predictions about particular justices or specific arenas of the law. The participants’ and observers’ reflections on the experiment—how it might have been done differently, what it implies about the Court, what it reveals about disciplinary proclivities and even the whole public sphere—make for fascinating reading. Connections abound—between lawyers and social scientists, across methods, from journalists to academics, between cultural anthropologists and quantitative political scientists. Moreover, the symposium is fun to read.

This issue of *Perspectives* boasts two “Perspectives” essays. The first is one of the few innovative arguments in the outpouring of reflections about the fiftieth anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* that I have read over the past year. Stephen Smith, Karen Kedrowski, and Joseph Ellis use two brief case studies in “Electoral Structures, Venue Selection . . .” to support the claim that courts might now be the enemy of effective school desegregation, and local school districts the champion. They do not, of course, claim that this historic reversal always holds; it depends on changing demography, an effective policy to avoid minority vote dilution, and possibly some idiosyncratic personalities. But this brief article challenges long-standing liberal shibboleths about the courts, local electoral politics, and American racial dynamics, and it could have useful broader implications for scholars and activists alike.

Morton Kaplan, one of the grand old men of our profession, writes in response to another in “A Great University Makes for a Great Department.” He reflects on the essay by Gabriel Almond, “Who Lost the Chicago School of Political Science?” in the March 2004 issue of *Perspectives on Politics* and the two commentaries published with Almond’s piece. Kaplan takes gentle exception to his former colleague’s claim about the centrality of the department of political science in creating the “Chicago school”; instead, it took a university prepared to hire great scholars with deep disagreements, and individuals who embraced those disagreements and the table-thumping disputes that they produced. Kaplan, of course, is not just revising history. He is making an argument about how to create an institution, a discipline, and an individual mindset that makes the most of inevitable methodological disagreements rather than permitting them to sour collegial relations and stultify intellectual exploration. Theories must be encouraged to grow, organize themselves along internally coherent lines, subdivide or combine, and otherwise act like biological

organisms—and their proponents should combine and multiply rather than retreat into isolated ecological niches. “Only connect . . . !”

Deborah Schildkraut, in her syllabi review essay entitled “All Politics is Psychological,” takes us once more into links between the life sciences and political science. She considers when the hybrid field of political psychology is “merely” applied psychology or a sub-sub-field of American politics, and when it has a unique and nonreducible intellectual standing and methodological imperative of its own. As Philip Brick did about the field of environmental politics in the June 2004 issue of *Perspectives on Politics*, Schildkraut argues for understanding political psychology as a vibrant, growing, appropriately eclectic new subfield of political science. Perhaps the lesson here is “only dis-connect!”—at least from mistaken subordination to a hegemonic discipline or subfield.

The mantra of “only connect” fits this issue of *Perspectives* in two additional ways. The first, of course, is our usual complement of book reviews. As always, they are intended to connect new books with a discipline’s-worth of continuing readers, and they are a crucial element binding all the fragments of political science into something that at least vaguely resembles a whole. And finally, we report the list of our many wonderful reviewers for volume 2 of *Perspectives*. Another editor recently described the peer review

process as an extended conversation among scholars; it may feel more like a gauntlet to would-be authors, but from the vantage point of an editor it is an amazingly effective and informative exchange of ideas and information. Reviewers for *Perspectives* perhaps deserve even an extra ration of thanks since they are working hard, along with the six editors of the journal, to figure out just what this new enterprise is really supposed to be about. We are getting more and more reviews that start with, “As I understand *Perspectives*, an article should include . . .”—and these reflections not only help individual authors but also provide an invaluable service to us editors. So this too is a connection worth prizing, and we thank them very deeply.

The next issue of *Perspectives* will have two articles providing different, even contradictory, reflections on the reasons for President George W. Bush’s success in passing upwardly redistributive tax cuts—which presumably shouldn’t happen in a majoritarian democracy. It also includes an article on ethnic politics in Russia, a topic that seems tragically important as I write this introduction, and an array of other pieces that we trust will further develop the connections among social scientists and between them and public actors. E. M. Forster probably would not have read much of *Perspectives*, but we can at least hope that he would have approved of its mission.