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Party Politics and Pop

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PARTY POLITICS AND POP

Beginning with this issue, *Party Politics* becomes the official journal of the Political Organization and Parties Section (POP) of the American Political Science Association (APSA). Membership in the Section is available to all members of APSA. Readers of *Party Politics* can learn about POP by visiting its website at www.apsanet.org/~pop/index.htm. They may also be interested in the origins of POP, the shorthand name for the group. This account traces the history of organized sections within APSA and their relationship with the Journal.

Unlike other professional associations in anthropology, psychology and sociology, APSA had no subdivisions by scholarly fields for the first 70 years of its existence. Responding to calls for change, in 1976 the APSA Council directed the 1977 Program Committee to ‘explore the degree of interest in beginning to organize continuing sections’ for the annual APSA meeting.

The co-chairs of the 1977 convention, James Q. Wilson and Harvey Mansfield, Jr., addressed their mandate in an item entitled, ‘Shall the APSA Have Organized Subfields?’ in the Winter 1977 issue of *PS* (p. 67). They scheduled separate meetings of scholars in various subfields to ‘discuss and make recommendations regarding the feasibility and desirability of having permanent or semi-permanent, sections’, with an aim ‘to provide greater clarity and continuity in the program sections and to permit scholars working in those subfields to participate more fully in defining the panel topics’. Distinguished conveners were invited to preside over 11 different subfields: Political Philosophy and Political Thought (Dennis Thompson); Empirical Theory, Methodology and the Philosophy of Science (Henry Teune); Comparative Politics (Suzanne Berger); International and Transnational Politics and International Organization (Robert Keohane); Public Policy Analysis (Aaron Wildavsky); Electoral and Voting Behavior (Donald Stokes); Law, Courts and Judicial Behavior (Samuel Krislov); Legislative Processes, Behavior and Representation (Samuel Patterson); Administration, Organization and Executives (Francis Rourke); Political Psychology and Political Socialization (Jack Dennis); and Federalism, Intergovernmental Relations and Urban Politics (Deil Wright).

Note that political parties and interest groups were not among the invited subfields.

Apparently, five of the chosen eleven decided against the idea of sections at that time; the next Program Chair, Elinor Ostrom, arranged for only seven ‘organized subfields’ to meet at the 1978 convention (*PS*, Spring 1978: 203–4).

Left to continue the discussion were these six groups (different conveners are in parentheses) and a seventh and new group: Electoral and Voting Behavior; Law, Courts and Judicial Behavior (Joseph Tannenhaus); Legislative Processes, Behavior and Representation; Federalism, Intergovernmental Relations and Urban Politics; Administration, Organization and Executives (John Kirlin); Political Psychology and Political Socialization; and Political Economy (Edward Tufte).

Still, there was no representation of political parties and interest groups.

When Leon Epstein became President-elect of APSA in 1978 and began planning for the 1979 convention, things changed. Known for the comparative analysis of political parties, Leon asked Frank Sorauf, fellow parties scholar and Chair of the 1979 Program Committee, to explore interest in organizing a subfield around political organizations. In a personal communication, Frank admitted that he and Leon were both concerned about growing specialization in the discipline but thought that if organized subfields were inevitable, political parties and interest groups ought to be represented. Busy himself with the 1979 program, Frank sought help from others, including Kay Lawson, who more than anyone became the moving force behind the effort to establish our section.

When asked to help unravel the early days of the parties and organizations section, Kay Lawson wrote in an email:

Frank Sorauf initiated POP. When Frank was APSA program chair, he thought there should be such a section and asked me to form it. As still quite junior faculty I was certainly honored and did my best. As I recall, that meant setting up some panels and starting a newsletter. I do remember very clearly indeed typing the first newsletters (and I do mean typing: on a typewriter), xeroxing what I typed, cutting it up and pasting it into columns so it would look like a 'real' newsletter, xeroxing all that again, and mailing it out as widely as I could – which was, of course, done by what we now call snail mail.

Kay neglected to mention the clever tactic she employed for the 1979 convention and implemented through her dual role as organizer of our subfield and section head of the Program Committee. Given that scholars in political parties and interest groups were already two years behind other subfields in planning for a role in the APSA program, Kay opted to catch up by combining the initial organizational meeting for the subfield, 'Parties and Other Political Organizations', with a series of seven panels under the section heading: 'Parties and Other Political Organizations.' As a result, the scholars who met on Saturday, 1 September 1979 to form the subfield had, in effect, their own place in the 1979 APSA program.

Members present at the first organized subfield business meeting elected John Bibby as Chair and Kay Lawson as Secretary. John served for two years to 1981. I succeeded him and served until 1983. Kay fortunately stayed on until 1982. All three of us wrestled with three key issues confronting the group in its infancy: (1) Should the group pick a new name? (2) Should we

formally affiliate with APSA? (3) Should we start our own journal? (4) How should we treat voting behavior?

Name change: because ‘Parties and Other Political Organizations’ was the section title for the 1979 APSA panels and the working title for the business meeting, the group took on the obvious acronym, POPO. However, POPO sounded undignified to enough members that Kay Lawson put this question to members in the group’s second newsletter:

Do you have a new name for the subfield? Does the acronym POPO trouble [], amuse [], or seem unimportant [] to you? If you have thoughts on this weighty matter, please let us know. (POPO Newsletter, Spring, 1981)

Kay wrote one other POPO newsletter (Spring 1980) and I wrote the third as the new Chair in November 1981. (Go to www.uakron.edu/bliss/VoxPop.php for past newsletters.) In a letter dated 6 November 1981, Kay noted that some people thought POPO ‘sounds sort of silly’, recalled that ‘the name was an accident anyway’ of the 1979 section and meeting titles and suggested that the name be changed – but noted that previous attempts generated ‘so much argument it wasn’t worth it’.

Kay, John Bibby and I decided to change the name ourselves and then put the change to the membership. The next newsletter in Winter 1982, the first as *VOX POP*, began with this paragraph:

Exit POPO, Enter POP

‘Parties and Other Political Organizations’ seemed like a perfectly good name for our subfield when it was formed at the 1979 APSA Convention. As an acronym, however, POPO drew some snickers from members and prospective members. To fashion a more sober short name for the group with a minimum of fuss, the Chair, Secretary, and past Chair agreed to change our title to ‘Political Organizations/Parties.’ This produced the new acronym, POP, and the new name for our Newsletter, *VOX POP*. Our trilateral action will be reviewable at our Annual Business Meeting at the 1982 APSA Convention in Denver. Friends of POPO will have their chance to undo our action, if they wish.

The members accepted the name change at the 1982 business meeting.

Joining APSA: although the APSA Council had voted to ‘explore’ the idea of organized subfields in 1976, it did not approve establishing ‘sections or organized subfields’ until 1981, when it directed its staff to prepare guidelines for their organization and operation for approval at the 1982 Council Meeting (*APSR* Autumn, 1981: 729). The Fall 1982 issue of *VOX POP* outlined the costs of joining (POP members must belong to APSA) and benefits (maintenance of membership lists and mailings and preferential treatment in the annual program). That issue of *VOX POP* asked members to complete a questionnaire concerning their desire to affiliate with APSA at different rates of dues.

The Winter 1983 issue summarized responses from 49 returned questionnaires: most POP members already belonged to APSA, were willing to pay

a few dollars in dues and offered positive comments about joining. The issue also called for more responses from the 194 members. A 'special edition' of *VOX POP* in August 1983 reported that members had voted 113 to 6 in favor of section status. Accordingly, I petitioned APSA for affiliation. POP was among the first five groups admitted in 1983 as APSA Sections. There are now 38.

The issue of voting behavior: the subjects of political parties and voting behavior are closely linked in American and comparative politics, and many scholars do original research on both subjects. More APSA members, however, focus on voting behavior than on political parties. Recall that the 'Elections and Voting Behavior' was one of the original 11 'continuing subfields' invited to organizational meetings at the 1977 convention. Even now, that subfield is more popular. The APSA website lists 942 members in the section on 'Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior' and only 590 in POP (as of November 2008). Moreover, POP members seem more interested in their section than vice versa. According to 2004 data in APSA's 'section by section' matrix, only 25 percent of members in the elections section belong to POP, while 34 percent of POP members belong to the elections section.

By forming POP, we aimed at creating a regular outlet for panel papers devoted to parties and other political organizations. The POPO newsletter of Winter 1981 reported on the neglect of panels on political parties and other political organizations in the official APSA programs from 1971 to 1981. In 1972 and 1973, for example, there were no sections on either political parties or political organizations and only a total of six panels in both conventions that dealt with either. The 1976 and 1978 conventions had a handful of separate panels but no sections on political organizations. By stretching the scope of POP to include public opinion and voting behavior, we feared that papers on voters would overwhelm our primary focus on political organizations. In any event, 'Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior' is now an APSA Section itself. It was the 32nd Section to join.

Today, POP is one of the most vigorous official Sections of APSA. It organizes panels at annual meetings of the Association, recognizes scholarship in the field through six awards (e.g. best book, best paper, emerging scholar and career accomplishment), and facilitates the study and teaching of political organization and parties in various ways, such as its syllabi project, articles in *VOX POP* and postings on its website.

Founding a Journal: interest in publishing a journal, tentatively called *Political Organization*, surfaced at the initial subfield meeting in 1979. Kay Lawson, as usual, took the lead in exploring the matter, and she reported in her second newsletter on the state of affairs at the 1980 business meeting. In May 1981, Kay submitted a formal proposal to MIT Press for publishing *Political Organization*, but the Press took no action. In the Fall/Winter 1983 issue of *VOX POP*, Bill Crotty as POP's new Chair recounted the difficulties of 'midwifing a new journal' and asked for suggestions of alternative

university or commercial publishers. Despite a great deal of effort in pursuit of this avenue, POP did not succeed in publishing its own journal. (To this day, there is no journal called *Political Organization*.) However, *VOX POP* grew to eight or ten pages and published short substantive articles.

As POP was becoming established, the international journal *Party Politics* was founded in 1995. Although *Party Politics* was a SAGE publication with no formal links to POP, it focused on topics central to POP, maintained a link to *VOX POP* on its website (www.partypolitics.org) and sponsored the annual prize for the best paper delivered at POP panels at the APSA Annual Meeting. Moreover, POP named the committee that determines the APSA award winner.

Some discussion ensued between POP officers and the editors of *Party Politics* about designating it as POP's official journal. At APSA's 2007 convention, members attending the POP business meeting voted to explore the possibility, and members at the 2008 meeting voted to complete the arrangements. Thus, after a long journey, POP and *Party Politics* are very pleased to initiate a formal relationship starting with this issue of the journal. Russell Dalton, POP President for 2007–8, endorsed the relationship by citing the final line in the movie *Casablanca*, 'I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship'.

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