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Politics in Motion: A Personal History of Political Science

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Politics in Motion: A Personal History of Political Science

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Abstract *The American Political Science Review (APSR) centennial provided us an occasion for the examination of the political science profession as reflected from its pages. Employing a citation analysis of 220 major political scientists published in the APSR and probing deeper into the citation record of some of its prominent scholars, this paper charts the dynamics of political science history. Since its birth over a hundred years ago, the profession has been in a state of constant flux, where new movements surge as previous ones decline once their integration into the fund of professional knowledge was completed. The paper argues that the surge and decline pattern is not a “tragedy of political science,” but a sign of a healthy and vigorous profession.*

American political science was founded as an organized academic guild just as a conception of a modern state was beginning to emerge. It was the last of the social science disciplines to organize as a guild, yet as an intellectual endeavor it was by far the oldest, the “study of mankind,” reaching back at least to the Greek tradition of politics as the art and science of pursuit of the Good Life. However, although political science was a throwback to the Greek sense of science as “objective pursuit of knowledge,” it was a modern discipline, combining the objective pursuit of knowledge with the emerging liberal university, a fusion of two competing demands—teaching and research. Throughout all intellectual realms, science was institutionalized as part of “higher education,” and, as with all institutions, the measure of success is in two dimensions, objective and normative. As Robert Merton would put it, the “manifest function” of an academic or learned profession is service—to be mundane, it is one of the service industries in the modern economy. The “latent function” is advancement of the economic security and social status of the practitioners—as in a *calling*. This makes political science a normal and distinguishable member of the learned professions. But we are set apart from the others by our relation to the state. Our task is to study its parts, all its functions, all its consequences, and all the implications of its moral and ethical character.

This defines the mainstream of the discipline, not only of the professional/guild dimension but also the intellectual dimension. Mainstream political science is the cumulative organization of the literature of politics, expansive in scope and eclectic in method. There is, however, a core, and that core is comprised of quite consensual subject matter categories. These have been institutionalized by the recognition they receive in the American Political Science Association (APSA) and also by the

demand, needs and tastes of the main clients of our services, the colleges and universities, the relevant departments and their faculties, the demands as measured by student enrollments and the pattern of adoption of textbook and related pedagogical materials. Leading textbooks provide good examples of the steady state of political science. In American government, for example, textbooks contain new themes but continue to present the same chapters, on foundations, institutions, public policies, political organizations, and electoral and opinion phenomena. Public policy exhibits a similar pattern, only lifting the level of abstraction so as to accommodate the larger number of cases. The same can be said of the subdiscipline of comparative politics, covering the leading countries of Western Europe, adding one or two "other" countries. International relations (IR) may have changed the most, moving away from international law to international relations, and still further removed from the old ways by the erasing if not the elimination of the distinction between IR and comparative politics. Political theory changes by the integration of new subject matter, but the biggest change there has been its relegation from being political science to a field within it.

This "steady state" of the institution of political science would be a woeful underrepresentation if it were the only story. Like other disciplines in the social sciences, the mainstream is being constantly acted upon by new developments, events, values and methods against which the established institution is, to say the least, resistant. Reactions against the mainstream have generally come from research scholars who have found something wrong in the profession and have tried to address and correct that wrong but have run into opposition that appears to be hostile to criticism and defensive of the oligarchy inevitable in all professional guilds. Many of these reactions are on an individual level, but there have been organized reactions against the steady state, the most recent being "Perestroika." In its call for methodological diversity, Perestroika was only the latest reaction to the preceding movement (if we can combine formal theory, game theory, and rational choice) that had gained prominence through its own attack on aspects of the mainstream that they had found to be incorrect and unscientific. The success of formal theorists made them a prominent part of the mainstream against which Perestroika was reacting to as unworthy to "purport to represent" the American Political Science Association. Each such reaction against the mainstream is mounted as though it was the first to suffer from oligarchy and prejudice in defense of vested interest. The history of political science is the history of a profession in motion, sometimes a motion away from dissented current knowledge, but for the most part a motion away from that which has now become institutionalized knowledge, or in other words, the canon.

Method

Employing the *American Political Science Review* (APSR) as the profession's main journal, we chart the development of political science by focusing on major political scientists as cited in the journal.¹ As such it is a personalized history of the

¹The APSR was not always regarded as the foremost political science journal and even today many question its status and relevance to some fields in political science. Nevertheless, we agree with Lee Sigelman ("The Coevolution of American Political Science and the American Political Science Review," *American Political Science Review* 100:4 (2006), pp. 463–478) that while it may not be a mirror of the field, it is a prism through which we can study our profession. It is not by any means an attempt to present our professional body of

profession. While focusing on the overall picture, we narrow it to a few scholars from whom we could learn where we had been and where we are going. To do so we based our list on the 193 scholars in Glenn H. Utte and Charles Lockhart's *American Political Scientists: A Dictionary*.² In addition, because the *APSR* is the journal of APSA we felt a need to include all twenty-seven past APSA presidents not originally included in the dictionary. Hence, our list consists of 220 political scientists. As Utte and Lockhart point out, this is *a*, not *the*, list of exceptionally valuable contributors to the profession (see Appendix A).³

We constructed a citations dataset for these scholars using JSTOR, a scholarly journal archive that allowed us to search inside *APSR* from 1906 through 2001 by a scholar's name anywhere in the text.⁴ Since we were solely interested in the citation of these major scholars in the work of other political scientists, we counted for each individual the number of citations per year in research articles, excluding book and review pieces.⁵ Last, we did not control for the nature of citations. Surely there are many cases in which a scholar was widely cited but mostly unfavorably. We leave it to the readers to think of their favorite cases. Nevertheless, any citation, even a negative one, is a sign of the profession's engagement with a scholar's argument. For the purpose of this study, and this study alone, there's no such thing as bad publicity.

Over the years the *APSR* has changed in many ways. One of these changes, the number of citations per article, hampers any cross time comparisons between scholars. Due to the fact that the number of citations per article has increased by more than tenfold over the last century, we counted the number of citations per volume for all years and factored this change in the weight of each citation using 2001 as our baseline.⁶

Footnote 1 continued

knowledge or even our industrious production. It is merely a metric which presents us with our professional patterns.

²Glenn H. Utte and Charles Lockhart, *American Political Scientists: A Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

³The share of these scholars' overall citations out of the total *APSR* citations until 2005 stands at approximately 10%. It is a solid numerical measure of their central role in political science.

⁴To capture all possible citation options without any "false positives" we searched each scholar using all possible name combinations (for example, "Dahl, Robert A." OR "R. A. Dahl" OR "Robert A. Dahl" OR "Robert Dahl" OR "Dahl, Robert" OR "Dahl, R") and not just the last name.

⁵We did not exclude each scholar's own *APSR* authored articles from the list, being the former so few in comparison to the number of citations (only a handful of scholars come even close to a 20 to one ratio).

⁶The factor is about ten for the 1910s and four for the 1920s, diminishing to two or less since 1934. We calculated the number of citations per volume by counting the number of citations in the first issue per volume and multiplying it by the number of issues in that volume/year. To avoid yearly spikes we smoothed the factor over a five-year running average (for example, the factor for 1970 equals the number of 2001 citations divided by the average number of citations from 1968 until 1972). Relying on a high factor and having fewer sources to cite from, it is no surprise that the figures for the first cohort are somewhat inflated when compared to the latter. One last note: for the 1910s we observed that the number of citations in the first issue does not represent the rest of the volume's citations. Therefore, for those years we actually counted all citations in the volume.

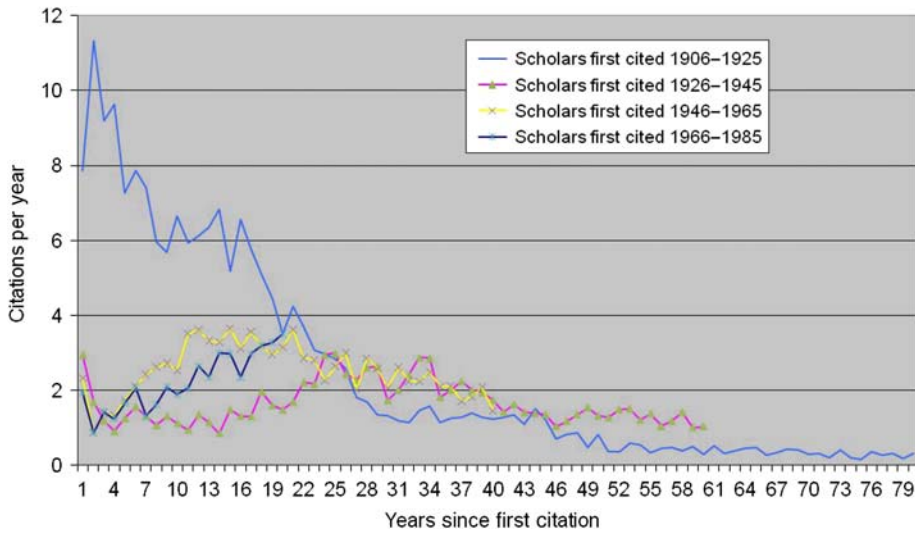


Figure 1. Average Citation “Career” for Scholars by Cohorts Following Their First Citation

Scholars’ Cohorts Aggregate

The first figure is a profile of the “surge and decline” of the average career in their respective twenty-year cohort. The first cohort is attenuated by the absence of an *APSR*, prior to 1906, depriving us of a picture of surge. But assuming most young scholars begin in obscurity, we can compare this readily with the later profiles.

The second and third cohorts present fairly similar profiles of surge and decline.⁷ We take the liberty of treating these profiles as a rise to visibility, or prominence, their “fifteen or twenty-five years of fame,” to be followed by a steady decline. As for the fourth cohort, we cannot conclude if it has yet reached its zenith, but it is quite likely that within the next decade this cohort will follow the same trajectory as its predecessors and begin its decline (more on surge and decline following the next section).

Individual Scholars

Looking at the profiles of individual scholars, we find that each is a reproduction of the average for their cohort and for the entire century of political science. We begin our story with two clearly pre-World War II cases: Charles Beard and Charles Merriam (Figure 2). Beard’s profile has a single peak (surge) and then a rather long tail of decline, with a tick of a survival after World War II, as part of the early American Political Development (APD) revival, including Louis Hartz. Beard had been a founder of the APSA and remained a loyal supporter of it through his service as the twenty-first president of APSA, following Charles Merriam, the twentieth president. But Beard could be considered a driving force within a new force in political science. He virtually resigned from the APSA in frustration against its “hyper-empiricism” and its lack of willingness to engage in ethical criticism and in political reform. But in the process he produced a virtual cottage

⁷The first year spikes are artificial and are caused by the fact that the whole cohort begins with their first citation, making it the only year for which this measurement guarantees at least one citation per author.

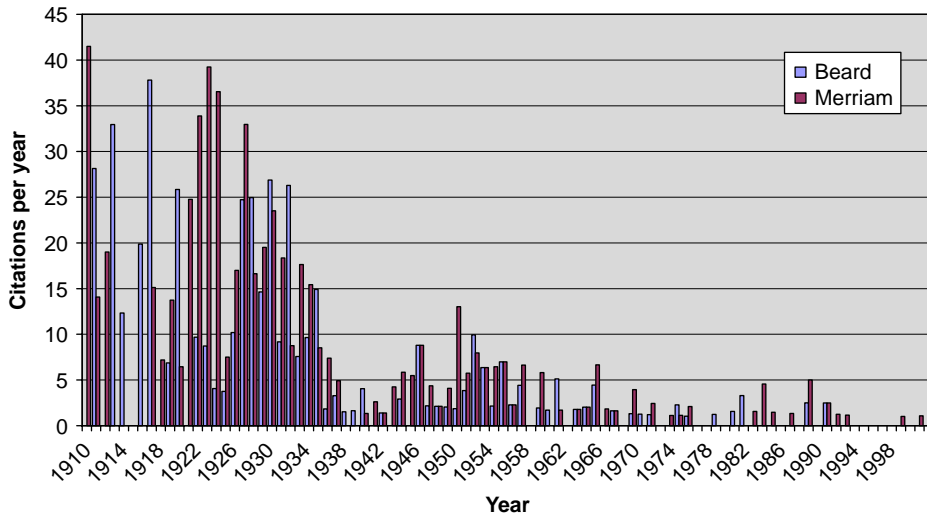


Figure 2. Charles Beard and Charles Merriam

industry of efforts to refute the thesis of his most prominent and controversial book, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States*.⁸

Charles Merriam's profile is very like the others in his principal surge and decline between 1919 and 1937. But his career spanned both of the world wars, and he enjoyed a bit of a revival in the 1950s for reasons quite different from Beard, because of his prominence in supporting the new movement toward behavioralism. He was also important in his role of making the University of Chicago's Department of Political Science the number one department well into the 1950s, before being displaced by Yale. His influence over his students and younger colleagues, including Lasswell and Gosnell, is significant, but overall, his profile does not stand out as exceptional.

The next case, V.O. Key (Figure 3), is the classic in every way. Key started out as a young scholar solidly within the mainstream as it was defined in the 1930s: government institutions, and, within that rubric, public administration. While he was one of the most prominent students of public administration within APSA, soon after World War II he sought to bring political behavior and the study of individual opinions into political science.⁹ Other students of public administration joined this movement and became prominent along with him or shortly thereafter: David Truman (1940), Herbert Simon (1943), Robert A. Dahl (1947), Robert Lane (1954) and William Riker (1964).¹⁰

⁸Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1913).

⁹V.O. Key, "The Lack of Budgetary Theory," *American Political Science Review* 34:6 (1940), pp. 1137–1144.

¹⁰David Truman, *Administrative Decentralization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940); Herbert Simon and Clarence Ridley, *Measuring Municipal Activities* (Chicago: International City Managers Association, 1943); Robert A. Dahl, "The Science of Public Administration: Three Problems," *Public Administration Review* 7:1 (1947), pp. 1–11; Robert Lane, *The Regulation of Businessmen* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1954); William Riker, *Federalism: Origin, Operation and Significance* (Boston: Little Brown, 1964).

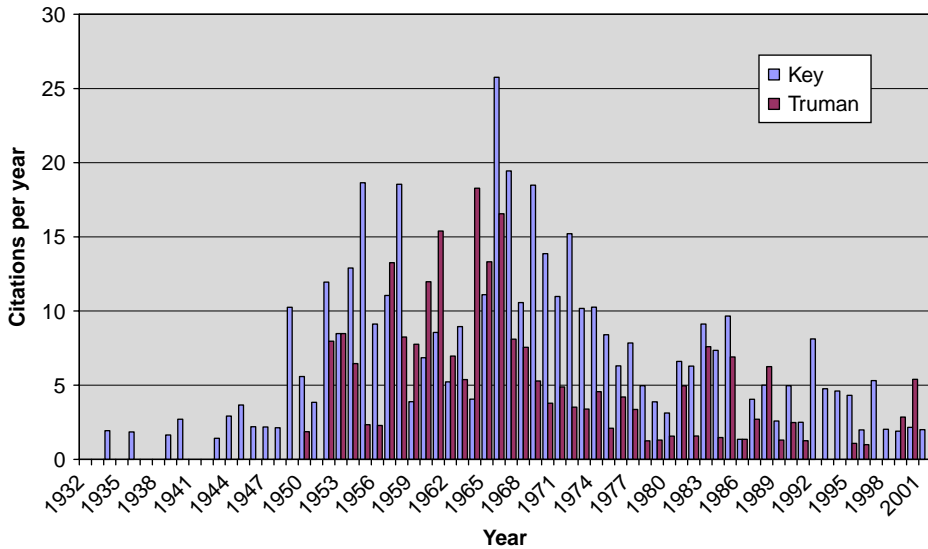


Figure 3. V.O. Key and David Truman

Key's surge to fame, probably the quickest and highest of the surges among all of the political scientists, was accomplished largely through an embrace of the empirical study of democracy. The foundation of his prominence was *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*.¹¹ But the spark that gave him the quick rise to the top of the profession was *Southern Politics*, which many consider the best single work of political science in the twentieth century.¹² His prominence was sustained by the later, significantly improved, editions of *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups*, whose last edition in 1964, coupled with his death in 1963, bumped him upward in a second surge by 1967, to be followed by a long, but certain decline. Even in this he was unusual. He has to be seen as something of a dual figure. He was first and foremost the ultimate successor of Merriam, an empirical scientist working on mainstream institutions and processes, revolving around electorates and democracy. But Key was also a harbinger of the new force that came to be termed the "behavioral revolution," because he saw the need to move beyond the study of aggregate electoral data toward the individual voters and the opinions that drove them. Opinions coupled with elections were falsely represented as "behavior," but that transposition was sufficient to ignite the revolution.

David Truman (Figure 3) was shoulder to shoulder with Key in supporting behavioral science as essential to the coming of age of political science. Both worked through APSA to put political behavior in the forefront of the profession, and both did so by involving themselves in works of scholarship using behavioral methods, even though that was a departure from their career trajectory. Key's valiant effort was *Public Opinion and American Democracy*.¹³ Perhaps it was not his best work, but colleagues of his emphasize that he worked diligently on the data in the then-recently established public opinion survey archive at the University of

¹¹ V.O. Key, *Politics, Parties and Pressure Groups* (New York: Crowell, 1942).

¹² V.O. Key, *Southern Politics* (New York: Random House, 1949).

¹³ V.O. Key, *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York: Knopf, 1961).

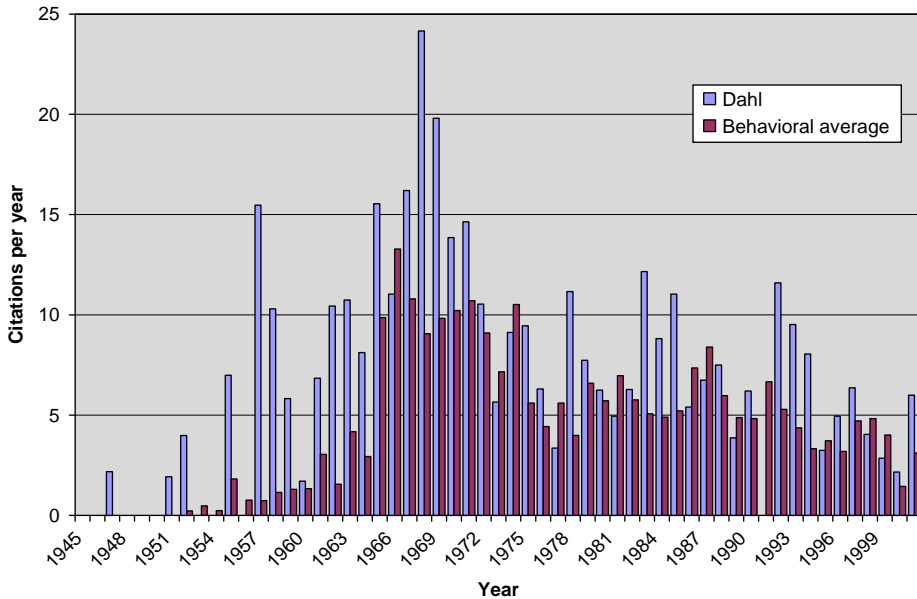


Figure 4. Average Behavioral Scholar Citations and Robert Dahl

Michigan, and he tried to put a normative dimension to the book as well as trying to advance the record number of tested hypotheses. David Truman also failed to live up to his own high standards in his one major behavioral exercise, *The Congressional Party*.¹⁴ However, this in no way diminished the importance and visibility of *The Governmental Process*, which, more than any other single work, brought pluralism into political science both as an empirical focus and as a general theory of democracy.¹⁵ It was later in the 1960s to be criticized as ideology, conservative ideology, but that only served to keep Truman's visibility high for a longer period before its inevitable decline.

The slightly younger Dahl presents almost an identical profile, a career very much like Key's and Truman's (Figure 4). The three of them served as members of the original Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Committee on Political Behavior, and supporting the campaign led by the long-serving APSA Executive Director Evron Kirkpatrick to use behavioral science as the battering ram to open the door for a political science entry into the realm of modern science, as defined by the National Science Foundation. But all three of them jumped off the behavioral bandwagon very soon after the movement itself was in full swing. Dahl was first to jump, by putting his energy in the 1950s into a more scientific and theoretic validation of pluralism. On the empirical level, for his systematic study of "community power structures" he did for pluralism at the local level what Truman had accomplished at the national level. That came with *Who Governs?*¹⁶ but he had already given pluralism a much higher status in the pantheon of political theory in, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*.¹⁷ We will return to Dahl when

¹⁴ David Truman, *The Congressional Party* (New York: Wiley, 1959).

¹⁵ David Truman, *The Governmental Process* (New York: Knopf, 1950).

¹⁶ Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960).

¹⁷ Robert A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956).

we reach Bentley, but we can end with one observation regarding his profile. Dahl extended his decline further than any other scholar, first by living longer and continuing to publish, and second by moving his theoretic position outside cities, outside the US and into another movement that required translation from pluralism to polyarchy, in order to make a larger place once again for the electoral dimension of democracy within the oligarchic phenomena of the pluralist competition among elites. His later work on democracy is far from a behavioral persuasion, but his decline is not attributed to his departure from behaviorism but more likely to the fact that his social-democratic position in the later work was alien to the rise of the most recent movement, rational choice/formal theory.

Given the failure of such eager sponsors as Key, Truman and Dahl (among others) to demonstrate in their own work the value and validity of the “behavioral persuasion,” we follow them with the profiles of the genuinely committed behavioral scholars who made the political behavior movement a success. The choice of one or a few among the many behaviorists was fairly easy because their profiles were almost identical. This we saw by laying one profile over another—for example, Converse, Miller and Stokes (with Campbell eliminated because he was not a political scientist). We saw it again by running an average citation profile for nine of the top figures—Axelrod, Converse, Eulau, Jennings, Lane, Lipset, Miller, Stokes and Verba—and the collectivity was almost identical to the individual profiles (Figure 4). We attribute this in part to the fact that behaviorists adopted the laboratory science collaboration model. But the uniformity of profiles also confirms the more general proposition that each new movement imprints its mentality on its leaders and eventually subsides for reasons to be explained below.

By whatever name, the most recent movement had begun its decline at the apogee of surge, as demonstrated by the decline of William Riker, one of the founding fathers, and Kenneth Shepsle, one of its bright stars (Figure 5). Rational choice is still very much alive, and there are many signs of its impact on the profession. Aside from a few universities with a dominating presence of political scientists of this persuasion, virtually every political science department in the country is recruiting for someone with such training. Another sign is the effort made by publishers of standard textbooks to introduce considerations of this sort to “keep up with the field” in order to meet the competition for adoptions.¹⁸

Explaining Movements’ Surge and Decline

Our main objective thus far was to chart the evolution of political science as a field; we have successfully shown the surge and decline of movements within the profession through its cohorts and some of its most prominent scholars. Yet, what accounts for the rise and fall of these scholars and the movements they represent? Are these the outcome of aging, fads or larger paradigmatic shifts within the profession? We propose three alternative explanations: research performance, canonization and the relationship between the political and political science.

¹⁸ One example here will suffice. Going into their 7th edition, Lowi and Ginsberg added Kenneth Shepsle as a co-author of *American Government—Power and Purpose* (W.W. Norton) entering its 11th edition, and also added Stephen Ansolabehere as a co-author.

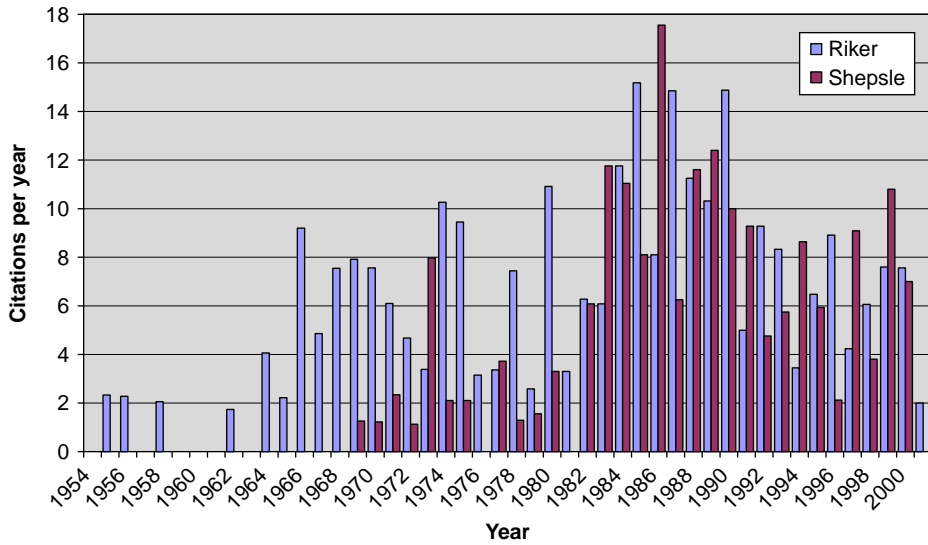


Figure 5. William Riker and Kenneth Shepsle

Research Performance

The most obvious explanation for decline of movements is a decline in research productivity with aging. Six different hypotheses have been put forward to explain reduced research performance among aging academics: *Utility Maximization* (much like marginal utility, with increasing age less attention is given to research as its expected utilization diminishes in comparison to other university tasks), *Seniority Burden* (seniority brings with it an accumulation of tasks and duties that reduce the time available for research), *Cumulative Disadvantage* (the publishing productivity of a cohort declines with age because those who are not rewarded for their research gradually lose the motivation), *Age Decrement* (on average, older scientists function on a lower intellectual and physical level than their younger colleagues), *Obsolescence* (in comparison to older scientists, younger cohorts have an advantage in theory, methods and technological training, which facilitate higher rates of productivity) and *Intellectual Deadlock* (older academics may be reluctant or unable to reorient their research towards new scientific or social problems).¹⁹

Ample evidence indicates that scientists become less productive as they age, even in fully specified models which control for individuals' ability, their motivation, values, and access to resources.²⁰ On average, scientists' productivity reaches a peak in their late thirties and early forties, and then declines.²¹ This is clearly the pattern we observe among our sample (taking into account a few years' lag between publication and mass citation). Since members of our movements,

¹⁹ Svein Kyvik and Terje Bruen Olsen, "Does the Aging of Tenured Academic Staff Affect the Research Performance of Universities?" *Scientometrics* 76:3 (2008), pp. 439–455.

²⁰ Sharon G. Levin and Paula E. Stephan, "Research Productivity Over the Life Cycle: Evidence for Academic Scientists," *The American Economic Review* 81:1 (1991), pp. 114–132.

²¹ Kyvik and Olsen, "Does the Aging of Tenured Academic Staff."

such as behavioralists, or rational choice, who trained in the latest methods and studied the latest theories, came of age at a certain time, it is inevitable that they will age more or less as a group, and thus create the cumulative effect we observe (see behavioralists in Figure 4). To sum up, scholars' productivity by itself may contribute to a cohort decline that may appear as a paradigm shift.

Oblivion, Rejection, and Integration

Perhaps the most obvious reason for the eventual decline in citations is that the author's work has been forgotten or rejected. Much like its sister disciplines, political science is an evolving and vigorous discipline, where new theories and scholars replace their predecessors. Innovation requires the abandonment or the repudiation of prior research. The process may take place decades after the publication of such work. New scholars may prove prior works as erroneous or no longer relevant, which will surely lead to the decline observed earlier.

There is no doubt that this explanation carries some weight and we must acknowledge that some authors do move into oblivion. However, we may draw a different conclusion, and interpret this decline not as sign of the work's irrelevance but as an indication that it has been integrated into the fund of professional knowledge. We are inspired by an observation made by Henry Adams to the effect that an author has not truly arrived until he has been plagiarized.²² Yet, since our metric is author citation, we have no way of knowing if this is the case. To do so, we compared the citation record of our scholars to their work. If their decline rate is similar, we would be able to reject integration and conclude that indeed they have been rejected or forgotten. However, if the authors' decline rate is steeper (faster) than their work, then we can assert that at least the work has outlived the author.

To shed some light on this puzzle we asked a handful of colleagues to go over our list of major scholars and pick the ones which have an iconic political science term associated exclusively with their name. They came up with twenty-four couplings (for example, Lasswell's *Who Gets What, When and How*; Lazzarsfeld's *Cross Pressures*; and Bueno de Mesquita's *War Trap*). Two scholars were excluded from the list as outliers: Greenstein and his Hidden-Hand Presidency yielded unfortunately only one citation each, and Public Administration, associated with Leonard White, was cited 837 times, arguably because it is not a unique term but a subject of inquiry. We were left with twenty-two scholars and twenty-two terms, with 2,284 and 1,083 citations, respectively.

As seen in Figure 6, our story is not solely one of rejection or oblivion. A study of the author-to-term ratio reveals that during the first twenty years following each author's major work citation, most articles which cite the term also cite the author (69.5%). This ratio begins a steady decline to about 30% by the seventh decade (for those remaining authors whose first citation was so many decades ago). To illustrate this further we grouped two scholars and the terms associated

²² "As for piracy, I love to be pirated. It is the greatest compliment an author can have." Worthington C. Ford (ed.), *Letters of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1938), p. 453 (letter, June 5, 1905).

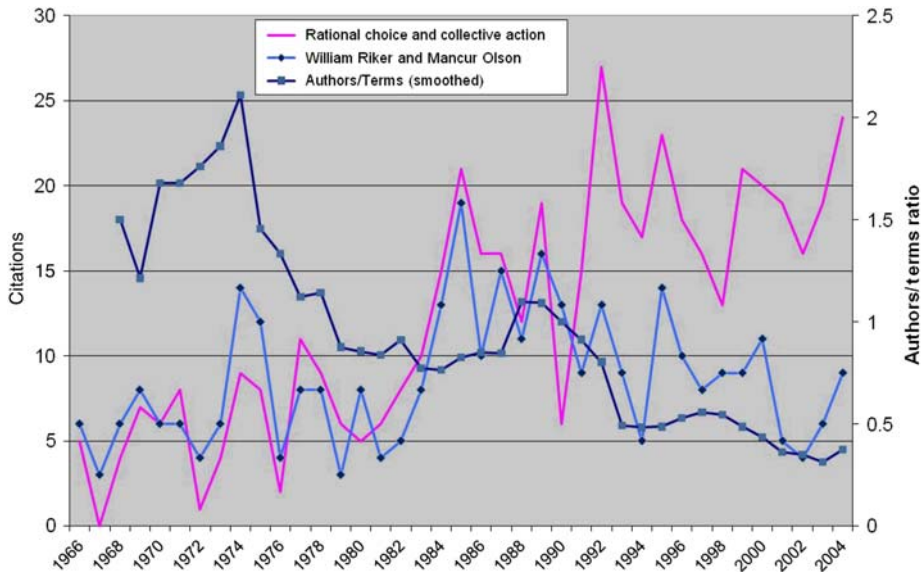


Figure 6. Yearly Citations for Two Scholars, Their Terms and the Scholars-to-Terms Ratio

with them: William Riker and Rational Choice and Mancur Olson and Collective Action (Figure 6).²³ The data indicates that even these two very relevant scholars have experienced a decline. However, this decline is by no means a decline of their work. While oblivion and rejection may already be in progress, their work is actually still on the rise. We observe from the late 1980s a steady decline in the number of times these scholars, and not the work associated with them, are cited.²⁴ This is clearly a sign of integration.

There are two possible mechanisms that can explain this pattern of integration. One possibility is that once a term becomes a synonym of the author there is really no need to cite the author when the term is used. To a large extent Olsen *is* Collective Action just as Gabriel Almond *is* Civic Culture and Richard Fenno *is* Home Style. Repeating the scholar's name becomes to some degree redundant. A second mechanism at work may be cohort displacement. Graduate students who have studied under the "disciples" of one of our scholars, for example Kenneth Shepsle or Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, surely know Riker's old testament, but are much more likely to cite their own teachers, or the work of more contemporary scholars in the field, and not the originator of the term. This process should accelerate as this new cohort goes on to teach their own field seminars and assign their mentors and favorite authors. The evidence presented here is a clear indication that our work outlives or at least outperforms ourselves.

²³ To start off the two at the same year, we have omitted seven citations Riker has prior to Olsen's first citation.

²⁴ The higher than 1.0 ratio in the 1970s indicates that the authors' other works have been cited too.

Politics and Political Science

There is a third explanation for the surge and decline pattern and it involves the state of political science and its relation to the state. The “state” was always an integral part of our professional identity and its evolution.²⁵

The state has always been an integral part of the professional integrity of all institutionalized political science. If a particular state were authoritarian—or worse— political scientists would become lackeys, or servants of the state, like any part of the state bureaucracy. In fact, in the 1970s when the Soviet Union was failing, their political scientists were almost altogether like administration bureaucrats. The same was to a certain extent true of South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s. And it can serve the state in budget, personnel, leadership recruitment, and so forth. Looking further ahead, once freed of state intervention, political science can then be free to criticize the state in ways that serve the state as well as to criticize it and democratize it. This is not a simple two-step relation. A free political science in a free state may become a single adversary, or it may be a follower. But the most free and permissive state will still have a substantial influence on political science and the political scientists who seek advantage through government support. To be specific, take the study of public opinion and electoral behavior. Every free and permissive government has an interest in public opinion and elections, and as a consequence a National Science Foundation (in any Western government) may become a lot more responsive to proposals of the most neutral, purely scientific nature. This is bound to give behavioral science a favorable rating in the competition among all political scientists. Or, for another example, the state may be more supportive of political science departments that train and support such specializations as rational choice and game theory. The state is merely responding to demands for research that is supported by the best of political scientists and their students. This is what led Lowi in his 1991 APSA presidential address to give it the title “How We Become What We Study.”

We open this last section by focusing our attention on two major scholars: Arthur Bentley and Harold Lasswell. Bentley’s profile (Figure 7) is unusual if not unique. It is twin-peaked, or double-belled. This is a bit of poetic license, but the point is sustainable. Bentley created something of a stir during the earliest two decades of political science as a profession, but there is no way to measure his visibility because of the absence of the *APSR*. By the early 1920s, his visibility was sufficient to produce three or four years of attention as measured by citations, but after that flurry of recognition, he disappeared, for reasons that have been fairly well explored in the literature. Bentley was never accepted as a political scientist; in fact he ended up in journalism. But his magnum opus, *The Process of Government*, belongs as an equal to work of Dewey and Beard, who were trying to accomplish the same thing with an equal amount of frustration: to produce “a unity of science and for politics” which had been a prominent goal

²⁵ John G. Gunnell, “The Declination of the ‘State’ and the Origins of American Political Science,” in James Farr, John S. Dryzek, and Stephen T. Leonard (eds), *Political Science in History: Research Programs and Political Traditions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 19–40; John S. Dryzek, “Revolutions Without Enemies: Key Transformations in Political Science,” *American Political Science Review* 100:4 (2006), pp. 487–492.

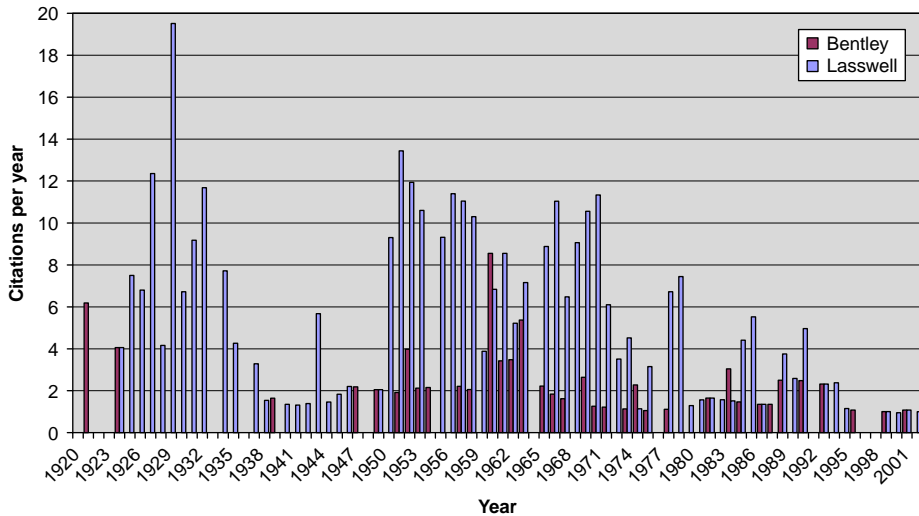


Figure 7. Arthur Bentley and Harold Lasswell

of the founders of political science as a discipline.²⁶ Bentley even collaborated with Dewey through their shared faith that objective, scientific research could produce reforms in the democratic polity. But after World War I, the spirit of reform, Progressivism and the use of the science of politics as an instrument of reform had passed them by. "Bentley stands as the paradigmatic scientific radical of his time."²⁷ To this observation, Gunnell adds that Bentley had a "commitment to social science as a method and tool that could pierce ideology, understand human behavior, and educate the public ... His concern with the philosophical basis of scientific inquiry was linked to the Progressive ideology, but he held fast to the idea that science must precede reform."²⁸

Bentley fell from grace—or was never able to enjoy it—with the advance of *normalcy* under the regime of President Harding and his two Republican successors, a concept which included the rejection of the state but not the rejection in the theoretical realm as Bentley intended it. For Bentley, the state was a false ideology, mere "soul stuff" that blocks science as well as reform, while to the prevailing normalcy regime, the state was the national government which should not be used for social reform ever, at whatever cost. Bentley was buried in the 1920s and was not "unearthed" until a full generation later by David Truman's rediscovery in his 1951 book *The Governmental Process*. And note Truman's self-conscious reiteration of Bentley's title, *The Process of Government*. However—and here is our main point—Bentley's highly original "group theory of politics ... [was] in reality far different from the orientation and concerns that revived it in the 50s and 60s."²⁹ Our contention is that the intellectual environment had changed,

²⁶ Raymond Seidelman, *Disenchanted Realists: Political Science and the American Crisis, 1884–1984* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 66.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 67.

²⁸ John G. Gunnell, *The Descent of Political Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 83.

²⁹ Seidelman, *Disenchanted Realists*, p. 67.

and in a quite specialized way. The post-World War I intellectual environment had become hostile to the reformist spirit that had linked science to society and to political science. That new environment was the new regime with a new state theory, *classical liberalism*. This swept the reformist Bentley off the chart entirely, and it sent a fledgling political scientist like Harold Lasswell (Figure 7) to the study of psychology. Even Lasswell's mentor, Charles Merriam, took his empiricism outside the state to the study of democracy through *The Making of Citizens*.³⁰

By the end of the Republican post-World War I regime, Bentley was long gone from political science, but the intellectual survivors of the 1920s found a new and more hospitable environment for a political science. Merriam, whose profile had gone into a precipitous decline through the 1920s, recovered with a second, albeit smaller surge in the 1930s and again after World War II. The new environment created by the New Deal was institutionalized by its durability during the Republican years of the 1950s, despite the issue made of it by the Republicans. The New Deal was as a consequence a genuine new regime, and there was unquestionably a need to redefine American democracy to come to terms with such established changes as presidential government, a Congress that had delegated most of its powers to the executive, a two-million-strong bureaucracy and a Supreme Court overwhelmingly deferential to the expanded powers and discretion of the national government over the economy, the society and—to reach society—the states; and, with new discoveries in national polls produced by national polling, we had to confront an ignorant, uninformed, and inactive electorate.

There was no one single response to the new American state, but that should not mask the fact that a new regime must have an influence on the intellect along with its influence on the distribution of wealth and power. One palpable case study of the influence of the new regime on the mentality of political science was the revival of Arthur Bentley. His was in effect “the new political science [that] is needed for a new world.”³¹

To extend Bentley's example, let us take another look at the case of Truman and Dahl. Quite clearly Truman's extraordinarily fast rise to preeminence is attributable largely to the one book, *The Governmental Process*. This is not to say that Truman wrote the book as an apology for and a rationale of the “Roosevelt Revolution” and its replacement of parties and elections with groups and oligarchies. Truman found inspiration in Bentley's message for some reason, and we feel that that reason is the changes in the intellectual environment attributable to such things as Congress's first official recognition of “lobbying” in 1946. This environment surely drew Truman away from the earlier mainstream of studying government agencies and agriculture policies. In effect, the environment “selected out” the species of political science Truman was advancing in his new book—through Bentley's resurrection.

Now compare this to Dahl. Dahl's first book was strictly mainstream—*Congress and Foreign Policy*.³² But that was already a move away from his first entry into the mainstream, his article, “The Science of Public Administration: Three

³⁰ Charles Merriam, *The Making of Citizens* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1931).

³¹ Alexis Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Knopf, 1954), Vol. 1, p. 7.

³² Robert A. Dahl, *Congress and Foreign Policy* (New York: Norton, 1950).

Problems.” And in that article he cited the quite mainstream book on public administration whose senior author was Herbert Simon, long before he became one of the precursors of rational choice.³³ Dahl’s step outside the mainstream was in political economy, his sole collaboration with Yale economist and colleague Charles E. Lindblom. *Politics, Economics and Welfare* sold few copies and contributed little to his rise in citations.³⁴ Dahl followed with his first step into pluralism, *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, which made him, not Truman, the theorist of pluralism. Truman was the dominant pluralist in the early to mid-1950s, but within five years Dahl outstripped him because he made pluralism “democratic theory” while Truman was providing most of the empirical grounding. Then Dahl followed with the prize-winning *Who Governs?*, which gave him one of the longest stretches of surge before decline.

In many respects, the conflicts over pluralism contributed more than the conflicts over Vietnam to the first important Perestroika movement, the Caucus for a New Political Science. The Caucus did not get its new political science, but it served an important purpose, by pointing out the unarticulated and often unconscious ideological biases of which political science is capable—especially if it loses its connection to its political context. The conflicts and controversies over pluralism were not limited to Yale versus the rest of the world. There were differences within the community of Yale political scientists of the 1950s. For example, two of Dahl’s graduate students during the 1950s wrote dissertations that rose out of the Dahl experience. Nelson Polsby gave a reasoned and in many ways successful defense of pluralism, in *Community Power and Political Theory*.³⁵ Theodore Lowi did not attempt to stage a full, self-conscious critique of Dahl’s pluralism, but reported serious anomalies in the “Madisonian Model” and its overextension to realms of policy-making to which it did not apply.³⁶

Pluralism is far from the only case study of the Darwinian connection between the character of the state environment and the character of political science, including the profiles of surge and decline. If the New Deal provided the material and the need for a pluralist alternative to democracy, another Darwinian byproduct of the New Deal environment was the behavioral revolution: the embrace of science for policy-making and the embrace of scientific research and development as essential to the economy. There was already going to be a political behavior component of political science. Harold Lasswell’s demonstrated mastery of the dimension of psychology and psychopathology in politics was instrumental in the development of the methods of content analysis that began with war propaganda and continued in relevance through the use of similar methods by democratic states. It led him also to the psychological study of bureaucrats, with a still more directly important contribution, to public

³³ Herbert Simon, Donald Smithberg, and Victor Thompson, *Public Administration* (New York: Knopf, 1950).

³⁴ Charles Lindblom and Robert A. Dahl, *Politics, Economics, and Welfare* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1953).

³⁵ Nelson Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1963).

³⁶ Theodore Lowi, *At the Pleasure of the Mayor—Patronage and Power in New York City, 1898-1958* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1964); Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: Ideology, Policy and the Crisis of Public Authority* (New York: WW. Norton, 1969).

opinion survey research. But none of this moved Lasswell's profile up to its heights until there was an environment that provided a receptive audience. Other political scientists came out of the war impressed by the power and status of psychology, and they were jealous of the leadership of psychology and sociology in panel and random sample survey research. We have already recognized the commitment of several political science luminaries to the post-World War II decade to cultivation of political behavior. But those meager efforts did not create the "behavioral revolution." In this case, it was not only the presence of a modern state and its embrace of science that provided the hospitable environment for political behavior. Beyond that, it was the definition of science as laboratory science and the creation of the National Science Foundation (NSF) in those terms. The NSF money trail was expanded into a limited-access highway as many private foundations joined in. The cost of random sample survey research requires large capital and operating costs that must come from grants, and the laboratory science model condones, indeed mandates, collaboration in research, in analysis, and in the resulting publications. Hothouse cultivation of this new science expedited the growth, and a critical mass was produced by the tremendous factory-like production of the journal articles from a single survey.

That explains the quantity of output. But what can explain the fact that the profiles of behavioralism as a collectivity (Figure 4) and its main figures moved from surge to decline in a pattern very much the same as the other subdivisions of the APSA? Here at least are some worthy speculations. The first and to us the most important possibility is that political behavior has to a very large extent been privatized during the last twenty years or so. The rest of the speculation may follow from that. There continue to be a few academic survey research centers where detached, non-partisan, and genuinely scientific research takes place, with innovations in survey design and sampling technology, and analytic methods, and even with serious inquiries into the theoretical basis of it all. But the political behavior known as "public opinion polling" has become a multi-billion dollar industry financed by the two parties, candidates, newspapers, and the commercial businesses and their advertising companies, who piggy-back important issue questions on their economic behavior surveys, overshadowing the academic side. There is risk of a denigration of the academic research, not only due to the tremendously high priority placed by private clients on the simplest, most ordinary and practical relevant questions. Another threat is the quantity of materials that are available. There is a tremendous amount of data around, and most of it is in the public domain because the proprietary value of the privately financed survey virtually disappears once the elections are over. Thus, although the prominence of political behavior continued to increase through the 1960s, warranting the continued use of the label "behavioral revolution," a gradual decline set in, eventually reducing this segment of political science to simply one more segment of APSA, and it was becoming part of the political science mainstream rather than a contrasting movement. Its prominence was fleeting, its impact permanent.

That pattern was virtually reproduced by rational choice/formal theory, and its surge to prominence is related to state development. A politics-of-knowledge reveals that the surge of rational choice was a mini-movement, in fact with cultish features, because it was not only consonant with the turn of the corner in state

power and practice but also in state theory or ideology. According to Mr. Dooley, Finley Peter Dunne's fictitious character, "The Supreme Court follows the election returns."³⁷ Similarly, we could argue that the APSA follows Leviathan. Judging from Riker's graphic (Figure 5), the political environment of the 1980s was hospitable to rational choice.

During the 1970s, Milton Friedman's political economy displaced that of John Maynard Lord Keynes, and the emergence of the Reagan/Republican coalition was both a cause and a reflection of that transposition of the theory of state. Now the libertarian ideology was even stronger than it was during the Harding-Coolidge-Hoover regime, and there could hardly be an environment more hospitable to rational choice. To some degree, rational choice in political science is to an overwhelming extent a playing out of the pure economic libertarian maximization model. This is not to say that William Riker and associates were following the standard of the Tammany Hall boss, who proposed as his epitaph: "George W. Plunkett, I seen my opportunities and I took 'em." Rational choice already existed, at least in the University of Rochester and Virginia Tech, and they had a happy relationship with the economics departments. Moreover, Riker himself was one of the most un-political, un-opportunist, non-ideological, non-cultish members of this profession. Nevertheless, one of the reasons rational choice became a successful force was its ideological consonance with the politics and ideology of the 1980s.

As seen earlier, rational choice is already confronting its decline, perhaps a longer than average profile of decline, but two developments suggest that it will continue. First, the Republican Party hegemony ended in 2008, after twenty-eight years. Second, it is no longer the Republican Party of Ronald Reagan. The Lincoln/Reagan libertarian wing exists, but the rational choice party of the early 1980s has morphed into a genuine *conservative* party, which favors a strong central government, a strong executive branch and a docile Congress, with a Supreme Court that is highly deferential to the expansion of presidential and executive power. That strong government is not a New Deal type of government; it is a regime that sets national standards, in this case standards of moral rather than rational choice. Thus, as the libertarian dimension of state ideology subsides at least to "second banana" status, it is likely that rational choice will also decline as a movement, toward an ordinary subdiscipline or "organized section" of APSA.

Conclusions

We conclude with two points of summation. First, the pattern of surge and decline is not a "tragedy of political science" at all.³⁸ It is a sign of a healthy and vigorous profession. Innovation in a science should not be easy. Kuhn's thesis should be translated into a prescription for a healthy learned society. Growth comes from persistence, repetition, rejection, organizing, and collaborating, and, for political science, responding to state development and political change in our agendas. This links directly to the second point.

³⁷ Elmer Ellis, *Mr. Dooley's America, a Life of Finley Peter Dunne* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1941), p. 308.

³⁸ David Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).

Political science is uniquely responsible to take the meaning of “PhD” seriously. A Doctor of Philosophy is not a certified philosopher. The PhD is supposed to be a certificate that the holder is in command of the philosophy of that field of scholarship; and that certainly includes a command of a constant awareness of its place in history. We must constantly engage in our segment of the sociology of knowledge, that is, the politics of knowledge. We all admire the old Quaker rule: “Speak truth to power.” Our alternative should be: “Power may not be listening to us, but we should be listening to power.” Why did we choose the phenomena we study? What is our place in the history of our state and others in the world? What are the salient aspects of our state context, and what ideologies are we or our colleagues working under—and how should these be revealed? We should be not only aware but critical of why we ourselves and why others are making the choices we study, and why such substantive fields and methods rise and fall. It is sadly ironic that, unlike good novelists, intellectuals tend not to study the things closest to themselves. For example, there is a rather thin scholarship in the politics of higher education. There is also an extremely thin scholarship on the politics of political science, and, more importantly, the politics of what we choose to study.

This is basically what the Caucus was about and so was Perestroika. Why is it so damn difficult for us to get into the *APSR*? *APSA* responded on each occasion. The Caucus literally produced a new journal *PS: Political Science & Politics*—to discuss issues about the profession. It was not what the movement sought. Perestroika literally produced *Perspectives on Politics* and that was an unintended consequence of Perestroika. In each instance, it was the least *APSA* could do: a pluralist solution to support diversity and transparency at the least possible cost to the *APSA*, the *APSR*, and the mainstream at that point in time.

Neither was a bad adjustment, but neither was the reform that political science needed. The need was and is to recognize the dynamics of our history as a guild and as a science, and to understand the environment of our work and its impact on our thinking about those parts of the environment we are studying. Why did we choose to study what we are studying, and why did we deal with them the way we do? What and who are we as political phenomena, and what role does our mental makeup—our ideology—play on what we are studying? We’ve had more than 2,000 years to appreciate the place of politics in society and our place in it. As long as politics is in motion so will be those who study it. Yet, these motions, or realignments, be it of a regime or a group of professionals, do not require doing away with the old for the sake of the new, if there is something worth preserving. The end of liberalism did not come with Reagan, just as the end of behaviorism did not come with Riker, nor should it. Hence, it is time we study our own political behavior and begin making rational choices about it.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our research assistant Mr. Naor Cohen, without whom this study could not have been completed.

Appendix A: The Scholars' List (by Cohorts—Based on the First Year they were Cited in *APSR*)

1906–1925: Anderson, William; Baldwin, Simeon; Beard, Charles; Bentley, Arthur; Brooks, Robert; Bryce, James; Burgess, John; Catlin, George; Coker, Francis; Corwin, Edward; Cushman, Robert; Dodd, Walter; Dunning, William; Dykstra, Clarence; Fairlie, John; Ford, Henry; Freund, Ernst; Garfield, Harry; Garner, James; George, Alexander; Goodnow, Frank; Gosnell, Harold; Haines, Charles; Hart, Albert; Holcombe, Arthur; Holden, Matthew Jr.; Judson, Frederick; Laski, Harold; Lasswell, Harold; Lieber, Francis; Loeb, Isidor; MacMahon, Arthur; Macy, Jesse; Merriam, Charles; Munro, William; Ogg, Frederic; Overacker, Louise; Pollock, James; Powell, Thomas; Reeves, Jesse; Reinsch, Paul; Rice, Stuart; Rowe, Leo; Sabine, George; Shambaugh, Benjamin; Shaw, Albert; Shepard, Walter; Smith, Munroe; Spencer, Henry; White, Leonard; Willoughby, Westel; Willoughby, William; Wilson, Woodrow; Wright, Quincy.

1926–1945: Almond, Gabriel; Deutsch, Karl; Friedrich, Carl; Herring, Pendleton; Huntington, Samuel; Lazarsfeld, Paul; McClosky, Herbert; Ranney, Austin; Schattschneider, Elmer; Simon, Herbert; Bunche, Ralph; Campbell, Albert; Cole, R. Taylor; Fainsod, Merle; Hallowell, John; Hanes Walton Jr.; Hyneman, Charles; Johnson, Chalmers; Leiserson, Avery; McKinley, Charles; Moore, Barrington, Jr; Moore, John; Morgenthau, Hans; Odegard, Peter; Pennock, J. Roland; Price, Don Jr; Pritchett, C. Herman; Putnam, Robert; Redford, Emmette; Swisher, Carl; Tucker, Robert; Walton, Hanes, Jr.; Ward, Robert; Woolsey, Theodore; Key, V.O. Jr.; Strauss, Leo.

1946–1965: Apter, David; Arendt, Hannah; Banfield, Edward; Barber, James; Barker, Lucius; Beer, Samuel; Berelson, Bernard; Brzezinski, Zbigniew; Bueno de Mesquita, Bruce; Burns, James; Carter, Gwendolen; Converse, Philip; Dahl, Robert; Derthick, Martha; Dexter, Lewis; Downs, Anthony; Dye, Thomas; Easton, David; Eckstein, Harry; Edelman, Murray; Eldersveld, Samuel; Epstein, Leon; Eulau, Heinz; Fenno, Richard. Jr; Gaus, John; Alexander, George; Greenstein, Fred; Hartz, Louis; Hass, Ernst; Hoffmann, Stanley; Huitt, Ralph; Jacobson, Harold; Jones, Charles; Kaufman, Herbert; Kramer, Gerald; Lane, Robert; Lapalombara, Joseph; Lijphart, Arend; Lindblom, Charles; Linz, Juan; Lipset, Seymour; Lowi, Theodore; Macrae, Duncan, Jr; March, James; Matthews, Donald; McConnell, Grant; Miller, Warren; Murphy, Walter; Neustadt, Richard; Peltason, Jack; Polsby, Nelson; Pool, Ithiel de Sola; Pye, Lucian; Riker, William; Rosenau, James; Rossiter, Clinton; Russett, Bruce; Scalapino, Robert; Schubert, Glendon; Shapiro, Martin.; Shklar, Judith; Stokes, Donald; Thompson, Kenneth; Truman, David; Verba, Sidney; Wahlke, John; Waldo, Dwight; Waltz, Kenneth; Walzer, Michael; Weiner, Myron; Wildavsky, Aaron; Wilensky, Harold; Wolfinger, Raymond; Wolin, Sheldon; Wood, Robert.

1965–1985: Aldrich, John; Allison, Graham, Jr.; Axelrod, Robert; Barber, Benjamin; Bates, Robert; Berger, Suzanne; Brady, David; Brady, Henry; Cox, Gary; Elazar, Daniel; Ferejohn, John; Fiorina, Morris, Jr; Galston, William; Gilpin, Robert; Gurr, Ted; Hamilton, Charles; Heclo, Hough; Hirschman, Albert; Inglehart, Ronald; Jacobson, Gary; Jennings, M. Kent; Jarvis, Robert; Katzenstein,

Peter; Katznelson, Ira; Keohane, Robert; King, Gary; Krasner, Stephen; Laitin, David; Levi, Margaret; Mayhew, David; Mckelvey, Richard; Nye, Joseph Jr; Okin, Susan; Olson, Mancur; Ostrom, Elinor; Pateman, Carole; Peterson, Paul; Pitkin, Hannah; Powell, G. Bingham Jr; Rae, Douglas; Shepsle, Kenneth; Sinclair, Barbara; Skocpol, Theda; Sniderman, Paul; Tarrow, Sidney; Weingast, Barry; Zaller, John.