

Political Research Quarterly

2020 Activity Report

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Overview

The 2020 annual report represents the second full year of the *Political Research Quarterly* (*PRQ*) editorial team composed of Seth C. McKee (Editor in Chief, American Politics Field Editor, Oklahoma State University), Toby J. Rider (International Relations Field Editor, Texas Tech University), Frank C. Thames (Comparative Politics and Gender Politics Field Editor, Texas Tech University), Sophia Jordán Wallace (Race, Ethnicity, and Immigration Field Editor, University of Washington) and David Lay Williams (Political Theory and Philosophy Field Editor, DePaul University).

As we certainly expect is the case at most other academic journals, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has posed remarkable challenges. For instance, after passing a milestone of 500 original submissions in 2019, we saw a substantial 12% decline in new submissions over the past year. Specifically, in 2020, *PRQ* received 476 original manuscripts. As the global struggle to return to a normal state of affairs continues, we cannot provide any sure expectations regarding the total number of new manuscript submissions for 2021. The submission volume is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, and hence passing the 500 manuscript mark again, might be a challenging task this year.

We remain committed to maintaining the highest standards of academic work published in *PRQ*. In furtherance of this objective, at the start of our tenure we embraced an editorial model that employs a division of labor based on academic specialization. We see it as an optimal means to improve the quality of published work and efficiency in processing manuscripts. Reflecting the increasing quality of work submitted to *PRQ*, we have reduced the most recent desk rejection rate by 10 percentage points, which comes in at around 41% in 2020. Relatedly, the percentage of accepted papers went from 11% in 2019 to 14% in 2020.

We are particularly pleased with the growth of articles represented in the areas of *Race and Identity* and *Gender*. These fields saw a notable rise in submissions in 2020, accounted for almost 20% of all submissions. We are also excited about the considerable rebound in *Political Theory* articles, which had declined in 2018, rebounded in 2019 and prospered in 2020, with this area comprising over 15% of all published manuscripts. Historically, numerous voices in the WPSA have lodged complaints regarding the considerable presence of theorists in the organization and in conference participation and yet there has been a disconnect with the underrepresentation of this political science subfield in the pages of *PRQ*. Kudos to Political Theory Editor David Williams for his efforts in mobilizing theorists to submit their work to the journal.

We have also started accumulating papers in our *TRENDS* section, which hosts some of the most cutting-edge recently published papers in the political science discipline. We introduced this feature to the journal at the end of 2018 to draw attention to work that appears particularly novel in speaking to the dynamics of contemporary political phenomena. This collection now contains 11 articles, including two published under the *TRENDS* banner in the March 2021 issue.

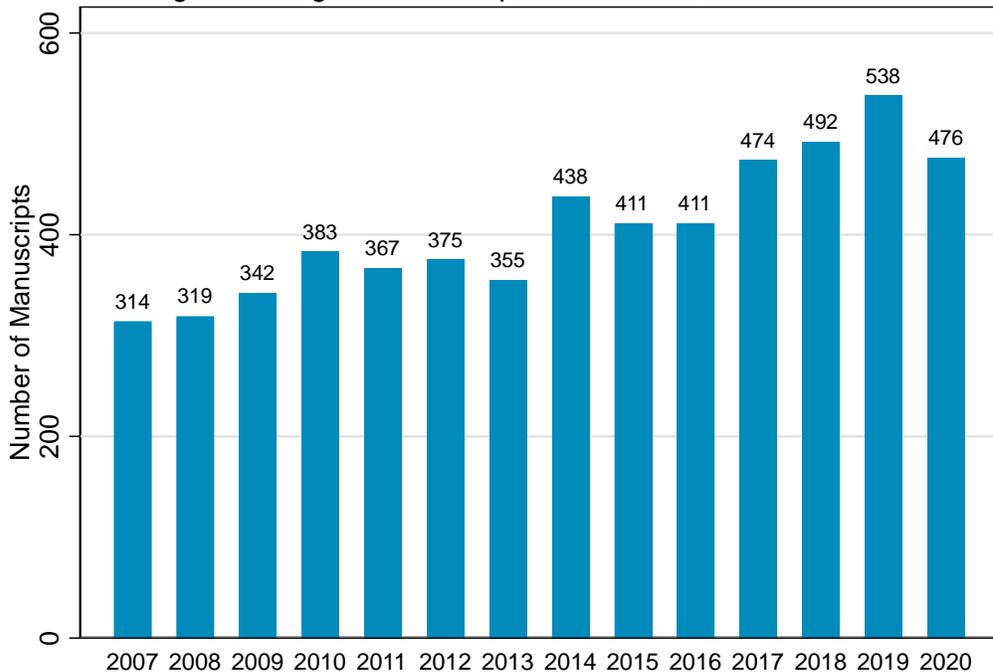
Once again, we want to emphasize our commitment to efficient communication with authors and reviewers. It should be expected that you will hear from us no later than two days, and usually

within twenty-four hours, from the time of your inquiry. In addition, we keep making efforts to further increase *PRQ*'s academic and public visibility. We continue to recognize award-winning articles, host article symposiums, and make use of podcasts to further the reach and impact of our authors. We also consistently use Twitter to promote research published at *PRQ* (over 2,000 followers on *PRQ*'s Twitter site). Finally, if and when the novel coronavirus pandemic subsides, we will once again offer a vibrant reception at the WPSA annual conference and host the *PRQ* editorial board meeting at the American Political Science Association (APSA) conference.

Manuscript Submissions

In 2020, as mentioned above, original¹ submissions declined by 12%. It is the first decline in submissions for the current editorial team and the first decline for the journal since 2015. While we are concerned about a dip in submissions, we also believe that it is the consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic halting researchers' productivity. Sight unseen, for the same reason, we suspect other leading political science journals also experienced a short-term drop in original manuscript submissions. On the other side of the ledger we can attest to the fact that during the pandemic there has been a notable reluctance to accept reviewer invitations. Hence, it is the worst of both worlds; a reduction in scholarly productivity and a decline in the willingness to review papers.

Figure 1: Original Manuscript Submissions, 2007-2020

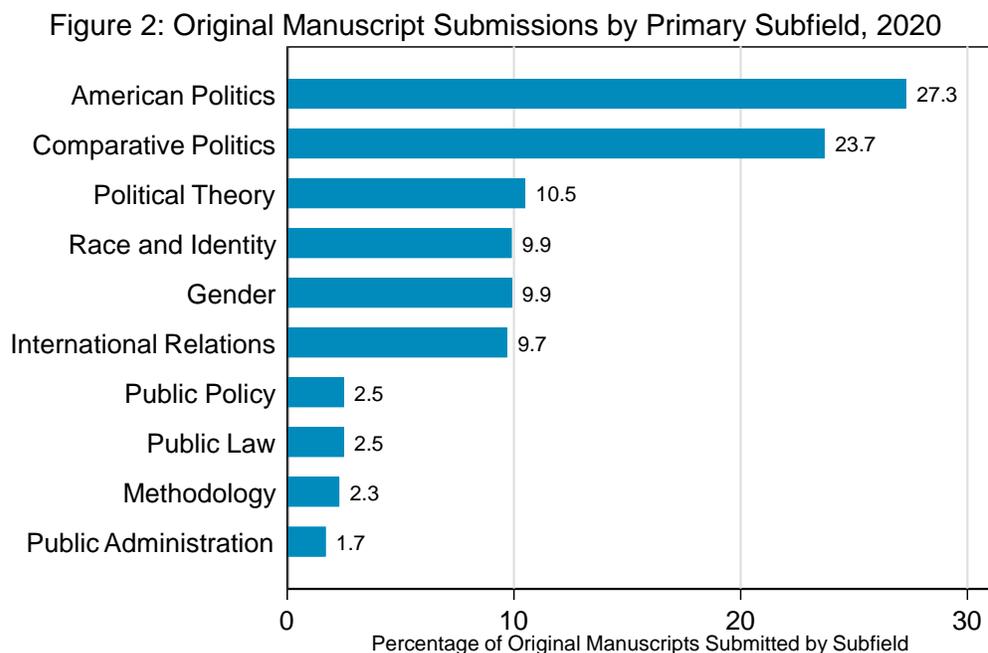


- PRQ* currently uses the following primary field categories to classify manuscripts and reviewers:
- American Politics
 - Comparative Politics

¹ *Original* refers to only new manuscripts and thus excludes all manuscripts that were resubmitted after reviews.

- Gender
- Race and Identity
- International Relations
- Methodology
- Political Theory
- Public Administration
- Public Policy
- Public Law

Accordingly, Figure 2 presents the breakdown of original submissions in 2020.



Number of submitted original manuscripts:
 American Politics - 130, Comparative Politics - 113, Political Theory - 50, Race and Identity - 47, Gender - 47, International Relations - 46,
 Public Policy - 12, Public Law - 12, Methodology - 11, Public Administration - 8.

Based on the descriptive statistics provided in Figure 2, *PRQ* remains a journal heavily represented by the *American Politics* and *Comparative Politics* subfields. Together these fields constituted 51% of all original submissions (compared to 58% in 2019). In 2020 the proportion of manuscripts in the *American Politics* subfield decreased from around 34% in 2019, to 27% in 2020. The number of submissions decreased from 183 in 2019 to 130 in 2020. The proportion of submissions in the *Comparative Politics* subfield remained similar to 2019 at 24%, but the number of submitted manuscripts decreased from 128 to 113.

We are pleased with the increasing number of submissions in the *Gender*, as well as *Race and Identity* categories, which together accounted for 20% of all submissions. For comparison, these categories accounted for 13% of all submissions in 2019. The number of submitted manuscripts for these categories increased from 71 in 2019 to 94 in 2020. The increase is even more

impressive considering that unlike in 2019, when we had many submissions to a highly successful Mini-Symposium (“The Role of Gender in the 2018 Midterm Elections”), in 2020 we had no specific symposium that would inflate the submissions for subfields. In sum, we are thrilled that important work in the gender and race/identity subfields is increasingly finding its way into the pages of *PRQ*.

Additionally, we are also pleased with the steady stream of *Political Theory* manuscripts, which in 2020 accounted for 10.5% of all submissions; up from 8.7% in 2019. Meanwhile, the *International Relations* field saw a slight decline from 10.4% in 2019 to 9.7% in 2020, with the number of submitted manuscripts dropping from 56 to 46.

Finally, we would like to emphasize that while *PRQ* receives most of its submissions from the United States, we also receive many manuscripts from around the world. In 2020, 63% (302 manuscripts) of all original submissions came from the United States. During this same period, *PRQ* received 14 manuscripts from Canada, 13 from China, 12 from Germany, 11 from South Korea, 10 from the Netherlands and 10 from the United Kingdom. Together, scholars from these countries accounted for around 14.7% of total original (new) submissions. Also, between 5 and 9 submissions came from Norway, Israel, Japan, India, Turkey, Spain and Sweden. In the aggregate, these countries accounted for approximately another 10% of total original submissions in 2020.

Processing Times

The current editorial team employs a division of labor based on academic specialization. This model has already improved efficiency and reduced manuscript processing times in some stages. Figure 3 provides data on the average number of days between manuscript submission and editorial decisions for both original and revised manuscripts.

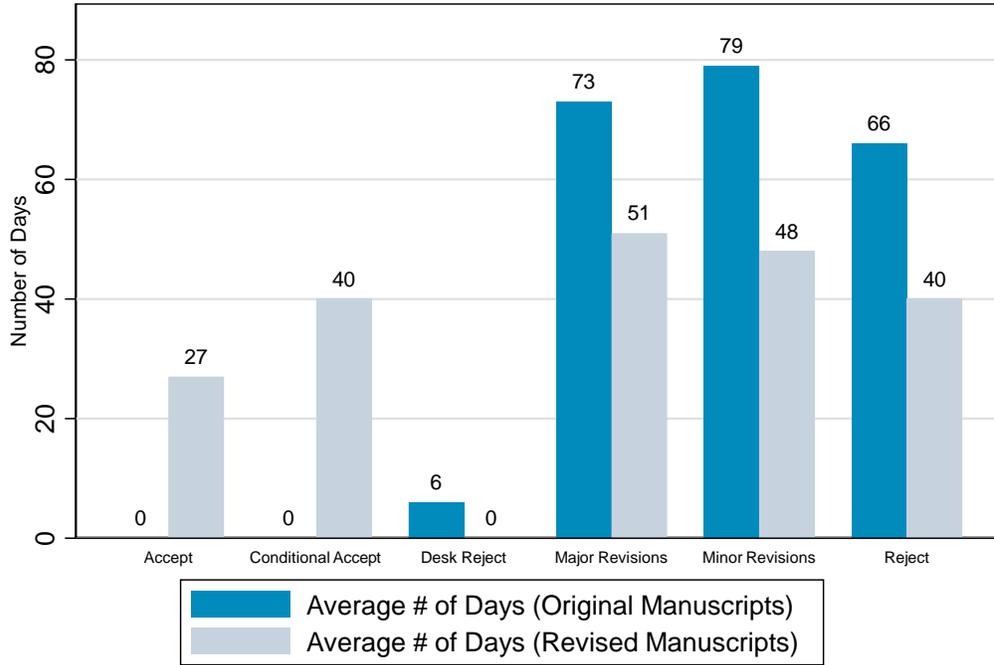
In 2020, the average processing time for desk rejected manuscripts was 6 days, while the average processing time for all original manuscripts receiving external review was 66 days in the case of rejections, and between 73 (major revisions) and 79 (minor revisions) days when authors are invited to make revisions.

Our time of decision for revised manuscripts that are accepted was 27 days and 40 days for conditionally accepted manuscripts. Our time to decision for major revisions was 51 days, minor revisions was 48 days, and rejection was 40 days (a sharp improvement from 75 days in 2019). Overall, the processing times were mostly similar to those in 2019.

Our editorial team is committed to trimming manuscript processing time upon initial submission by being selective regarding papers considered worthy of peer review. In addition, when a manuscript is sent out for review, we are of course to a heavy degree, at the mercy of reviewers submitting timely reviews. Therefore, we closely monitor all reviewers who are over 30 days late in submitting their reviews and contact them directly to encourage submission of their report. When we are unable to make a decision about a manuscript after 60 days due to an overdue

report, we either use the existing reviews or reach out to editorial board members or find new reviewers to judge the manuscript in a timely fashion.

Figure 3: Average Number of Days From Submission to Decision, 2020



Currently (as of March 2021), we have about a four and a half issue backlog. Thus, manuscripts accepted today (in March) will be published in the March 2022 issue at earliest. We are currently accepting manuscripts at a rate that precludes us from generating an excessive backlog. Nevertheless, without increasing the journal page limit, reducing the current backlog seems highly unlikely. Once manuscripts have been uploaded by journal staff to SAGE for copyediting, they typically appear on SAGE’s Online First platform within four to six weeks. As a result, although it may take several months for an article to appear in print, the digital version is available for researchers to access and to cite well in advance of the designated printed issue. All of this said, SAGE currently allows for 1,000 total hard copy printed journal pages a year, which means that a low acceptance rate goes hand-in-hand with increasing the quality of published work while also keeping the article backlog under control. However, given the extant backlog, we have requested an additional 250 printed annual pages from SAGE, but have not received a decision yet.

Manuscript Decisions

Up to March 13, 2021 the *PRQ* editorial team made 612 decisions on manuscripts submitted since the start of 2020, and out of these, 468 decisions were made on original submissions and 144 on reviewed articles. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the decisions made for original submissions received in 2020, and Table 2 does the same for revised submissions. It is worth mentioning that the desk rejection rate decreased from 51.2% in 2019 to 40.8% in 2020. The

overall acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted in 2020 was around 14% (up from 11% in 2019).

Table 1. Decision for Original Submissions, 2020

Manuscript decision	Number of Manuscripts	Percentage of Manuscripts
Desk Reject	191	40.81%
Reject	176	37.61%
Minor Revisions	10	2.14%
Major Revisions	91	19.44%
<i>Summary</i>	<i>468</i>	<i>100%</i>

Table 2. Decision for Revised Submissions, 2020

Manuscript decision	Number of Manuscripts	Percentage of Manuscripts
Accept	85	59.03%
Conditional Acceptance	23	15.97%
Minor Revisions	20	13.89%
Major Revisions	13	9.03%
Reject	3	2.08%
<i>Summary</i>	<i>144</i>	<i>100%</i>

Figure 4 shows the distribution of articles accepted in 2020 by field. Not surprisingly, the trend in proportions of accepted manuscripts is highly similar to the distribution of article submissions shown in Figure 2. In 2020 most manuscripts were accepted in the *American Politics* field at 36.9% (for comparison, it was 31.8% for manuscripts accepted in 2019), followed by *Comparative Politics*, which accounted for 21.4% of all accepted articles (23.5% in 2019).

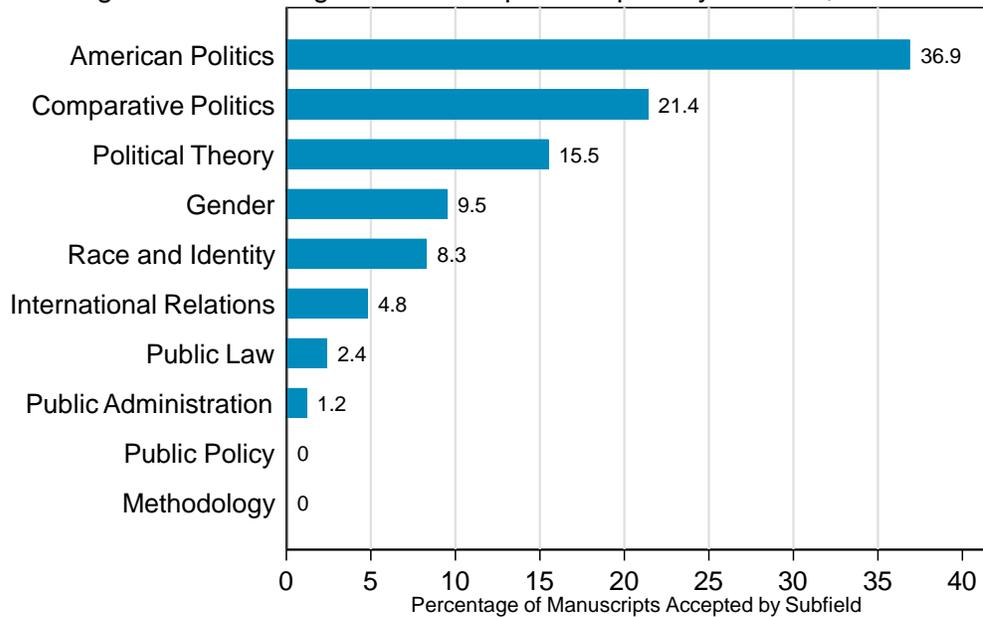
We are very pleased with the share of accepted manuscripts in the *Race and Identity* and *Gender* fields. Together they accounted for 17.8% of all accepted manuscripts (consistent with 18.8% in 2019; 15 manuscripts accepted in 2020, similar volume to 2019 when 16 manuscripts were accepted). This growth in the share of published manuscripts for these fields is indicative of the increasing number of submissions and their quality in both areas.

We are also satisfied with the increase in the share of accepted *Political Theory* manuscripts that accounted for 15.5% of the total in 2020 as compared to 11.8% in 2019 and 7.8% in 2018. In 2020, 13 manuscripts were accepted, compared to 10 accepted manuscripts in 2019.

The proportion of accepted manuscripts in *International Relations* declined from 9.4% in 2019 to 4.8% in 2020. In 2020, 4 manuscripts were accepted compared to 8 manuscripts in 2019. In 2018, *International Relations* accounted for 14.6% of all accepted manuscripts. We are not sure what is behind the steep decline in accepted papers in this area, and hence it is something we need to better monitor. There are numerous *International Relations* journals and therefore *PRQ* may be getting lost in the shuffle, but this trend seems real and needs to be halted.

There were no manuscripts accepted in the areas of *Public Policy* and *Methodology* in 2020, but this is primarily because of the very low total number of submissions received in these areas (12 new submissions in the former subfield and 11 in the latter subfield).

Figure 4: Percentage of Manuscripts Accepted by Subfield, 2020



Number of accepted manuscripts: American Politics - 31, Comparative Politics - 18, Political Theory - 13, Gender - 8, Race and Identity - 7, International Relations - 4, Public Law - 2, Public Administration - 1.

Reviewer Awards

To thank *PRQ* reviewers for their time and effort, SAGE continues to offer 60 days of free access to all titles on the SAGE Journals Online First platform, as well as a 25% discount on SAGE books.

Following *PRQ* custom, we annually recognize our Top 20 Reviewers, each of whom receives a free one-year subscription to *PRQ*. The Editor in Chief will also send a message of recognition to each top reviewer's department chair.

The Top 20 for 2020 are (in alphabetical order):

Sara Angevine	<i>Whittier College</i>
Phillip Ayoub	<i>Occidental College</i>
Daniel Biggers	<i>University of California, Riverside</i>
Apolonia Calderon	<i>University of Maryland</i>
Michael Findley	<i>University of Texas</i>
Bernard Fraga	<i>Emory University</i>
Tom Ginsburg	<i>University of Chicago Law School</i>
Jon Green	<i>Ohio State University</i>
Jake Grumbach	<i>University of Washington</i>
Alex Keena	<i>Virginia Commonwealth University</i>
Robert Lupton	<i>University of Connecticut</i>
Tofigh Maboudi	<i>Loyola University Chicago</i>
Natalie Masuoka	<i>University of California, Los Angeles</i>
Marc Meredith	<i>University of Pennsylvania</i>
Julie Moreau	<i>University of Toronto</i>
Ian Ostrander	<i>Michigan State University</i>
Jessica Schoenherr	<i>University of South Carolina</i>
Wayne Steger	<i>DePaul University</i>
Andrew Taylor	<i>North Carolina State University</i>
Ana Catalano Weeks	<i>Harvard University</i>

Journal Impact

We are pleased with the influence of *PRQ*. In 2019 most of the important metrics kept improving (see Table 3). The Journal Citation Report (JCR) Impact Factor is one commonly used measure of the impact of academic journals. *PRQ* has seen steady growth in this measure over time, with a steep increase in 2017. In 2019, the 2-year impact factor slightly declined to 1.362 (as compared to 1.581 in 2018). However, regarding the more important 5-year impact factor, it keeps steadily increasing and rose to 2.287 (from 2.050 in 2018). *PRQ*'s ranking among other political science journals (by 2-year impact factor) was 92 out of 181 journals. In 2019, citations rose by 12% to 3,460. In terms of total citations, *PRQ* ranks 24 out of 181 political science journals.

Table 3. *PRQ* Impact Factor, 2007-2019

Year	Total Cites	Impact Factor	5-Year Impact Factor	Journal Ranking (by Impact Factor)
2007	636	0.486	0.902	56/93
2008	887	0.75	1.294	39/99
2009	963	0.915	1.219	36/112
2010	1187	1.018	1.249	40/141
2011	1189	0.921	1.298	45/149
2012	1323	1.044	1.281	48/157
2013	1550	0.985	1.460	58/157
2014	1831	1.149	1.561	47/161
2015	1956	1.116	1.539	59/163
2016	2406	1.053	1.816	83/165
2017	2818	1.523	1.988	65/169
2018	3089	1.581	2.050	75/176
2019	3460	1.362	2.287	92/181

Source: Journal Citation Report 2019

Appendix A

PRQ EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD - 2020

Sarah Anderson	<i>University of California, Santa Barbara</i>
Sarah F. Anzia	<i>University of California at Berkeley</i>
Antoine Banks	<i>University of Maryland</i>
Tiffany Barnes	<i>University of Kentucky</i>
Andrea Benjamin	<i>University of Missouri</i>
Richard Boyd	<i>Georgetown University</i>
Royce Carroll	<i>University of Essex</i>
Jason Casellas	<i>University of Houston</i>
Cornell W. Clayton	<i>Washington State University</i>
Bridget Coggins	<i>University of California, Santa Barbara</i>
Michael H. Crespino	<i>University of Oklahoma</i>
Mary G. Dietz	<i>Northwestern University</i>
Elisabeth Ellis	<i>University of Otago</i>
Jennifer Fitzgerald	<i>University of Colorado</i>
Megan Ming Francis	<i>University of Washington</i>
Danny Hayes	<i>George Washington University</i>
Clarissa Hayward	<i>Washington University in St. Louis</i>
Erik Herron	<i>West Virginia University</i>
Mirya Holman	<i>Tulane University</i>
Mala Htun	<i>University of New Mexico</i>
Michele Keunzi	<i>University of Nevada, Las Vegas</i>
Ari Kohen	<i>University of Nebraska</i>
Suzanne M. Leland	<i>University of North Carolina, Charlotte</i>
Amanda Licht	<i>Binghamton University</i>
Gregory Love	<i>University of Mississippi</i>
Frank Lovett	<i>Washington University in St. Louis</i>
Robert Lupton	<i>University of Connecticut</i>
Tofiq Maboudi	<i>Loyola University Chicago</i>
Anthony J. Madonna	<i>University of Georgia</i>
J.S. Maloy	<i>University of Louisiana</i>
Elizabeth Markovitz	<i>Mount Holyoke College</i>
Jonathan Marks	<i>Ursinus College</i>
Angie Maxwell	<i>University of Arkansas</i>
Amy G. Mazur	<i>Washington State University</i>
Michael McKoy	<i>Wheaton College</i>
Jeanette Mendez	<i>Oklahoma State University</i>
Jamila Michener	<i>Cornell University</i>
Michael Minta	<i>University of Minnesota</i>
Diana O'Brien	<i>Rice University</i>
Ian Ostrander	<i>Michigan State University</i>
Erica Owen	<i>University of Pittsburgh</i>
Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz	<i>University of Rhode Island</i>

Efrén Pérez	<i>University of California, Los Angeles</i>
Kelly Rader	<i>Yale University</i>
Jordan Ragusa	<i>College of Charleston</i>
Ora John Reuter	<i>University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee</i>
Emily Hencken Ritter	<i>Vanderbilt University</i>
James M. Scott	<i>Texas Christian University</i>
Paru Shah	<i>University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee</i>
Yael Shomer	<i>Tel-Aviv University</i>
Shane Singh	<i>University of Georgia</i>
Zeynep Somer-Topcu	<i>University of Texas at Austin</i>
Dara Strolovich	<i>Princeton University</i>
Sharece Thrower	<i>Vanderbilt University</i>
Alvin Tillery	<i>Northwestern University</i>
Susan H. Whiting	<i>University of Washington</i>
Jennifer Wolak	<i>University of Colorado Boulder</i>
Antoine Yoshinaka	<i>University of Buffalo</i>
Amy Yuen	<i>Middlebury College</i>
Chris Zepeda-Millán	<i>University of California, Los Angeles</i>