

## Analytical pluralism

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The articles in this issue represent the diversity of scholarship that the journal and association embodies. Pluralistic in method, theory, and scope, the studies within these pages encompass a robust cross-section of the multidisciplinary that is the journal's hallmark. This issue contains a mix of policy analyses and empirically based studies that utilize legal and policy analysis, nonverbal coding, and experimental methods to shed light on topics ranging from physician aid in dying, to the regulation of genetically modified food, to candidate displays during the 2008 primary debates.

The issue opens with a trenchant review of Montana's legalization of physician aid in dying, which allows terminally ill adults to hasten death by self-administering a lethal dose of drugs prescribed by a physician. Montana recently joined Oregon and Washington as the only states in the nation to allow this procedure. As Arthur Svenson explains, the legal justification for physician aid in dying stems from the Montana Supreme Court's finding that state law, allowing terminally ill Montanans sustained by life support to withdraw such treatment and die, discriminates against terminally ill Montanans *not* sustained by life support who seek death. Svenson asks if other states that criminalize assisted suicide yet enumerate constitutional equal protection guarantees could follow suit.

The law and policy thread continues in Anton Wohlers' examination of policies designed to regulate genetically modified food in the U.S., Canada, and EU—and the varying risk perceptions associated with modified food in different political cultures. From close document and public opinion analysis, Wohlers finds that policymakers in North America have modified their existing regulatory frameworks to govern genetically modified food within an environment of relatively high uncertainty tolerance (i.e., openness to novelty). By contrast, low uncertainty tolerance within European Union member states has contributed to the establishment of elaborate and stringent regulatory policies governing genetically modified food in these countries.

In her piece reflecting on California's response to federal policy on human embryonic stem cell (hESC) research during the Bush administration, Eileen Burgin

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examines how, through the passage of Proposition 71 in 2004, state innovation in a key policy arena can fill a void created by federal disengagement. Relying on a series of interviews with key actors in Sacramento and Capitol Hill, Burgin concludes that even with the freeing up of new federal funds for hESC research in the Obama years, California should be able to mesh its program with federal priorities and remain a prime mover in the area.

Empirical approaches to biopolitical research are represented by two additional articles—an experimental study of reactions to ambitious decision makers by Christopher Larimer and Rebecca Hannagan, and nonverbal analysis of the expressive displays associated with candidate humor during presidential primary debates by Patrick Stewart. Larimer and Hannagan find that observers tend to equate ambition for decision-making authority with self-interested, unfair, “male” behavior. Female decision makers were not perceived to be as self-seeking as male decision makers, and decisions made by females were less likely to be rejected. With his coding of primary debates, Stewart finds candidate humor functions as a nuanced communicative device that strengthens bonds between leaders and followers, albeit at the expense of opposition figures and groups.

Rounding out the journal's contents is a conference report on the 20<sup>th</sup> Biennial Congress of ISHE, the International Society for Human Ethology. This fascinating and well-run meeting, held at the University of Wisconsin—Madison last summer, was attended by several APLS members who presented their research and renewed interdisciplinary ties. Additionally, the issue features three book reviews of titles ranging from democratic nation building to genetics and life insurance.

With this issue I am pleased to announce the addition of Steven Peterson to the editorial board. Steve's ties to the association and journal date back to its earliest days and we welcome his editorial judgment and perspective. Reflections on early biopolitics scholarship and the future of the association and field are explored in a series of essays in the next issue of the journal, which showcases an APLS “founders” theme. Stay tuned for that and more.

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