

Cast Your Vote on the APS Name!

Would the mission, members, and meaning of APS be better served as the Association for Psychological Science?

At the direction of the APS Board, all members will receive a ballot this month on which they will cast their vote on whether APS should remain the American Psychological Society or instead become the Association for Psychological Science.

The name of APS has been discussed almost since APS was established. The most recent discussion was prompted by a letter from APS Fellow Carol Tavris suggesting it was time for a name change. A February *Observer* article soliciting member views netted more than 50 letters on the subject.

Ballots were sent out in late August and are due back to the APS office by September 30th. According to the bylaws of the Society, two-thirds of those responding would have to be in favor of the change in order to make it a reality. Should the membership endorse the name change, it will take effect in 2000.

To Change Or Not To Change

When APS gets more than 50 letters regarding a topic, it is the responsibility of the Board to take notice and this past spring, as you saw in the past few issues of the *Observer*, APS members had a lot to say on the topic of changing the name of APS from the American Psychological Society to the Association for Psychological Science.

At its meeting in June, noting the overwhelmingly positive response to the idea of a change, the APS Board endorsed sending the change to the APS membership for vote where a two-thirds majority vote would make it a reality. Members should receive ballots this month and we encourage everyone to cast their vote. Here I will present some of the arguments the Board has heard and read in favor of changing the name of APS.

Clarify the Focus

The name "Association for Psychological Science" says exactly what it is that APS stands for: to promote, protect, and advance the interests of *scientifically oriented* psychology in research, application, and the improvement of human welfare. In addition, by putting the words "psychological science" in the name, it also reaffirms to the often unaware public that there is a *science* to psychology while emphasizing the organization's commitment to scientific research and the 'giving away' of it. And the change won't stop anyone who just wants to refer to us as APS.

Eliminate Confusion

The similarity of the current APS name with that of the American Psychological Association causes much confusion in and out of the field. For those outside of the field, the distinction is one without a difference. To borrow an example from my colleague Carol Tavris, who proposed the change, if there was an American Medical Association and an American Medical Society, what possible difference could the public see in them? Even within our own field, there is often unintentional confusion between the two organizations. On a daily basis, the APS office receives a number of calls intended for APA and in renewing their dues, some APS members have actually made their APS dues check out to APA.

International Appeal

By taking the word "American" out of the name of the organization, APS may broaden its appeal to international scientists. APS's current international audience numbers less than 1,000, but we expect that there are many more psychologists outside of the United States who would be interested in the benefits and representation APS has to offer.

APS is now entering its second decade and it is time to think big about the direction we want the organization to take—in its activities, advocacy, publications, and direction. Perhaps that includes welcoming a new name, the Association for Psychological Science, that better reflects all these things. That is up to the members now to decide. Please cast your votes and mail your ballots back to APS by September 30th. The results will be announced later this fall.

ELIZABETH LOFTUS

PAST PRESIDENT, AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

I am writing in opposition to the proposal that APS change its name.

Learning of the proposal put me in mind of that old comment by Noam Chomsky, who wrote of "political science" (he might have had "cognitive science" in mind as well), that the first sign that a discipline isn't scientific is that it calls itself a science.

Psychology is a science. There is no non-scientific psychology. There may be nonscientific psychotherapy practiced by non-scientific psychotherapists, but there is no non-scientific psychology, because psychology is a science by definition. APS is a society of psychologists, in the same way that the American Physical Society is a society of physicists and the American Chemical Society is a society of chemists.

Of course, there are two different organizations claiming the label "psychological," the APA and APS. This does indeed cause confusion, but this confusion will not be remedied by changing our name to the Association for Psychological Science.

Anyone who wants to clarify the differences between the APS and the APA should be told that APS is an association exclusively for scientists, including science-oriented clinical practitioners, while APA also emphasizes the guild interests of psychologists in professional practice—interests which sometimes conflict with those of scientists. APS represents no guild interests (and if it did there would no longer be any difference between it and APA).

Some supporters of the proposal have drawn an analogy between the APA and the AMA. However, the analogy strikes me as inappropriate. Medicine is a (science-based) profession, not a science. There is no confusion in anyone's mind between AMA as a professional guild and the scientific societies in biology, genetics, pharmacology, etc. which promote basic and applied science as their exclusive activities.

Other supporters have objected to the term "American," on the grounds that it seems to exclude our Canadian and Latin American colleagues. But then again, Canada is part of North America, and Latin America is in the Americas as well. We are not talking about the "United States Psychological Society" here.

But even if we were, I suspect that the vast majority of members joined APS because they wanted a professional organization that would focus its activities, including its advocacy activities in Washington, DC, exclusively on science and scientific issues. Within psychology, the various national organizations are set up to look to their own national policy interests. APS was convened because many of us had doubts about APA's effectiveness in this regard, by virtue of the conflict between scientific and guild interests alluded to above.

Psychology is already effectively organized at the international level by the International Union of Psychological Sciences, Pan-American Psychological Association, and the like. There is no reason for APS to play this role, except as a contributing member.

The American Psychological Society is a fine name, and it has a fine ring to it. There is no reason to change our name to the Association for Psychological Science. By the way, there is no contradiction between my views and my editorship of a journal called *Psychological Science* (*PS*). In my view, the title of *PS* is a play on words: *PS* is expressly modeled on the journal *Science*, which for some reason publishes relatively little psychology. As such, "We publish the psychology that *Science* should be publishing."

JOHN KIHLMSTROM

EDITOR, *PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE*