

The Profession

Bridging a Disciplinary Divide: The Summer Institute in Political Psychology*

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Like many other social scientists, political scientists often incorporate theories and findings from other academic disciplines into their research. In fact, many research questions posed by political scientists can be answered adequately only by linking political science theories with insights from other disciplines. How, for example, do voters decide which candidate to support on election day? We could answer this question by focusing only on the economic interests of the voters. Our answer becomes more complete, however, if we also consider the influence of political attitudes, social characteristics, the way in which information about the candidates is processed, and the impact of the political context on vote choice. Or, how do leaders make decisions in the foreign policy domain? If we limit our focus to the constraints in the international environment, we lose the explanatory power gained by examining the beliefs, images, and motivations of decisionmakers; the impact of group dynamics; the effects of bureaucratic politics; and strategies for mobilizing support, or dealing with opposition, among various types of publics.

Interdisciplinary research in political science takes many different forms. Of the 33 organized sections of the American Political Science Association, 10 are explicitly interdisciplinary. Political psychology—an approach which focuses on the individual level of analysis and draws upon psychological theories to un-

derstand political phenomena—is one of the largest of these sections and the use of psychological theories is common among all subfields of political science. Of the articles that were published in the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, and *The Journal of Politics* between 1991 and 1993, just over 20% were political psychological in focus (Rahn and Sullivan, forthcoming).¹ The popularity of political psychology research in political science is not surprising given the considerable overlap in the research topics among political scientists and psychologists. Scholars from both disciplines have long been interested in exploring, for example, attitudes, decision making, conflict resolution, socialization, social identity, and leadership.

At least four obstacles face political scientists interested in bridging the disciplinary divide and doing research in political psychology, either independently or in collaboration with psychologists. The first concerns the creation of a common language and a set of definitions for the phenomena under study. The second revolves around the degree to which findings are generalizable across situations, groups, institutions, cultures, and time. The third focuses on the kinds of methods and data that are considered appropriate to achieving reliable and valid findings. And the fourth involves training.

Attempts at bringing together cross-disciplinary groups of political scientists and psychologists (see

Krosnick and Hermann 1993; Hermann 1997) suggest that participants need time to develop a common base of shared knowledge about each discipline if they are to reach a consensus understanding of the issue under study. At first, participants talk past one another and are skeptical of the depth of understanding among those from the other discipline. Members from each discipline raise standard disciplinary complaints. But gradually, by critiquing each other's research over a period of time, participants begin to realize the extent and limitations to their own, and their collaborators', knowledge. Upon developing this respect for each other's abilities, the political scientists and psychologists begin to develop a common representation of the theories, concepts, and findings of concern to them.

A major stumbling block that often arises in the creation of a common language is participants' differing degrees of willingness to generalize across contexts. Political scientists in such interdisciplinary settings caution about the importance of contextual information for understanding political phenomena, while psychologists are interested in the development of more law-like generalizations. As Greenstein observed, political scientists examine "aspects of the political psychology of presidents that are presidency-specific," whereas psychologists are more likely "to deal with the psychology of leadership as a general phenomenon" (1973, 457). For inter-

disciplinary collaboration to occur, there needs to be acceptance that both of these approaches to the examination of people and politics can contribute to political psychology. In broad terms, psychologists can delimit the general parameters for how psychological and political phenomena interact and political scientists can explore the conditions or contingencies under which these general parameters hold or lead to different effects.

A second roadblock to the development of a common language involves what political scientists and psychologists consider appropriate research methods and data. Psychologists, who generally use the experimental method and gather quantitative data, often have difficulty tolerating those whose data are qualitative and not representative of any particular population. Political scientists, who study problems on which even qualitative data are hard to find, wonder if those with so-called hard data are living in a world of their own creation. To be interdisciplinary means gaining some tolerance for different types of data and methods—for different epistemological approaches to the study of politics. Consider the variety of information that we could gain about a particular research puzzle were it possible to collect not only historical narratives and case studies but also experimental and quasi-experimental data, survey data, interview responses, and ethnographies. With access to the latter kinds of data, political psychologists become diagnosticians piecing together diverse information into a meaningful whole. In short, different types of data and kinds of methods help the political psychologist develop nuanced, detailed answers to complex questions.

So how does one gain such an interdisciplinary perspective? How important is it for those considering themselves political psychologists to receive formal training in both disciplines? Is such training most feasible at the graduate level or does it require postdoctoral work? Does one need to work with an interdisciplinary team of teachers who represent different perspectives and help the student integrate the material from the two disciplines or can such an

orientation only be gained by joining an interdisciplinary team of researchers or a network of individuals involved in examining a particular topic? Can a political scientist afford to do research that is political psychological in nature until he or she has tenure or is secure in a position? These questions have led to different kinds of training opportunities for people at various points in their careers. The purpose of this article is to describe one of these training experiences, the Summer Institute in Political Psychology (SIPP), that is intended to introduce participants at the beginning of their professional careers to the theories, concepts, findings, and controversies important in political psychology and to help them overcome the obstacles to interdisciplinary research.

SIPP is a month-long workshop for young scholars (graduate students and junior faculty) and policy analysts who are interested in political psychology. Under the sponsorship of the International Society of Political Psychology, SIPP is conducted annually at the Ohio State University. SIPP has five broad goals, all of which were designed to address the problems inherent in interdisciplinary research:

- expose participants to the theories, findings, and research methods currently extant in both political science and psychology
- train participants to integrate research findings and theories from political science and psychology into their own projects
- create a network of political psychologists who share a common language and can team up to study common problems
- provide opportunities for participants to begin, or refine, research projects involving political psychology
- encourage participants' appreciation of methodological pluralism.

The SIPP Experience

The goals of SIPP are realized through a variety of activities during the four-week period. The first goal, introducing participants to the political science and psychology literature,

is primarily achieved through the lecture series. Monday through Thursday of each week participants attend two daily lectures—one on a psychology topic, such as information processing, and one on a political science topic, such as voting. SIPP invites noted scholars from universities across the globe to lecture on topics central to their research. Table 1 provides a sample of lecture topics and lecturers.

The lectures are designed to introduce participants from various disciplinary backgrounds to the theories, debates, and methods of both psychology and political science. The lecture topics are presented in a particular order so that participants will gain an understanding of the links between mass and elite politics. Thus, for example, a lecture on international images may be paired with a lecture on stereotyping to illustrate that the theories used to explain these phenomena have some fundamental similarities and that scholars studying one might be able to learn something from scholars studying the other. In addition, “clusters” of lectures build on similar topics. For instance, a presentation on information-processing theories is followed by lectures on behavioral decision theory, game theory, problem representation, and media and politics, each elaborating on what came before.

The lectures provide excellent introductions to the relevant political science and psychology literature and these introductions are one of the major reasons people give for attending SIPP. On the final evaluation form, participants are asked to list up to three reasons they had for coming to SIPP. Gaining a familiarity with political psychology research and findings is generally mentioned by 50% of the participants; somewhat fewer—about one-third (usually political scientists)—indicate a desire to learn basic psychological concepts. Participants who come to SIPP to “test the waters” want to find out exactly what political psychologists do, and whether the methods and topics of political psychology fit their interests. The range of theories and research presented at SIPP is valuable to these people because it illus-

TABLE 1
Examples of Lecture Topics and Lecturers, 1991–1997

Topic	Lecturer	Affiliation
Information Processing	William von Hippel	Ohio State University
Voting	Herbert Asher	Ohio State University
Public Opinion	Paul Allen Beck	Ohio State University
Personality and Motivation	David Winter	University of Michigan
Political Socialization	Judith Torney-Purta	University of Maryland
Social Capital	Wendy Rahn	University of Minnesota
Social Identity	Marilynn Brewer	Ohio State University
Race and Politics	James Kuklinski	University of Illinois
International Images	Richard Herrmann	Ohio State University
Aggression	Russell Geen	University of Missouri
Dispute Resolution	Roy Lewicki	Ohio State University
Pro-Social Behavior	Margaret Clark	University of Pittsburgh
Behavioral Decision Theory	Elke Weber	Ohio State University
Leadership	Margaret Hermann	Ohio State University
Group Decision Making	Paul 't Hart	Leiden University, Netherlands
Bureaucratic Politics	Eric Stern	University of Uppsala, Sweden

trates the scope of political psychology.

The second goal of SIPP is to help participants integrate political science and psychology theories, concepts, and research findings. To aid participants in this task, they are divided into smaller discussion groups of 10 to 12 people that meet four times a week over lunch. These discussion groups, facilitated by SIPP staff members, focus on synthesizing the material from the two disciplines. Over the course of the four weeks, participants learn to speak the same language as they are exposed to the concepts and definitions of the other discipline. In addition, a Guest Specialist visits on Thursday and Friday of each week (see Table 2 for a list of the Guest Specialists). Guest Specialists are prominent political psychologists (or teams of political psychologists) who have made significant contributions to the field. Participants have the opportunity to hear about the Guest Specialist's latest research and get a close look at how highly successful researchers have integrated the two disciplines in their own work.

The third goal of SIPP, creating a network of political psychologists, is realized in a number of ways. In addition to giving formal presentations of their research, the Guest Specialists also provide participants with an intellectual autobiography and join

each discussion group over the course of their visit, interacting informally with the participants. Individuals can ask questions of these experts or chat with them on a one-on-one basis. This experience helps participants put faces with authors' names, and when participants encounter these scholars again at conferences or colloquia, they can more easily strike up conversations with senior researchers.

SIPP also gives participants a forum for sharing professional concerns. Since most of the participants are graduate students and junior faculty, it is not surprising that they struggle with professional issues. "If I conduct political psychological research," they may ask, "will I be able to publish it? Will I be able to get a job? Will I be able to get tenure? Can I work alone or do I need to

collaborate with a scholar from the 'other' discipline?" SIPP provides a place where scholars can raise these questions with people who have similar concerns. This kind of supportive network is invaluable during the initial stages of one's career. Additionally, the Guest Specialists often give advice from their own careers during their autobiographical talks or during small group discussions with participants.

The most extensive network-building, however, occurs among the SIPP participants themselves. On the final evaluation form, some 50% of the participants usually state that meeting people with similar interests was one of their reasons for attending SIPP. The formal discussion groups provide a starting place where people find out one another's passions and preconceptions, and these discussions often lead to more intense, extended debates and collaborations between people with similar interests. By the second week, it becomes obvious that pairs or small groups of individuals have been debating theoretical issues and hatching research projects in the halls of their housing unit or, more often, on the patio of the nearby pub. These informal, extracurricular interactions, in turn, improve the quality of the "formal" discussion group sessions.

The ties that develop among participants cross international, institutional, and disciplinary boundaries; and with the prevalence of e-mail and other modes of communication, the conversations do not end with the close of the four-week session. The endurance of the bonds created at SIPP is illustrated by the fact that over 100 people gathered for a SIPP

TABLE 2
Guest Specialists, 1991–1997

1991	David Sears; Pamela Conover; Philip Tetlock; Janice Gross Stein and Richard Ned Lebow
1992	Donald Kinder; Ole Holsti; Roberta Sigel; Herbert Kelman
1993	Philip Converse; Susan Fiske; Robert Jervis; Jeffrey Rubin
1994	Robert Abelson; John Sullivan; Marilynn Brewer; Betty Glad
1995	Reid Hastie; Milton Lodge; Peter Carnevale; Martha Crenshaw
1996	Janice Gross Stein; Philip Tetlock; George Marcus, Russell Neuman, and Michael MacKuen; Charles Judd
1997	M. Kent Jennings; Tom Tyler; Kathleen McGraw; Stephen Walker

reunion in 1995. Additionally, SIPP alumni have helped each other in countless ways, including reading manuscript drafts and hosting former participants when they have traveled internationally to conduct research. Numerous SIPP alumni have also joined in collaborative research projects. At current count, 30 of these projects have resulted in presentations at professional conferences. These joint projects are beginning to yield major articles and books as alumni begin their professional careers. Moreover, several of the international participants have begun conferences and associations for political psychologists in their own countries.

This interaction and collaboration among participants is a crucial foundation for achieving SIPP's fourth goal—providing opportunities for the participants to begin or refine research projects. Roughly one-half of the participants report that they attend SIPP to find new topics for research, and approximately one-third say they want to learn more about a specific research topic. Participants also have the chance to try out their ideas on the daily lecturers over lunch or in post-lecture question and answer sessions. In addition, during 1996 and 1997, a series of very successful evening panels were introduced where participants could present their own ongoing work or propose new research projects and receive feedback from the group.

Various activities during the four weeks encourage methodological pluralism, the final goal of SIPP. Participants read articles that use methods ranging from content analysis to elite interviews and from mass surveys to laboratory experimentation, and, in the process, discover the unique strengths and weaknesses of each approach. In the discussion sections, participants are encouraged to apply alternative methods to the same research question. Instead of only critiquing a particular methodological approach, participants are asked to discuss if, and how, a different method could better address the same question. In addition, weekly methods workshops provide in-depth introductions to a variety of research techniques, and give partici-

pants a starting point for using new strategies in their own work. Furthermore, interactions with other participants foster methodological pluralism. If a psychologist and a political scientist are discussing a hypothesis, they will often have radically different standards of proof and means for empirically testing the idea. The participants learn from one another as they debate the merits of particular research strategies.

SIPP participants become critical consumers of research conducted using different methodologies and, more importantly, they come to recognize the value of using multiple methods to investigate a question of interest. As SIPP progresses, participants are less likely to reflexively reject a particular method. Rather, they may recognize that an experiment or a computer simulation, for instance, is a good starting point, but that it should be supplemented with a field study or a survey, and vice versa.

The People of SIPP: Generations of Scholars

SIPP is conducted under the direction of three Ohio State University faculty: Margaret Hermann, department of political science and the Mershon Center; Jon Krosnick, departments of psychology and political science; and Thomas Nelson, departments of political science and psychology. All three received their formal training in psychology but have done much of their research in the domain of politics. The evolution of political psychology as a field is evident in the leadership of SIPP. Margaret Hermann, a past president of the International Society of Political Psychology and current president of the International Studies Association, represents the first generation of scholars that explicitly incorporated psychological theories into their explanations of political behavior. This generation sought to give credibility to political psychology as a scholarly endeavor through the establishment of the International Society of Political Psychology and its affiliated journal, *Political Psychology*. A second generation of scholars, including Jon Krosnick and Thomas

Nelson, has built on these early efforts and has worked to legitimize political psychology to a broader audience by continuing to publish their research in highly regarded journals of both fields, such as the *American Political Science Review*, the *American Journal of Political Science*, the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*. Through the experience and leadership of these two generations of scholars, SIPP seeks to strengthen and energize the field of political psychology by socializing a third generation. The leaders of the next generation of political psychologists will likely be drawn from the ranks of SIPP alumni, several of whom have returned to SIPP as lecturers.

The staff of SIPP consists of advanced graduate students who come primarily from the departments of political science and psychology at Ohio State and who have both been participants in SIPP and done coursework in political psychology. Most are doing dissertations involving political psychology. Staff members serve as role models and mentors for participants and lead the discussion group sessions. The staff attends all SIPP activities and are responsible for providing leadership in both the more academic and the more social settings of SIPP. The directors strive for a well-balanced staff, which includes approximately equal numbers of men and women, psychologists and political scientists, and students of mass and elite politics. Staff members, in effect, continue their interdisciplinary education by learning to transmit their knowledge to others.

SIPP has now been in operation for seven years. The alumni roster totals nearly 400 and includes graduate students, junior faculty, and military and government officials from throughout the world. The participants come from 37 countries—including Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Northern Ireland, Greece, The Netherlands, Belgium, China, Romania, Australia, and Chile—and 122 colleges and universities (see Table 3 for a sample of the universities). SIPP has also welcomed professionals in policy-making positions from a variety of organizations, among them

TABLE 3
Sample of Universities Represented at SIPP, 1991–1997

U.S. Universities	Non-U.S. Universities
Duke University	University of Toronto
Washington State University	Leiden University, Netherlands
Stanford University	University of Lisbon, Portugal
West Virginia University	University of the Philippines
Purdue University	Warsaw University
University of Virginia	Gakuin University, Japan
Princeton University	University of Uruguay
SUNY-Stony Brook	University of Diego Portales, Spain
University of Minnesota	Stockholm University
University of Nebraska	Mannheim University, Germany
University of South Carolina	Moscow State University
University of California, Los Angeles	Northern Territory University, Australia
Harvard University	Hebrew University

Many participants use their SIPP experience to fulfill course requirements at their home universities. Ohio State University requires all graduate students who plan to complete its political psychology minor program to enroll in SIPP as the core course for the minor. The University of Minnesota also relies on SIPP for this purpose, and sixteen students from Minnesota have attended SIPP. In addition, both U.S. and non-U.S. institutions have honored participation as independent coursework for credit in participants' home programs. SIPP, therefore, serves institutions that are unable to offer courses in political psychology by providing students with a comprehensive introduction to the study of political psychology.

Participants have gone on to distinguish themselves in many ways. A cursory review of alumni finds former SIPP participants in teaching positions at universities such as Boston University, Brigham Young University, Carnegie-Mellon University, Cornell University, Harvard University, Louisiana State University, Northwestern University, Purdue University, Tufts University, and the University of Kansas.

Conclusion

Each year at the picnic marking the beginning of SIPP, the directors welcome the participants by telling them that they will be spending the next four weeks getting a "SIPP," or a taste, of the wide variety of theo-

are the U.S. Department of State, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, the South African Department of Foreign Affairs, the Democratic Studies Center of Nigeria, the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the Colombian Defense Department.

SIPP has attempted to achieve diversity among its participants each year, and has remained rather successful in this endeavor. Table 4 presents the demographic characteristics and disciplinary affiliations of participants across the seven years. Women have consistently made up at least one-third of the participants, and international students have usually been around one-fifth of the participants, with international participation reaching its highest levels in 1996 and 1997. In addition, SIPP has

welcomed individuals from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds; on average some 15% of SIPP participants have been from minority groups.

While the participants have largely been drawn from political science programs, with an overall participation rate of 68%, psychologists have comprised one-fourth of the total participants (24%). Within political science, participants are drawn primarily from the fields of American politics and international relations, with an increasing number of comparativists taking part in the past three years; psychologists mainly come from the social, industrial/organization, and counseling areas. Former participants have also come from the disciplines of anthropology, communications, education, public administration, and sociology.

TABLE 4
Participant Characteristics, 1991–1997

	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Gender							
Women	43%	35%	34%	38%	39%	46%	33%
Men	57%	65%	66%	62%	61%	54%	67%
Nationality							
American	78%	84%	83%	73%	81%	72%	62%
International	22%	16%	17%	27%	19%	28%	38%
Discipline							
Political Science	69%	73%	68%	71%	68%	61%	79%
Psychology	23%	18%	25%	25%	27%	22%	16%
Other	8%	8%	7%	4%	5%	17%	5%
Total number of participants	56	49	56	45	62	46	39

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ries and methods used by political psychologists. At the end of the month, participants walk away from the experience feeling energized about political psychology and ready to face the challenges of interdisciplinary research. SIPP provides participants with a foundation in political psychology upon which they can build throughout their careers.

As the ranks of SIPP alumni grow, we feel confident that research in political psychology is being reinforced from the bottom up. We are hopeful, and there are signs that such is happening, that these alumni will further develop their interdisciplinary interests through interaction and collaboration with first and second generation political psychologists as well as begin to train the fourth generation of political psychologists. Such endeavors help to shape an infrastructure of support for political psychology research around the world and maintain the momentum that participants, staff, and lecturers gain from SIPP. As Woody Hayes, a former football coach at Ohio State University, once noted, institutions result when people "pay forward." All those who participate in SIPP are both learners and teachers as the Institute pays

forward and works toward institutionalizing political psychology as a perspective for studying politics.

Notes

* We would like to thank the directors of the Summer Institute—Margaret Hermann, Jon Krosnick and Tom Nelson—for encouraging us to write this piece and for providing us with the data on past Institutes. This paper builds on our experiences both as participants in the Summer Institute and as staff members.

1. For the sake of comparison, 36% of the articles could be classified as involving rational choice, 15% explored political behavior, and 28% fell into an "other" category.

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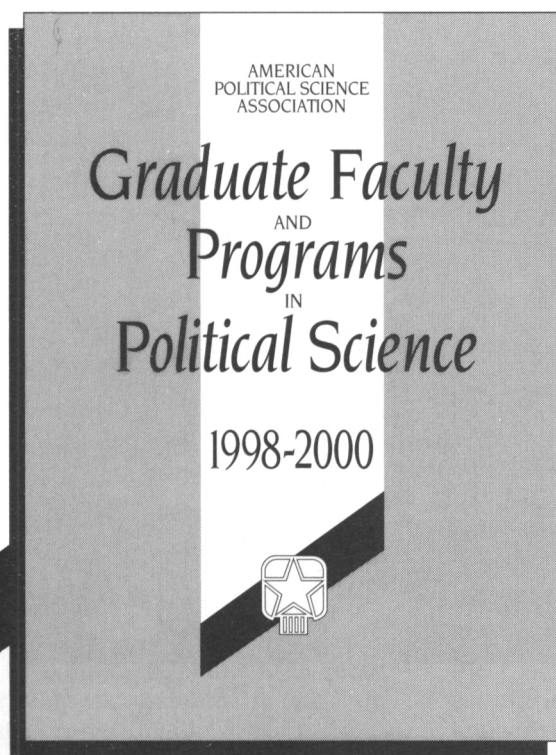
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