

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE APSA
ORGANIZED SECTION ON
POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

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Message from the Section Chair

Welcome to the newsletter for the APSA Political Psychology Organized Section. I have the honor to serve as section Chair for 2009-10. Working with me are a great team of officers, including Rose McDermott (Chair-elect), Bethany Albertson (Communication Director), and John Transue (Treasurer). Jeff Karp, the 2010 section Program Chair is busy combing through the very large number of submissions made to the section for this year's APSA meeting in Washington. Rounding out the team is Cameron Thies (At large member of the Executive Council) and Chris Federico (Past Chair).

As you will see in this newsletter, Bethany is working hard to enhance its content to make it more useful to section members. The first fruits of that effort are here, with brief interesting articles on current issues in the field, both in terms of research and teaching. Please note the call for future articles of this type. It is our intent to regularly include two or three in each issue of the newsletter. But this can only happen if you are willing to participate!

Please also note that the deadline is coming for submissions for section awards. We give awards for the best political psychology paper presented at the previous APSA meeting, the best political psychology dissertation filed during 2009, and the best book in the field published in 2009. The list of committee members and submission information is in this newsletter;

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submission deadline is March 1, 2010.
Self-nominations are accepted.

APSA tells us that over this coming year they will be rolling out a new online system for sections to communicate with their members. One of my goals is to see us get more online for the section, to make newsletters, announcements, and the like more easily accessible. As soon as APSA provides us with the information we need to move forward, we will begin doing so.

Many of you no doubt regularly read the journal *Political Psychology*. The journal has an international reach and has become highly ranked under its editorial team at Stony Brook. Stanley Feldman, Leonie Huddy, Howie Levine, and Chuck Taber deserve a vote of thanks for a job well done as their term ends. The new editorial team, which is multi-disciplinary and international will take over effective February 1, though the Stony Brook team will continue to process their revise and resubmits during the transition. The new team is led by Alex Mintz, of IDC in Israel, and includes Paul t'Hart, Helen Haste, Jim Sidanius, and myself as co-editors, along with associate editors Eran Halperin and Steven Redd.

Political Psychology is published by the International Society of Political Psychology (www.ispp.org). If you are not a member of the ISPP I encourage you to look closely at joining. Members receive the journal, as well as a reduced rate for the Annual Meeting held generally in July. This year it is in San Francisco, while next year the meeting is in Istanbul, Turkey. The membership fee is reasonable, and the benefits of joining with fellow political

psychologists worldwide are immeasurable.

Finally, speaking of joining, if you are getting this newsletter you are listed by APSA as a member of the political psychology organized section. So please make sure that you stay a member when you renew your APSA membership. Renewal of section membership is not automatic. You must choose to renew. It's only \$8 and gets you this newsletter as well as our annual reception at APSA, which includes very nice hors d'oeuvres and a free drink ticket if you come to the section business meeting. Just the drink alone is worth nearly the \$8 at most of our APSA hotels!

Thanks again to Bethany for her work on putting together this newsletter. And thanks to all of you who have submitted proposals for the 2010 APSA meeting. While Jeff Karp has a difficult task ahead of him in determining which proposals to accept – and many good proposals will not be able to be accepted – it is the participation of section members in the meetings and on our panels that makes the section what it is.

Dave Redlawsk
Chair, 2009-10

Broadening Political Psychology

Peter K. Hatemi and Rose McDermott

The history of political psychology has depended primarily on insights from specific subfields of psychology, largely social psychology, for applications and insights into the nature and foundations of political attitudes and behavior. This research has produced important findings concerning emotion, the nature of socialization, the influence of groups, and the critical role of situations in influencing outcomes of interest.

However, other burgeoning subfields in psychology hold great and increasing promise for addressing the enduring theoretical and empirical challenges confronting political psychology. In particular, work in developmental and clinical psychology, neuropsychology, cognitive neuroscience, psychiatry, biological anthropology, and behavior genetics suggest critical new insights into human behavior, offering intriguing possibilities for exploring the combination of biological and environmental factors which undergird political attitudes, attachments and actions. These approaches, which have become well established in the exploration of almost all other human traits, hold important implications and provide critical mapping for future directions in political psychology. In short, political psychology has benefitted greatly from relying on the insights provided by one subfield of psychology, and we believe that it can garner tremendous additional advantages by more fully incorporating the informative perspectives offered by other subfields of psychology, and other related disciplines, as well.

Some of these recent developments arise from technological and methodological advances such as magnetic resonance imaging to ascertain the geography of decision making, along with assays from blood and saliva which allow the identification of hormonal levels and genetic typing. Modern approaches to studying human behavior cross disciplinary boundaries. Indeed, those outside the fields of political science have been using neurobiological and psychological methods to explore political traits with great success for some time, largely unbeknownst to our own discipline. Topics such as prejudice and discrimination, cooperation and aggression, the nature of representation, and the foundations and manifestations of political ideology have been explored by neuroscientists, psychologists, and behavioral geneticists for decades. Much of this work grows out of an interest in filling the lacunae that remain in our understanding of the origins of political preferences.

An integrated behavioral approach differs from previous work exploring similar topics in the past by incorporating genetic liability, hormonal mechanisms, cognitive processes, and physiological responses into an understanding of human political preference formation. This biologically based understanding of human nature systematically explores the myriad ways in which every unique human disposition, in interaction with developmental and environmental stimuli, operates to create, structure, sustain and transform the nature of human political and social beliefs and behavior. These new methods, along with their accompanying theoretical models, might be used profitably in the future to

Hatemi & McDermott, cont.

explore existing problems in productive ways which may not have been possible before technological advances allowed non-invasive means of exploring the human brain and the human genome. Importantly, these biological focuses alternatives provide added value and comparative advantage over narrower approaches which, while valuable, often only provide half the story by limiting the empirical exploration to exogenous socialized factors.

Political psychology, while continuing to incorporate the methods and theories of social psychology, need not remain unnecessarily restricted to the subfield on which it has historically depended for future applications and exploration. Rather, political psychology can profitably expand its repertoire to incorporate methods and models from other fields of human behavior as well. In short, Political Psychology can and should incorporate more than traditional social psychological models of human behavior. Models and methods drawn from traditional clinical psychology, which focus on understanding, preventing, and relieving psychological distress or dysfunction has led to a deep understanding of emotion, anxiety, fear, and affiliation, hold great additional promise for helping political psychologists address these same topics from a politically relevant perspective. Cognitive psychology, which focuses on how the mind processes information, including attention, memory, language, perception, learning, and reasoning offers great insights for further understanding the nature of decision making in political choice. Developmental psychology, which explores how the human mind develops

throughout our lives, from infancy, through childhood and adolescence into adulthood, holds the key to better understanding many aspects of change and constancy in political attitudes and behavior over the lifespan. Epigenetic and neurological changes are most profound in youth, just about the time our attitudes are formed. For example, work in developmental psychology can help us to understand how nutrition and other aspects of pre-natal care can affect the propensity for violence and resilience in populations subjected to starvation, famine or other systematic forms of stress such as forced migration. Modern Social Psychology explores the interplay between individual minds and the social world, and includes personality, emotion, prejudice and stereotyping, person perception, social norms, conflict resolution, biases in judgment, affective processes, cultural diversity in thinking, morality, helping and aggression, identity and the self, attitudes and persuasion, and motivation and uses a full complement of experimental, psychophysiological, neural, and behavior genetic methods. Finally, cognitive neuroscience investigates the functional organization of the brain's cerebral systems and maps them to critical neurochemical processes utilizing functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electro/magneto-encephalography (EEG/MEG), and transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS). Many of the research topics commonly investigated in this area, including the neural substrates of perception, attention, memory, language, learning, affect, stress and motivation, hold great interest and relevance for political scientists. Furthermore, politically relevant topics such as culture and emotion, reward processing, anxiety, and emotion expression and suppression can each be

Hatemi & McDermott, cont.

profitably explored, both alone and in combination, employing a wide variety of these subfield perspectives. Theories drawn from behavior genetics allow scholars to use twin studies and genetic assays to examine differences in population structures to explore relative susceptibility to particular conditions such as lactose intolerance or various diseases, such as cystic fibrosis. Various methods including physiological experimentation, genetic analysis, neurological explorations including MRI's and other technical advances provide opportunities for wider and deeper examination of the human political brain and how it functions alone, and in the context of wider social groups. These methodological and empirical advances offer the additional advantage of increasing descriptive and predictive accuracy in current theories of political behavior.

While many existing models provide useful hypotheses concerning the nature and function of ideology, for example, they often fail to accurately describe or predict large portions of the population. At least part of the reason for this lies in the inherent differences that exist between individuals. Not everyone will react to the same stimulus the same way. Models focused on external variables alone may characterize many people much of the time, but will fail to categorize many people much of the time, and some people all of the time. This is not because such models are wrong, but merely because they fail to take adequate account of the basic biological differences between individuals, and more importantly, because they also fail to fully incorporate the distinct environmental

experiences encountered by individuals who actively participate in creating the realities they perceive and to which they react. In this way, ironically, many models of socialization fail to adequately predict human political responses because they provide an overly blunt understanding of environmental interaction, assuming that individuals interpret and respond to their circumstances in similar ways. Yet this may not be true if people approach such situations from fundamentally different perspectives based on either differing genetic predispositions, cognitive architecture, or hormonal levels as a *result* of their varying life experiences. Theories which incorporate such information into their models will provide more traction in identifying those factors which influence individuals to adopt particular beliefs over others, or engage in specific actions.

The methods and theories imported from psychology at large, genetics and cognitive neuroscience will enrich and broaden the theoretical models and methodological techniques for political psychologists. In advocating their use, we reflect critically on what has been missing from past work, and suggest how we might improve and strengthen the accuracy of our understanding of the psychological bases of political behavior in the future.

Blending Political Psychology into “Bread and Butter” Coursework

Alina Oxendine

A common dilemma for professors at undergraduate teaching colleges (or understaffed departments in any institution) is limited flexibility in choosing what to teach because of a need to cover curricular necessities, such as Introduction to American or World Politics, Political Research, Public Policy, or Freshman/Senior Seminars. Although many of us would like to see Political Psychology prioritized alongside these “bread and butter” undergraduate courses, the reality is that the course can be difficult to incorporate with so many existing curricular commitments. After grappling with this for several years as Assistant Professor in a small department, I have developed some creative ideas for infusing political psychology into established curricula. Not only do these course components help to fulfill my own academic interests, but they also seem to effectively engage students.

My teaching and research interests sit at the intersection of public policy and political psychology, and I regularly teach the course “Public Policy and Public Administration,” which focuses largely on policymaking in the United States. A great way to integrate political psychology and energize policy discussions is to challenge students to reassess policy goals. Instead of perpetuating the assumption that economic prosperity and competitiveness are the lone goals for which a country should strive, I have the class explore research on other, more socio-

psychological objectives gaining prominence – equality, subjective well-being, and longevity. Course materials (such as “Beyond Money: Toward an Economy of Well-Being” by Diener and Seligman, “In Pursuit of the Longevity Dividend” by Olshansky et al., and documentary film *This Emotional Life*) push students to think creatively about public policy, policy design and how they connect to citizens’ day-to-day lives: Which policies are necessary for achieving these quality of life outcomes? What can we do to promote and sustain greater racial, gender and/or economic equality, so that we may live in a fairer, more balanced society? Which policy changes are needed to make people happier, to enhance the contentment and satisfaction people associate with their day to day lives? Finally, what can (or should) government do to extend our life expectancies to include healthy, full lives into our 80s or 90s? In addition to studies of race, social class and subjective well-being, these discussions provide plenty of opportunities to connect academic research to approachable concepts and endless material for class debates.

Another way I integrate political psychology, and specifically studies of race, class, and social identity, into my teaching load is by teaching our “First Year Seminar,” which is both an orientation to college life and a freshman introduction to critical thinking. In my most recent seminar entitled “Downsizing the American Dream,” students explore issues of economic inequality and social class using a blend of social scientific research, classic literature, contemporary film, news stories and television. This class explores the causes and consequences of mounting economic

inequality in the United States and how it influences fundamental policy debates. In addition to these societal challenges, it also grapples with issues of social class and personal identity. The class explores the dynamics of American social class using a variety of materials: *Limbo: Blue-Collar Roots, White-Collar Dreams* by Lubrano, *The Great Gatsby* by Fitzgerald, HBO documentary film *Born Rich* and recent AMC television drama *Mad Men*. Moreover, students explore what it might feel like to “straddle” two different economic realities, growing up in a blue-collar household and later becoming a white collar professional. Finally, the class analyzes life from the perspective of “haves” and the “have-nots,” exploring challenges associated with being wealthy, poor and middle-class and how the American Dream varies for these groups. Like “First Year Seminar,” most undergraduate programs require students to take an “Introduction to American Politics” course, and there are many fun ways to enliven class discussions and pique students’ interest in politics with political psychology. I have enjoyed working with *Struggle for Democracy* by Greenberg and Page, partly because of its heavy emphasis on political behavior and extensive coverage of political culture, media, and civic participation.

Political culture, in particular, lends itself to interesting debates and class activities. Greenberg and Page discuss common cultural characteristics associated with the United States, such as individualism, skepticism of government intervention, and support for free enterprise (relative to other established democracies). To supplement the textbook, my class explores clips from films *American Beauty*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Bowling for*

Columbine, which highlight “dark sides” of American culture and often trigger debate about whether the films’ critiques are fair, accurate portrayals of American society.

It also helps to explore political culture with a classic tragedy of the commons scenario, which I call the “point in the pot” game. For this exercise, I give the students ten extra credit points (on a minor assignment) and have them choose (1) how many of the points to keep and (2) how many to put “in the pot.” Up front, I make it clear that I will double all points in the pot before redistributing evenly to all students. In the end, students figure out that, while they may collectively benefit from pooling their points, there are strong individual pressures to keep them. The game is a great way to trigger discussions about interpersonal trust, social capital, multiple levels of analysis and collective action dilemmas.

Even when covering American institutions, such as presidential politics, there are several ways to integrate political psychology into the discussion. After analyzing the various facets of the President’s job, I have students develop a full job description for the position: “In an alternate universe, our class has been given the difficult task of helping to choose the next President of the United States. In an attempt to guide voters, we need to develop a list of necessary and recommended job qualifications. Since voting is the process of ‘hiring’ a president, what should voters be looking for?” This exercise encourages students to be thoughtful (and even systematic) about what candidates need to be successful. It also triggers a discussion of

Oxendine, cont.

why voters rarely think so analytically and, instead, fall prey to emotional appeals, stylistic factors, and the need to feel a personal connection to the candidate. This discussion also lends itself to some entertaining video clips of candidates trying desperately (and sometimes successfully) to bond with voters, including Bill Clinton's ground breaking Arsenio Hall Show saxophone performance, candidates' appearances on late night comedy programs like The Daily Show or Saturday Night Live, and Alan Keyes leap into a "mosh pit" on The Awful Truth (by far the students' favorite). It is also interesting to discuss the psychological preoccupation with style over substance alongside institutional forces (such as the electoral college and lenient campaign finance laws) that many people also believe hinder citizens' abilities to select effective leaders.

While my small department and teaching responsibilities make it difficult for me to offer full courses devoted only to political psychology on a regular basis, I still manage to integrate political psychology effectively into already-established courses. In my experience, these curricular additions both satisfy my own intellectual curiosities and seem to engage and appeal to my students.

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Political Psychology Newsletter Call for Submissions

We are interested in including brief items on developments in the field of political psychology in our Summer 2010 Newsletter. Contributions can focus on any of the following themes:

1) new developments in political psychology, presented in an accessible way; 2) short pieces by graduate students on their current research, including dissertation abstracts for those who are about to defend (or have just done so). If we get enough abstracts consistently over time we can make that a regular feature of the newsletter; 3) ideas for conducting research (new data sets, ideas regarding data collection), 4) commentary on contemporary political issues that is informed by current work in political psychology; 5) commentary on teaching political psychology, especially at institutions that are primarily oriented toward the teaching of undergraduates; and 6) perspectives on political psychology from around the world;

Our next newsletter is scheduled for August 2010, and we invite section members to send in submissions to the communications director, Bethany Albertson (balberts@austin.utexas.edu). Submissions should be 1500 words or less in length and should be received before July 1, 2010. Contributions will be considered for publication at the discretion of the section officers. We also welcome other ideas for the newsletter.

In Our Next Issue

Our next issue will feature a discussion of the recent *Perspectives on Politics* article "What is Political Psychology?" by Kristen Renwick Monroe, William Chiu, Adam Martin, and Bridgette Porter (December 2009).

APSA Award Information

Best Book Award (Robert E. Lane Award)

The Robert E. Lane Award is given for the best book in political psychology published in 2009. Self-nominations are accepted. Please send a hard copy of the nominated book to each committee member by **March 1, 2010**.

Committee:

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APASA Award Information, cont.

Best Paper Award

The Best Paper Award is awarded to the authors of a paper in the area of Political Psychology that was presented during the 2009 APSA Annual Meeting. The paper did not have to be presented on a Political Psychology panel to qualify. Self-nominations are accepted. Please send a hard copy of the nominated paper to each committee member by **March 1, 2010**.

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Best Dissertation Award The Best Dissertation Award is given for the best dissertation in political psychology filed during 2009. Self-nominations are accepted. All nominations should include a letter of support from the chair of the dissertation committee that addresses the contribution of the dissertation to the field of political psychology. Please send a hard copy of the nominated dissertation to each committee member by **March 1, 2010**. See the section website for more information:

www.apsanet.org/~psychology/index.cfm

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ISPP Erikson Award Information

The International Society of Political Psychology awards the Erikson award to recognize and celebrate exceptional achievement. It is awarded to an individual who is a member of ISPP and within a decade of receiving their Ph.D. Nominations for this year's award are due by Feb. 15 and should be sent to the chair of the Erikson committee: Jamie Druckman at druckman@northwestern.edu.

TESS Announcement

Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) continues to seek proposals for innovative, Internet-based experiments on the general United States population. Starting in February, TESS is changing the way we handle new proposals, moving to a version of the Manuscript Central system used by many journals. This will eliminate the current need for user profiles and should also improve the functioning of internal operations in a number of ways. For those submitting proposals, the basic guidelines will remain the same. Investigators submit brief (5 page) proposals to TESS; these proposals are reviewed; successful proposals are fielded with a nationally representative survey panel at no cost to the investigators. Information about TESS, including the link to the new system for submitting a proposal, can be found at <http://tess.experimentcentral.org/>.

Upcoming Conferences:**CESS – NYU Experimental Political Science Conference**

February 5-6, NYU

For conference program, please see: <http://cess.nyu.edu/conferences/2-2010/index.php>

CResPP Inaugural Conference:

April 14-16, Queen's University, Belfast
The Center for Research on Political Psychology (CResPP) will hold a conference "Tearing Down the Walls: Rethinking the political in political psychology." Keynote speakers include Kum Kum Bhavnani, Helen Haste, and Felicia Pratto. **Deadline for submission of abstracts: February 1, 2010.** See: <http://www.psych.qub.ac.uk/CResPP/Conference/>.

Chicago Area Political and Social Behavior Conference:

May 7, Northwestern University
The program includes the following speakers (tentatively): John Zaller, UCLA; Cara Wong, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Barry Burden, University of Wisconsin; and; Traci Burch, Northwestern University. There also will be a roundtable discussion with: Doris Graber, University of Illinois, Chicago; Ben Page, Northwestern; and John Zaller, UCLA. To be added to the mailing list, contact Jamie Druckman at druckman@northwestern.edu. For information on past conferences see: <http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~jnd260/conference.html>

ISPP Annual Meeting:

July 7-10, San Francisco, CA
Plans are underway for our 2010 Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Please see <http://ispp.org/meet.html> for more information and to **submit your proposal by February 5, 2010.**

The Political Psychology newsletter is a publication of the APSA Organized Section on Political Psychology. Editor: Bethany Albertson, Associate Editor: Lindsey Clark Levitan.

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