

- Simon, H. A. (1985). Human nature in politics: The dialogue of psychology with political science. *American Political Science Review* 79, 293-304.
- Simonton, D. K. (1990). Personality and politics. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 670-692). New York: Guilford.
- Smith, M. B. (1968). A map for the study of personality and politics. *Journal of Social Issues* 24, 15-28.
- Smith, M. B., Bruner, J. S., & White, R. W. (1956). *Opinions and personality*. New York: Wiley.
- Sniderman, P. M. (1974). *Personality and Democratic Politics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Stone, W. F. (1981). Political Psychology: A Whig history. In S. L. Long (Ed.), *The Handbook of political behavior*, Vol. 1, New York: Plenum.
- Stone, W. F., & Schaffner, P. E. (1988). *The psychology of politics*, 2nd Ed., New York: Springer Verlag.
- Tucker, R. C. (1965). The dictator and totalitarianism. *World Politics* 17, 555-583.
- Tucker, R. C. (1973). *Stalin as revolutionary, 1879-1929: A short study in history and personality*. New York: Norton.
- Tucker, R. C. (1981). *Politics as leadership*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Vertzberger, Y. Y. I. (1990). *The world in their minds: Information processing, cognition, and perception in foreign policy decisionmaking*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Volkan, V. D., and Itzkowitz, N. (1984). *The immortal ataturk: A psychobiography*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wallas, G. (1908). *Human nature and politics*, 3rd Ed., New York: Crofts.
- Walter, J. (1980). *The leader: A political biography of Gough Whitlam*. St. Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press.

---

### Issues in Professional Development

---

## Theory Development in Political Psychology or, the Play's the Thing

John Gastil<sup>1</sup> and Virginia Sapiro<sup>2</sup>

---

*A student of political psychology assesses the roots (and flowers) of the field of political psychology.*

---

**KEY WORDS:** political psychology; theory.

### INTRODUCTION

In her summary of the field of political psychology, Margaret Hermann prudently and appropriately fudges the answer to her own question, "Should we be searching for a single, unifying paradigm or reinforcing the pluralism that presently exists?" (Hermann, 1986, 4). The fact of the matter is that although, as she says, interdisciplinary networks are evolving, no matter how much we approach greater ability to communicate and collaborate across the artificial boundaries of discipline and subdiscipline, those different scholarly communities will continue to be discrete in very important senses.

I have chosen to open my graduate course in political psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by assigning articles that, together, raise some of the theoretical and methodological questions posed by inter- and cross-disciplinarity in the field of political psychology. I assign some surveys of the field itself (e.g. Hermann 1986; Sears 1987), as well as literature which allows us to use conflict over the concept of *rationality* itself as a medium for further analysis (e.g. Simon, 1985; Quattrone & Tversky, 1988).

The students are required to write a page a week in response to the reading. These assignments are not part of the "graded" written work but are intended,

<sup>1</sup>University of Wisconsin—Madison, Madison, Wisconsin 53706.

<sup>2</sup>Department of Political Science, University of Wisconsin—Madison, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, Bitnet: sapiro@wiscgps.

among other things, to help provide grounds for discussion. One response to the readings described above, written by John Gastil, offered not just grounds for discussion in the classroom, but perhaps an elegant (and certainly amusing) stimulus for thought more widely among our colleagues.

## REFERENCES

- Hermann, M. G. (1986). What is political psychology? In M. Hermann (Ed.), *Political Psychology* (pp. 1-10). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Quattrone, G. A., & A. Tversky (1988). Contrasting rational and psychological analyses of political choice. *American Political Science Review* 82, 719-36.
- Sears, D. O. (1987). Political psychology. *Annual Review of Psychology* 38, 229-55.
- Simon, H. (1985). Human nature in politics: The dialogue of psychology with political science. *American Political Science Review* 79, 293-304.

—Virginia Sapiro

## A DIALOGUE ON A DISCIPLINE

Psychologus: Ho, thief! What are you doing in my garden?

Polpsyche: Excuse me, I was just picking theories for my research. You have so many, and we have but few. Might I take this psychoanalytic one? I suspect it would add a nice complement to my sociological analyses of political participation.

Psychologus: That may be so. However, you're not the first *political* psychologist to snatch blossoms from my yard, and we have not so much as ventured onto your grounds. This seems unfair.

Polpsyche: True, we political psychologists have not yet repaid you for the theories we have borrowed. But we will, I assure you!

Psychologus: And how? These rows of blossoming theories called "Psychology" are like those called "Biology" and "Sociology." We are a *level* field, concerning ourselves with processes at the psychological level. We nod our heads to biologists, and even some sociologists, but we have little patience for political scientists. Your discipline is defined by a context, not a level of analysis. Your only contributions are arranging our theoretical flowers in your contextual pots.

Polpsyche: This is no less a crime than picking flowers, as you do, and leaping about the land, pronouncing their elegance while they wilt for lack of soil. You grow pretty flowers, but we let them grow more beautiful and valuable by potting them in socially significant contexts.

Psychologus: Your words are one part truth and one part ignorance. The problem is that you pick our theories indiscriminately, almost haphazardly. And you

keep picking the same old flowers. Why, look over here at these bright new—

Polpsyche: I'm sure those new ones are fine, and I may take one if you will familiarize me with it. But we political psychologists are a busy lot, running back and forth from political science to psychology. By comparison with you, our psychological knowledge is shallow, narrow, and dated. We work twice as hard as our peers, yet we receive scant recognition. Psychologists look askance at our theories, and now our political science colleagues have learned how to grow and pot *rational* theories from economics. They claim that substantive rationality assumptions are easy to learn, are quick to grow, and make psychological theory unnecessary.

Psychologus: On that regard, I suspect that your colleagues only make progress when they unknowingly use bounded rationality assumptions. Those half-witted cheats!

Polpsyche: We share your view, but not your contempt.

Psychologus: Fine. Pick away, but pot our theoretical flowers more carefully. Behind so many sorry uses of our theories I see a list of references with but a courtesy citation of a psychologist.

Polpsyche: As I said, we are trying to form our own discipline, develop our own theories. That one can cite political psychologists at all shows how far we have come!

Psychologus: Or how far you lag behind the constant advances in psychology.

Polpsyche: You are neither kind nor Kuhnian. You may belittle us now, but when we have matured into our own discipline, you will beg to visit us.

Psychologus: I should live to be so old.

Polpsyche: You will.

—John Gastil