

The Invited Workshop on Cognitive Social Sciences—Grounding the Social Sciences in the Cognitive Sciences?

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General Descriptions

This workshop is aimed at exploring the cognitive (psychological) basis of the social sciences and the possibilities of grounding the social sciences in cognition (psychology).

The cognitive sciences have made tremendous strides in recent decades. In particular, computational cognitive modeling (i.e., computational psychology; Sun, 2008; Thagard, 1996) has changed the ways in which cognition/psychology is explored and understood in many profound respects. There have been many models of cognition/psychology proposed in the cognitive sciences (broadly defined), leading to detailed understanding of many cognitive/psychological domains and functionalities. Empirical psychological research has also progressed to provide us with much better understanding of many psychological phenomena.

Given the advances in the cognitive sciences, can we leverage the successes for the sake of better understanding social processes and phenomena? More fundamentally, can the cognitive sciences (including experimental cognitive psychology, computational psychology, social-personality psychology, developmental psychology, cultural psychology, psycholinguistics, philosophy of mind, cognitive neuroscience, and so on) provide a better foundation for important disciplines of the social sciences (sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, as well as some “humanity” fields: literary studies, communication, history, religious studies, legal studies, and so on)?

Thus far, although very much a neglected topic, there nevertheless have been various efforts at exploring this topic. Some of the efforts were computationally motivated (see, for example, Sun, 2006: “Cognition and multi-agent interaction”, published by Cambridge University Press). Some other efforts were more empirical or theoretical in nature (see, for example, Turner, 2001: “Cognitive Dimensions of Social Science”, published by Oxford University Press).

There are both theoretical and practical rationales for developing “cognitive social sciences” (see, for example, Turner, 2001; Sun, 2006; DiMaggio, 1997; Tetlock and Goldgeier, 2000; Camerer, 2003). Any social process occurs through the actions and therefore the mind of the individuals involved. Whether in a specific context cognition/psychology is a deciding factor or not, taking cognition/psychology into account would be a reasonable step in the process of reaching a fundamental understanding of the phenomena involved.

Some cognitive process details may turn out to be unimportant for a specific phenomenon, but this cannot be determined a priori, and needs to be ascertained through empirical and theoretical work examining all the factors involved, including cognitive factors. The cognitive sciences may serve as a basis for the social sciences, in much the same way as physics provides grounding for chemistry or quantum mechanics provides grounding for classical mechanics.

We contend that the social sciences may find their future in the cognitive sciences (at least in part), which may well lead to a powerful and productive combined intellectual enterprise. This combination (or grounding) may provide the social sciences with imaginative scientific research programs, new syntheses, hybridization/integration, novel paradigms/frameworks, and so on, beside providing the cognitive sciences with new data sources and problems to account for.

The presentation and discussion at this workshop may lead to a collection of major work in the form of a well edited book or a journal special issue.

For more information about the workshop, see: <http://www.cogsci.rpi.edu/~rsun/wsp2010>

Invited Keynote Speakers

The invited keynote speakers include:

Pascal Boyer
Paul Thagard
Mark Turner

Program Committee

The workshop program committee includes the following members:

Ron Sun (chair)
Philip Tetlock
Paul Thagard
Paul Bello
Jun Zhang

Submissions

For regular oral presentation, submit a paper of 3-8 pages, in the usual CogSci conference format (as specified at: <http://www.cogsci.rpi.edu/~rsun/wsp2010>). Email the submission to: rsun@rpi.edu

For short oral or poster presentation, submit an extended abstract of one page, in the usual CogSci conference format

(as specified at: <http://www.cogsci.rpi.edu/~rsun/wsp2010>).
Email the submission to: rsun@rpi.edu

All submissions are subject to review by the workshop program committee.

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