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# Studying political decision-making as a cognitive process: is it interdisciplinary? A bibliometric analysis

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**Introduction:** At the turn of the 21st century, concerns emerged regarding whether research at the intersection of psychology and political science should be regarded as a multidisciplinary subfield within political science or an independent, interdisciplinary field that contributes to both disciplines. More than twenty years later, how does the literature on political decision-making approach this issue? Should this application of political cognition research be viewed as a multidisciplinary subfield within political science, or as an independent interdisciplinary field contributing to both political science and psychology? This study examines the organizational framework of research and the trends in publications within the literature on political decision-making.

**Methods:** Through a bibliometric analysis, this study aims to enhance readers' understanding of the disciplinary characteristics of research in political decision-making. The analysis examines how publications are distributed across various disciplines and among different researchers contributing to the study of political decision-making, as well as the most frequently used methodologies in this field.

**Results:** The findings suggest that research tends to be more multidisciplinary than strictly interdisciplinary. This conclusion is based on three observations: (i) most publications are in political science journals; (ii) much of the research is conducted by political scientists; and (iii) the research mainly uses political science frameworks and observational designs despite political scientists' familiarity with experimental designs. Departmental affiliation is the key factor in predicting cited literature, with political scientists favoring political science research and psychologists leaning towards psychology research.

**Discussion:** The results of this study suggest that while political decision-making research draws on expertise from both disciplines, it remains fundamentally anchored in political science. Recommendations include attending conferences outside the researcher's primary discipline, provided they are relevant to their research agenda. Researchers should explore the various specialized grants and funding opportunities that aim to promote the development of new research questions and testing new methods, theoretical approaches, and innovative ideas. Faculty should integrate various disciplines into the curriculum to offer valuable and broadly applicable knowledge. By promoting open interdisciplinary dialogue, political scientists and psychology researchers can work together more effectively to tackle the challenges of political decision-making research.

## KEYWORDS

political decision-making, cognition, psychology, political science, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinarity, bibliometric analysis

## 1 Introduction

In the early 2000s, Krosnick and McGraw (2002) claimed that research at the crossroads between political science and psychology possessed the characteristics of a “psychological political science.” They defined it as “an attempt to understand how and why the processes of politics unfold as they do, with no interest in generalizing beyond the political context to other domains of human behavior” (p. 82). Notably, they noted that the literature, team composition in research addressing the interaction between human psychology and politics, and enrollment rates in political psychology graduate training programs – among which the *Summer Institute of Political Psychology* (SIPP) is one of the most prominent – were reflecting the predominance of political science. The authors concluded by arguing for a more ‘balanced’ field where research would contribute equally to the theories and methods of both psychology and political science.

Whenever two or more disciplines engage in a dialogue – be it theoretical or methodological – concerning topics of shared interest, and this interaction contributes to the accumulation of knowledge by enhancing the body of literature across all disciplines involved, the result is the dissolution of boundaries and the emergence of interdisciplinary research through integration (see Callard and Fitzgerald, 2015; Klein, 2017). It is also important to develop something “novel” in terms of knowledge from this integration (see Davies et al., 2010). In the case of multidisciplinary research, expertise is combined to investigate a research topic that is deemed too complex for a single discipline to address, yet both perspectives remain within their boundaries with respect to scientific outcomes: “[...] research is cumulative or additive [within each discipline] rather than integrative by nature” (Huutoniemi et al., 2010, p. 83).

Research investigating the relationship between the processes of human psychology and politics could arguably have grown in stature due primarily (but not exclusively) to the continued research carried out by political scientists. With the advent of information processing theory in the middle of the last century, research in cognitive sciences has come to occupy a central position within experimental psychology (Robins et al., 1999). Research that combines the study of cognitive processes with political science emerged from the intertwining of the predominance of the cognitive paradigm in psychology, and a focused interest in the study of political behavior and instances of cognitive processes in politics. The *19th Annual Carnegie Symposium on Cognition*, held in 1984, and the subsequent publication of ‘Political Cognition’<sup>1</sup>, likely correspond to this heightened interest among researchers in applying information processing theory to the study of political phenomena. Although some researchers offer a more nuanced and flexible definition (see Jost and Sidanius, 2004; Marcus, 2013), many political scientists define research at the crossing of psychology and political science as applying psychological theories to the study of political behavior and phenomena (see the definitions provided by Cottam et al., 2015; Houghton, 2014; Huddy et al., 2013; Monroe, 2001; Schildkraut, 2004; Wituski et al., 1998). Research has a prominent position in the local chapters of renowned professional political science associations (e.g., *American Political Science Association*, *Midwest Political*

*Science Association*). Additionally, a considerable number of political science departments offer graduate survey courses that combine the latest evidence on human psychology, and politics (i.e., *Arizona State University*, *Bournemouth University*, *National Pedagogical Dragomanov University*, *Ohio State University*, *University of Birmingham*, *University of California – Irvine*). Political science is also home to several seminars and yearly graduate training programs (e.g., *New York Area Political Psychology Meeting*, SIPP) that provide valuable insight into political phenomena through the interaction between human psychology and the environment in which behavior, information processing, and decision-making occur. Apart from a few exceptions in the United Kingdom (i.e., *Keele University*, *University of Kent*), psychology departments rarely combine psychology and the study of politics as part of their full-time curricula offerings. Such teaching is often integrated as a smaller component of a graduate degree program (i.e., *Cedar Crest College*, *Chicago School of Professional Psychology*, *IDC Herzliya – Lauder School of Government*, *Lewis-Clark State College*, *State University of New York at Stony Brook*, *University of Michigan – Ann Arbor*, *University of Minnesota – Twin Cities*, *Washington State University*). At first glance, research that integrates psychology and political science may seem multidisciplinary and “unidirectional,” not interdisciplinary (Iyengar, 1993).

The *International Society of Political Psychology* (ISPP) is a leading global academic organization focused on research at the intersection of political science and psychology. They believe that interdisciplinarity is vital to this field of study and should be the foundation of all research in this area. The ISPP underscores on its website the important ‘integrative role’ it has in “representing all fields of inquiry concerned with exploring the relationships between political and psychological processes” (ISPP, 2023). Several scholars also concur that the combination of both political science and psychology curricula is intrinsic to the field (e.g., Cottam et al., 2015; Deutsch and Kinnvall, 2001; Huddy et al., 2013), encouraging the dissolution of boundaries across all disciplines involved. Given these perspectives, there is some ambiguity regarding the disciplinary nature of the domain; it remains unclear whether research at the juncture of psychology and political science is predominantly carried out within the field of political science, or if this research is generally seen as being interdisciplinary. The issue appears to be part of an ongoing debate within the field (for instance, see Haste, 2012; Iyengar, 1993; Krosnick, 2002; Schildkraut, 2004), one which has failed to reach a consensus to this day.

Emphasizing the ambiguity regarding the disciplinary nature of political psychology, the review by Druckman et al. (2009) urged researchers to adopt interdisciplinary approaches and incorporate insights from cognitive science and evolutionary psychology into political science. Engaging in this process could lead to a deeper understanding of some of the most fertile research topics in the field, particularly those that target individual psychological dispositions and transient cognitive states to explain the behavior of political elites and voters, as well as public opinion formation. This could include expertise (Krosnick, 1990; McClurg, 2006), political efficacy (e.g., McDonnell, 2020), genetics (e.g., Fowler and Dawes, 2008), levels of cognitive demand/mental workload (Krosnick, 1991), personal psychological health (Flinders et al., 2020), and cognitive strategies involved in managing complex information (e.g., Bécharde et al., 2023; Bolsen and Palm, 2019; Lau and Redlawsk, 2001; Suedfeld and Tetlock, 2019).

More than twenty years later, the question remains: What became of the plea made by Krosnick and McGraw? Does such observation hold true for the subfields within the discipline that merge a focus on individual processes, central to cognitive psychology, with the examination of

1 The volume was a gathering of the work presented at the *Carnegie Symposium on Cognition* that included theories, methodologies, and empirical findings related to how individuals process political information, make decisions, and engage in political behaviors (see Lau and Sears, 1986).

interactions in political behavior among individuals, institutions, and political structures, which is a fundamental aspect of political science (e.g., Farnham, 1990; Fiske et al., 1983; Hafner-Burton et al., 2013; Nosek et al., 2010)? In this article, we investigate whether the study of political decision-making from the standpoint of cognitive information processing should be considered an independent, interdisciplinary field that contributes to both cognitive psychology and political science, or if it should be viewed as a multidisciplinary subfield within political science. We conduct a bibliometric analysis to identify trends in the intellectual structure of this particular domain (Donthu et al., 2021a; Ellegaard and Wallin, 2015). Our focus on political decision-making is not arbitrary. Political scientists and researchers in psychology have collaborated successfully in political decision-making studies, which have been highly cited in the scientific community (e.g., Fiske et al., 1990; Pietraszewski et al., 2015; Spezio et al., 2008). Through this study, we aim to deepen our understanding of the disciplinary dynamics of the literature by investigating the connections between authors, research design, and journal discipline (see Donthu et al., 2021b). In conducting the quantitative analysis of publications, we portray research by describing: (i) the disciplinary fields of the scientific journals publishing the political decision-making literature; (ii) research designs; and (iii) the nature of the scientific sources referenced in the field. In addition, we offer a depiction of the profile of researchers in terms of disciplinary affiliation, and research team, while concurrently conducting an appraisal of the multivariate factors that potentially underlie the publication trends.

## 2 Data and methods

We have performed a bibliometric analysis to investigate the disciplinary characteristics of research on political decision-making. Bibliometric analysis is a method of reviewing literature that quantitatively evaluates patterns of publication, citation, and collaboration among researchers. It provides insight into the structure and development of scholarly discourse. In our research process leading up to data extraction, we utilized the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines as developed by Moher et al. (2010) (for a recent update of the PRISMA guidelines, see Page et al., 2021). This application of PRISMA was specifically tailored to guide our literature search, screening, and inclusion decisions. However, it is crucial for our readers to understand that, despite employing the PRISMA framework for these initial stages, we neither conducted a systematic review nor performed a meta-analysis. Our use of PRISMA was confined to establishing a rigorous and transparent approach to selecting and extracting data from the relevant literature. An experienced information specialist, with extensive training in literature search strategies and years of experience in conducting systematic reviews, crafted a detailed search protocol. This protocol was then customized for use in the subsequent databases: *Web of Science* (SCI and SSCI), *OVID Medline* (All), *OVID PsycINFO*, *ABI/Inform*, *International Bibliography of the Social Sciences* (IBSS), *PAIS Index*, *Sociological Abstracts*, *Worldwide Political Science Abstracts*, and *EBSCO*<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The advent of computers in the 1950s gave rise to information processing theory, an important theoretical framework within cognitive psychology aimed at explaining human learning through the different stages of information

Two concepts, (1) 'Cognition', and (2) 'Politics', were combined to organize search queries within bibliographic databases. We have chosen to use 'cognition' for two main reasons. Firstly, it encompasses a wider range of cognitive processes akin to decision-making. In studies of political decision-making, researchers may examine both formal executive functioning rooted in neural activity (e.g., attention, memory, perception) as well as higher-order decision-making processes that require some level of consciousness. Secondly, this term is consistent with the information processing theory from which it emerged in the late 1950s. By adopting this approach, we can identify studies focusing on political decision-making from the theoretical standpoint of information processing. To ensure we cover the lexical family of both concepts, we use truncation at the end of root words (i.e., cogniti\*; politi\*). We used broad search strings for cognition and politics instead of specific terms, to avoid missing important information regarding cognitive functioning and the phenomena authors regard as manifestations of politics. The search strategy for the first concept included the following keywords: 'cognition,' 'cognitive,' 'cognitive process,' 'cognitive science(s),' 'cognitive psychology,' 'cognitive theory,' and 'cognitivism.' For the second concept, relevant keywords included 'politics,' 'politic,' 'political psychology,' and 'political science.' We conducted all searches within two months (August–October 2022) using Covidence to streamline the review process. Although we followed the PRISMA framework to guide our literature search, screening, and inclusion process, it is important to note that the search terms we employed may have somewhat restricted our results. This limitation arises from the extensive body of literature on political behavior and the specific focus of our work within the broader context of information processing theory. However, our aim is not to present a general argument about all research that intersects psychology and political science. Instead, we are concentrating on political decision-making. In this context, our inductive method for identifying relevant articles has been both thorough and effective, yielding results applicable to our research question.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established before starting the identification process to ensure consistency and reproducibility, as well as to reduce subjectivity (see Moher et al., 2010). Predefined criteria also save time by avoiding the examination of irrelevant studies. Studies were selected for inclusion if they investigated political decision-making or related cognitive processes, such as judgment, assessment, evaluation, reasoning, inference, problem-solving, as well as choice-making and preference selection, within the framework of information processing theory. Articles included need to offer an empirical analysis (i.e., no theoretical-only papers, book reviews, narrative and historical reviews, commentaries, and essays) and a single bibliography (i.e., no textbooks or collective works). We excluded articles addressing the clinical aspect of cognitive psychology (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapies, psychodynamic approach to clinical psychology, humanistic psychotherapy, psychoanalysis,

processing that occur in the human mind, understood as a complex system similar to a computer (see Miller, 2003; Reed, 2017). Specifically, information processing refers to the approach that focuses on how humans acquire, transform, compact, elaborate, encode, retrieve, and use information (see the classic work by Neisser, 2014). Please refer to the [Supplementary materials](#) for additional information on the search strategy and Boolean programming queries.

Gestalt psychology), or referring to cognition in terms of age-related cognitive decline or pathology; and articles discussing cognition under the larger concept of “cognitions” – that is, healthy or pathological/distorted thoughts in clinical psychology. We have chosen not to discuss abnormal cognition or specific pathological cognitive states that can affect decision-making patterns in politics. Although there is a vast amount of literature on this topic (see the seminal work by Lasswell, 1986; Mack, 1985; Mehrabian, 1996), our focus is on gathering articles that assume decisions are made based on mental faculties that operate within usual parameters and without significant impairment. Articles not covering cognitive information processing and focusing solely on describing a particular phenomenon at the intersection of psychology and political science from an anthropological, management, or purely sociological standpoint, were excluded from the analysis. Articles primarily focusing on cognitive processes related to emotion and affect, moral cognition, social or distributed cognition, and cognitive competence more broadly were also excluded. Only peer-reviewed articles written in English<sup>3</sup> were included for consideration. We did not use limitations by year of publication.

Each piece found in our initial corpus was screened by one of two reviewers according to title and abstract. A second reviewer screened the full text of each study. An independent auditor was responsible for validating whether the reasons for the exclusion provided by the reviewers correspond to the contents of the excluded articles. A consensus procedure in case of disagreement on full-text appraisal was in place but was not deemed necessary. Following the identification process, we assembled the descriptive attributes of selected articles (i.e., title, issue date, keywords, journal name, discipline, research design, and methodology). We also compiled the number of references from political science, psychology, or any other discipline for each of the articles included in our study. Articles published in *Political Psychology*, the flagship journal of the ISPP, along with those in the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, were categorized under the ‘other’ category to prevent undue influence on the analyses. Journals that do not fall within the fields of psychology or political science were classified using a similar system. Scientific journals in the fields of public administration, international relations, and international theory were regarded as belonging to political science. For each author, we identify institutional (disciplinary) affiliation.

The bibliometric analysis used performance analysis techniques (Donthu et al., 2021b) to derive insights from bibliographic data. We calculated metrics related to publications (number of publications, sole-authored, co-authored, and number of contributing authors) and citations (diversity, percentage of references from political science, psychology, and other disciplines). The results of the bibliometric analysis are presented next.

### 3 Descriptive statistics

A total of 8,548 original articles were identified at first. After the withdrawal of duplicates, 8,454 articles remained. Following the screening

process, 766 articles were considered relevant for full-text appraisal. Ultimately, 72 articles met the eligibility criteria and were included in the analysis (see Figure 1). Five of the 31 articles published in political science journals are found in *Political Behavior* and four in the *American Political Science Review*. The remaining articles were published in psychology (16 articles) with a maximum of three papers in a single journal (*Judgement and Decision Making*), and in other disciplinary or general social sciences venues (25 articles) with twelve articles in *Political Psychology*. There are thus more articles in our corpus in political science journals that study political decision-making than in all other disciplines combined.

Table 1 shows the distribution of research designs per journal type. In terms of research design, experiments are most common in psychology (7 out of 16) and in other non-political science journals (10 out of 25). In political science, observational studies are more common (14 out of 31) than experiments, which still make up a significant part of political decision-making research (12). Studies that combine experimental and observational designs (i.e., mixed-methods) are present in all three venues, but in lesser numbers.

We analyzed the number of citations in each article to depict the diversity of sources mobilized by research in political decision-making. We made use of the *Herfindahl–Hirschman Index* (HHI) as a synthetic measure of diversity<sup>4</sup>. This measure tends toward zero when there is a high level of diversity, and toward 1 when there is less. The average HHI index in our corpus stands at 0.48, which is a sign of mild diversity (as only a small number of disciplines are engaged in the research domain). In addition, we looked at the percentage of cited works found in each discipline. Results show that articles found in political science journals include in their bibliography an average of 62% of research from political science and 22% from psychology. In psychology journals, an average of 52% of the works cited are from psychology, while an average of 29% are from political science. In general journals, 37% of the cited pieces are from political science and 41% are from psychology sources.

We also took a closer look at the various profiles of researchers in the field. We acknowledge the existence of a cultural contrast between political science and psychology (at least in terms of research on political decision-making), notably in the author order preferences (i.e., political scientists tend to value the first author, while researchers in psychology seem to confer the position of last author to the senior researcher), and the prevalence of single-author articles. Table 2 shows how single-author articles are distributed. There are 19 single-authored articles in the review, 14 of which have been conducted by researchers affiliated with a political science department.

How do interdisciplinary collaborations manifest within the scope of research centered on political decision-making? We find a mean HHI index of 0.96 for studies issued in political science journals, indicating that the level of diversity among co-authors is noticeably low in these journals. 29 of the 31 articles issued in political science journals are published by co-authors from the same discipline. When excluding single-authored articles, there are 17 out of 19 articles without diversity in disciplinary affiliation. There is slightly more diversity in the psychology literature (average HHI = 0.72). This is in part driven by the lesser prevalence of

<sup>3</sup> Although we did not include peer-reviewed articles written in French, we surveyed recent publications, notably in two of the most prominent French-language political science journals, the *Revue Canadienne de Science Politique*, and the *Revue Française de Science Politique*. This search yielded no relevant articles.

<sup>4</sup> The Herfindahl–Hirschman Index is a measure of concentration widely used in different fields of economics. It was originally developed separately by Hirschman (1945) and Herfindahl (1950) to measure the market concentration of an industry.



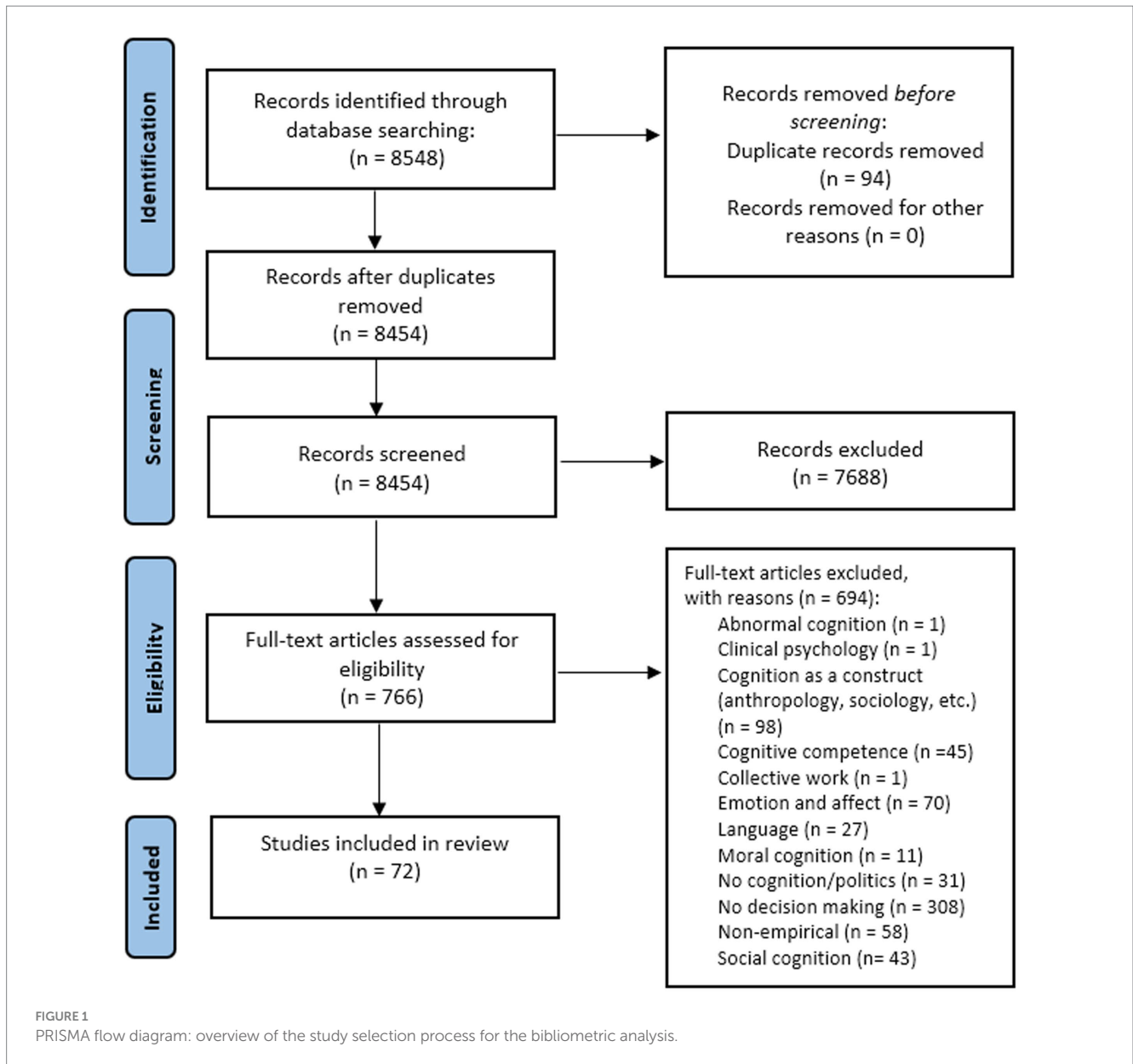


TABLE 1 Distribution of research design per journal type.

Journal discipline	Experimental	Mixed Methods	Observational	Total
General	10	4	11	25
Political Science	12	5	14	31
Psychology	7	6	3	16
All	29	15	28	72

single-authored papers. However, it is of interest to note that among the 16 articles issued in psychology journals, seven display an absence of diversity in the affiliations of their respective authors. Articles published in non-disciplinary journals show, on average, an HHI of 0.86, which is somewhere between what we observe in political science and psychology. Out of the 25 articles in this category, 17 have co-authors from the same discipline. If we exclude single-authored articles, the proportion goes to 10 out of 19.

## 4 Explaining disciplinary diversity and publishing strategy

One goal of the current study was to investigate the factors that may help explain the publication trends in the field of political decision-making, and determine whether this area of research should be considered an interdisciplinary field, that contributes to both cognitive psychology and political science, or

TABLE 2 Distribution of first authors.

Journal discipline	Single author	Multiple authors	Total
General	2	8	10
Political Science	14	24	38
Psychology	3	21	24
All	19	53	72

TABLE 3 OLS regressions table.

Covariates	Model 1 HHI ref	Model 2% of pol sci ref	Model 3% of PSYCHO REF
<b>(First author Pol Sci dept)</b>			
First author psycho dept	-0.04 (0.05)	<b>-0.32</b> (0.08)	<b>0.25</b> (0.07)
First author other dept	0.02 (0.03)	-0.04 (0.09)	0.12 (0.10)
<b>(First author Pol Sci Ph.D.)</b>			
First author psycho Ph.D.	0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.07 (0.06)
First author other Ph.D.	<b>-0.09</b> (0.05)	-0.16 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.10)
Authors HHI	0.04 (0.08)	-0.11 (0.15)	0.12 (0.13)
<b>(Experimental)</b>			
Mixed Methods	0.03 (0.04)	0.06 (0.06)	-0.03 (0.05)
Observational	<b>0.06</b> (0.03)	0.04 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
Intercept	0.41 (0.07)	0.69 (0.14)	0.13 (0.13)
N	72	72	72
R2	14.6%	40.4%	41.1%
RMSE	0.12	0.19	0.17

Coefficients in bold are statistically significant at a 90% level of confidence.

if it is a subfield within political science that draws on multiple disciplines. We thus estimate three parametric models (see Table 3) where the outcomes are first the diversity of sources referred to in the bibliographies of articles included in the review, and second, the percentages of sources coming from either political science or psychology.

In the first model, we set out to assess a series of potential predictors to explain the level of diversity in the bibliography of each article. The outcome variable is a synthetic HHI that takes into account the proportion of published work in political science, psychology, and other academic disciplines. We first look at the characteristics of authors and co-authors. The relationship between the first author's affiliation with a psychology department (rather than political science) and the sources listed in bibliographies is found to be non-significant. We also do not find a statistically significant difference between papers where the first author holds a Ph.D. in psychology rather than in political science. However, when the first author holds a Ph.D. in another discipline, diversity in citations tends to increase ( $\beta = -0.09, p = 0.071$ ). The effect

is substantial, with a 90% level of statistical significance. Interestingly, a more diverse group of authors in terms of disciplinary affiliation – that is, with a lower HHI – is not statistically associated with a more diverse bibliography. In terms of designs, studies involving observational data alone tend to mobilize less diverse references ( $\beta = 0.06, p = 0.081$ ) than studies relying exclusively on experiments. The relationship is statistically significant at a 90% level of confidence.

In model 2, the outcome variable is the percentage of sources cited in the bibliography that come from political science journals. Results show that when the first author is affiliated with a psychology department, the share of political science articles in the bibliography decreases by 32 points ( $\beta = -0.32, p = 0.001$ ) compared to a first author who is affiliated with political science. There is no statistically significant relationship between the discipline of the first author's Ph.D. and the percentage of political science references. Neither the diversity of authors nor the research designs seem to predict citation counts in political science.

In model 3, the dependent variable is the proportion of references originating from psychology journals. When the lead author is associated with a psychology department, there is a notable increase of over 25 percentage points in the proportion of references from psychology ( $\beta = 0.25, p = 0.001$ ), compared to studies led by researchers from political science departments. Within the framework of Model 3, covariates do not show any statistically significant correlations with the dependent variable. Similarly, research designs fail to demonstrate any statistical significance as predictors of citations from psychology journals.

During the final validation stage, we test the robustness of each model by adding six extra references that were not originally included in the reviewed articles (i.e., Kahan, 2013; Kertzer, 2022; Kim et al., 2010; Lodge and Hamill, 1986; Lodge et al., 1995; Mintz et al., 1997). Although considered relevant for identifying trends in the intellectual structure of the literature on political decision-making, these references do not alter the results.

## 5 Discussion

The 'plea' made at the turn of the century by Krosnick and McGraw argued that research at the juncture of psychology and political science would need a "real shift in the practice [...] through a self-conscious attempt to contribute to psychological theory by paying careful attention to the political context" as a mean to "engage psychologists" (p. 84) finds reflection in the literature on political decision-making. Our results suggest that research displays traits associated with a multidisciplinary subfield within political science. Leading studies in the field of political decision-making are primarily published in political science journals. Mainstream psychology journals – whether generalist or specialized – are not the medium first considered for disseminating findings related to the cognitive processes associated with political decision-making.

Part of the explanation for this phenomenon might be attributed to the expectations inherent in the realm of research within cognitive psychology and the investigation of human decision-making. Although a fair number of psychology journals cover empirical research of broad interest, efforts not adhering to the dominant experimental framework in cognitive psychology might be perceived by editors as simply not fitting within the discipline. Alternatively, it is plausible that decisions

made in the political domain could be seen as ‘exceptional’ peculiarities that are intertwined with the inherent dynamics of politics, distinct from original manifestations of higher-order cognitive functions in controlled laboratory environments. Another possible explanation may be that the political decision-making corpus borrows theories and methods from cognitive psychology, without necessarily pursuing the objective of dissolving boundaries or contributing to the accumulation of knowledge in the discipline. This could be an indication that political scientists – who have conceivably facilitated the growth of the field as it stands today – are hesitant to submit their work to psychology journals, given that their primary goal is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in political science.

One key finding concerns the composition of research teams and the variety of designs. Although a significant number of studies in political decision-making involve researchers in psychology, most studies are conducted by political scientists only. Authors diversity in political science journals is low; political scientists appear to connect easily with one another. The same goes for researchers in psychology, yet to a lesser extent. Researchers are used to working closely with fellow members of their department, whereas collaboration with colleagues from other fields seems to be a relatively rare occurrence. One possible explanation for the prevalence of ‘departmental collaboration’ could be the attitude toward the role of research itself. While most political scientists would agree that research on political decision-making should not be considered solely devoted to social action, it is worth noting that some researchers in psychology might associate it with applied research too closely tied to social commitment (Garzon Perez, 2001). Such a view may conflict with their attitude toward experimental psychology research – that is, a value-neutral domain that is not inherently meant to engage in public discourse. This may explain why the few references to politics in psychology studies are mainly illustrative (Bar-Tal, 2002).

Methodological differences can hinder interdisciplinary collaboration by creating challenges in aligning research approaches and interpreting findings. Political science studies often utilize observational data, which may not provide the controlled conditions necessary for drawing definitive causal conclusions. In contrast, controlled psychology experiments may sometimes lack real-world relevance, risking external and ecological validity. Effective data collection depends on using rigorous methods and having the necessary expertise. The quality and robustness of a questionnaire largely depend on the researcher’s ability to define the concept being measured clearly and to select appropriate items in the correct order with suitable wording. This approach helps to minimize bias and ensures that the outcome is not simply an artifact of the measurement tool’s design. In laboratory experiments, researchers must establish a systematic procedure for consistent data collection among all participants. The experimenter must clearly explain the tasks to be completed in the lab, calibrate the instruments, and control variables to isolate the desired effect, if it exists. This rigorous methodology transforms what could be mere ‘anecdotal evidence’ into validated findings through replication. Each discipline has different expectations and standards concerning evidence, causality, data collection, and the broader role of research. These differences can create barriers to mutual understanding and collaboration, which limits the potential for better integration.

Future research should investigate the mechanisms behind low interdisciplinary collaboration between psychology and political science researchers in political decision-making. One approach would be to explore further the differences in methodological

standards guiding research practices in the two disciplines to determine if there are norms or standards that are too divergent. It is likely that researchers with different views on what constitutes good methodological practices in research may find it challenging to collaborate. However, fostering the development of interdisciplinarity in research is possible by progressively familiarizing researchers with other disciplines’ concepts, methodologies, and perspectives. We recommend that researchers gradually attend conferences and symposia outside their primary discipline, as long as they are relevant to their research agenda. Researchers should use such forums to ask unconventional questions that enhance perspectives by offering fresh viewpoints often unknown to traditional insiders. Next, researchers should consider collaborating with peers from other disciplines through grants and funding opportunities aimed at developing new knowledge and encouraging exploratory initiatives. Numerous resources are available to support formulating novel research questions and experimenting with various methods, theoretical approaches, and ideas. This funding generally backs short-term research initiatives that last up to two years and are carried out by teams involving researchers who have never collaborated before. Faculty members should promote the integration of various disciplines into students’ curricula. This approach will help students become familiar with the concepts and terminology researchers use in other fields. While they may not become specialists, they will gain widely applicable knowledge across different areas. Finally, researchers should embrace the opportunity to learn new things, even if it means ‘being taught’ by peers from different disciplines. This openness is crucial for effectively tackling unpredictable research challenges.

In the past few years, several researchers underlined the need for a more integrated approach to research investigating the relationship between psychology and political science (e.g., Cacioppo and Visser, 2003; Erişen et al., 2013; Gawronski et al., 2015; Hatemi and McDermott, 2012; Theodoridis and Nelson, 2012). It is evident from our findings that there is potential for further integration within the subfield of political decision-making. One could argue that the biggest challenge ahead is to establish a common understanding of research focused on how individuals process political information and make decisions. What are the different forms that this political decision-making research can take, and what might be the best methods for researchers to use as windows into cognitive processes? We suggest that attention be given to specifying the meaning of research in a way that encourages political scientists and researchers in psychology to cross their competencies to study topics of shared interest. A first step toward better integration could be to emphasize a theoretical and methodological ‘two-way dialogue’ within a commonly agreed definition, which emphasizes the necessary “bidirectional interaction” (Monroe, 2001, p. 17) between *what* (i.e., the receptor) is under investigation and *how* (i.e., the source) it is studied (see Iyengar, 1993). Yet, for this to happen, researchers may have to call into question existing paradigms within their disciplines and engage with colleagues outside their departments whose interests may not be, at first, fully compatible with their own. They may have to devote time to convincing peers to set aside projects that cohere better with their current research programs to focus on new ones, for which the learning curve is likely to be steep. It is in such collaboration, though, that interdisciplinarity lies.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Author contributions

BB: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. MB: Formal analysis, Supervision, Writing – review & editing. LL: Project administration, Writing – review & editing. MO: Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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## Supplementary material

The Supplementary material for this article can be found online at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpos.2024.1305055/full#supplementary-material>

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