Political Methodology: Past and Future

- **The Past**: Established as a major subfield of *political science*
  - One of the largest sections in APSA
  - Annual summer conference of ≈ 200 attendees
  - PA as most cited political science journal

- **A Future**: Demonstrate contributions to wider *statistics* community
  - Engage with methodologists in other disciplines
  - Export new methods as well as import existing methods
  - Train methodologists as well as substantive researchers
Political Methodology as an Interdisciplinary Field

- **Political methodology**: Study of statistical methods (broadly defined) as applied to political science research
- Political methodology as an interdisciplinary field

  ![Venn Diagram]

- Rise of interdisciplinary (substantive) research implies a greater need for methodologists from various disciplines to work together
- Examples: network analysis, spatial statistics, natural language processing, causal inference

Causal Inference

- **Causality**: fundamental to scientific inquiry
- **Statistics**: required for experimental and observational studies
- Numerous common challenges and opportunities
  - ignorability (statistics), unconfoundedness (epidemiology), no omitted variable (econometrics)
  - mediation effects (psychology), indirect effects (epidemiology)
  - regression discontinuity designs (education, econometrics)
  - structural equation modeling (econometrics, computer science)
  - necessary and sufficient causes (social sciences, epidemiology)

- Statisticians, Biostatisticians, Epidemiologists, Econometricians, Psychometricians, Sociologists, Computer scientists, Philosophers, Engineers, etc. and Political methodologists!

- Mid-Atlantic causal modeling conferences
The Contributions of Political Methodology

Three important contributions:
1. **Pedagogical**: explaining how to use existing methods
2. **Empirical**: applying existing methods to substantive research
3. **Theoretical**: developing new methods that are widely applicable

Importing, Consuming, and Exporting

Political methodology as a late comer: PA started in 1989
- Journal of Royal Statistical Society in 1838
- Biometrika in 1901
- Econometrica in 1933
- Psychometrika in 1936

“Late development” strategy: make significant improvements rather than invent from scratch

Training Future Political Methodologists

- **The Past**: Methodologists receive most training in other disciplines
- **A Future**: We train next generation of methodologists
- Interdisciplinary training is good but we should not just send prospective methodologists elsewhere
- Essential for recruiting talented students

**Graduate education:**
1. Cover the advanced topics as well as the basics
2. Train methodologists as well as empirical researchers
3. Recruiting talents from outside of the US

**Undergraduate education:**
1. Methods sequence
2. Continuity with the graduate curriculum
Towards the Future of Political Methodology

- Many past successes and many future challenges
- Going beyond political science by influencing other disciplines
- Recruit and train next generation of methodologists
- Foster internationalization