

# ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING OF THE EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH SECTION OF THE APSA

2017 September 01

San Francisco, CA

## PEOPLE ATTENDING

Vin Arceneaux (Editor of JEPS), Anna Bassi, John Bullock (Treasurer), Daniel Butler, Alex Coppock, David Doherty, Conor Dowling, Thad Dunning (Chair-Elect-Elect), Kevin Esterling (Chair of the Journal Advisory Committee), Jessica Gottlieb, Macartan Humphreys (Chair), Nahomi Ichino (member of the Council), Reuben Kline, Adam Seth Levine, Devra Moehler, Laura Paler, Jessica Preece, Lynn Vavreck, Amber Wichowsky. This is not a complete list.

## NOMINATIONS

The slate was adopted unanimously:

- Treasurer (beginning 2018 September): David Nickerson
- Secretary (beginning 2018 September): Anna Bassi
- Council (beginning today): Adam Berinsky
- Council (beginning 2018 September): Dustin Tingley
- Council (beginning 2018 September): Claire Adida

## REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF THE JOURNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (KEVIN ESTERLING)

Eric Dickson stepped down from his position as chair of the *Journal of Experimental Political Science*. In light of the need to quickly appoint a new editor, there was no open call for editors. Instead, the applications for the editorship that were submitted during the last call were reviewed. Feedback from the section leadership was solicited. There was strong, broad support for Vin Arceneaux's candidacy. Arceneaux accepted and is now the journal's editor.

## REPORT OF THE EDITOR OF THE *JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL POLITICAL SCIENCE* (VIN ARCENEUX)

- Praise for the process that Eric Dickson implemented.
- Rick Wilson has been especially helpful during the transition.
- Introducing new assistant editors and a “strong associate editor” model.
- Aiming for more efficient processing of submissions.
- Goal: desk-rejection of 50% of submissions.
- New types of articles will be introduced.
- A new, 40-person editorial board will soon be announced.

## REPORT OF THE TREASURER (JOHN BULLOCK)

As of 2016 July 31, the section had a balance of \$24,161.09. As of 2017 July 31, it had a balance of \$26,427.91.

*Revenue.* Over the 12-month period that ended on 2017 July 31, the section gained \$6864.00 in revenue. This figure represents a 3% decline from the revenue recorded for the previous 12-month period. Revenue declined by 3% because membership declined by 3%. (All section revenue comes from membership dues.)

*Expenses.* Over the 12-month period that ended on 2017 July 31, the section spent \$4,597.18.

### *Projections:*

- The *Journal of Experimental Science* had been publishing two issues per year. In the future, it will publish three issues per year. The addition of the extra issue will increase section costs by approximately \$2,100.
- Membership fees have been eliminated for graduate students who opt to receive the journal only in online form, rather than in print. Our hope is that this change will ultimately lead to more paying members. But in the short run, the section will lose approximately \$1,000 in revenue that it had gained through graduate student fees.
- The treasurer expects the section to incur a net loss of approximately \$1,000 in the next 12 months.

*Membership numbers.* The section’s account balance is large relative to its expenses. In the short term, section finances are not worrisome. In the long term, increasing the number of paying section members will be critical to stabilizing section finances.

### AWARDS: BEST BOOK

The Book Award Committee for the Experimental Research section of the APSA has selected *Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction* by Samara Klar and Yanna Krupnikov to receive the section's 2017 book award. In the past, books have received this award either for their methodological contribution and innovation, or for their application of experimental methodologies to important substantive questions. This year's award winner falls into the latter category, asking why so many individuals choose to identify as politically independent, and what consequences this independent identification has for political participation. The authors use a series of 11 different experiments to test various aspects of their theory, and to show the ways in which reactions to partisanship and partisan disagreement shape political attitudes and behaviors. The experiments are straightforward, implemented across a variety of survey and laboratory settings, and offer innovative measures of attitudes and behaviors—asking individuals to identify imagery in some cases, tracking displays of political messaging in others. *Independent Politics* provides an outstanding example of the use of innovative experimental research in the service of important substantive research on politics. We are pleased to award the prize to this excellent piece of scholarship.

### AWARDS: BEST PAPER

The submissions for best paper this year were fantastic. The committee, which is comprised of Jessica Preece, Christian Grose, and Liz Carlson, commends all of the authors for the really interesting experimental work that they are doing.

We ultimately chose to give the Best Paper award to David Doherty, Conor Dowling, and Michael Miller for their paper “The Effects of Candidate Race and Gender on Party Chairs’ Assessments of Electoral Viability.” This paper surveys Democratic and Republican Party County Chairs and uses a conjoint experiment to assess the extent to which these party leaders believe voters will penalize women, Latinx, and Black candidates at the ballot box. The authors find that party chairs do not believe that voters will penalize women candidates, but they do believe they will penalize minority candidates. The only exception are Democratic Party chairs in a small number of heavily minority districts.

The committee appreciated several things about this paper. First, the analysis was very careful. The authors made good and judicious use of the large amount of information that a conjoint experiment necessarily produces. Second, the sample was compelling--experimental work on elites can be difficult to execute, but it brings insights into behind-the-scenes political processes that are very important for us to understand. Finally, this is an important question for democratic representation. Perceptions often matter as much as reality in politics. If party elites believe that candidates from underrepresented groups can't get elected, they are unlikely to actively recruit or support them, no matter how electorally viable they actually are.

In short, this was an excellent paper in both style and substance. Congratulations!

## AWARDS: PUBLIC SERVICE

The Public Service Award for 2017 is given to Kelly Bidwell, the Director of the Office for Evaluation Sciences (OES) of the US Government's General Services Administration (GSA). Since 2015, Kelly has helped the OES, which used to be called the White House Social and Behavioral Sciences Team (<http://sbst.gov>), run roughly 30 randomized field experiments within the United States government. The director of the group since September 2016, she has tirelessly (and creatively and cheerfully) advocated the use of experiments to help improve the policy and governance practices of the federal agencies. In addition to her work as an advocate and experimenter within the government, she has hired and mentored roughly 15 academics as fellows of the team (that is how I got to know her). And she has continued to seek out collaborations with academics who are not able to come to work in DC for the year (such as David Nickerson, Adam Berinsky, Cara Wong, in political science as well as others in public health and economics and public policy). Throughout her work both as a team member and now leader of the team, she has kept the integrity of the research (including transparency and reproducibility) at the forefront: this has been costly at times, when, an administration has desired fast action without a randomized trial to assess the social science advice. However, I think that this focus has paid off: for example, the fact that the first year of trials yielded one study with a null effect; a study which was published in a peer reviewed public health journal (Health Affairs), helped establish the credibility of the team both inside and outside of the government. It was such a rare move to publish a null result that our team gained a lot of trust among those in the government most concerned with truth and good governance and less with credit claiming. Before joining this team (I think she was the third person to join the team back in 2014) she worked at innovations for poverty action, overseeing field experiments in Ghana. In that capacity she attended EGAP meetings and began her work as a practitioner collaborating with academics. She does public service via experiments, and she serves the cause of experiments via her role as a public servant. It is hard to imagine another person who has done so many experiments with so many collaborators having such important public policy impacts

## AWARDS: BEST DISSERTATION

Alex Coppock's dissertation is a true intellectual tour de force. Through a series of 20 (!) experiments, he calls into question our common understanding of a fundamental aspect of the democratic process: how citizens respond to new information that is counter-attitudinal. He argues in favor of a Bayesian reasoning framework that stands in stark contrast to theories of motivated reasoning. One of the key empirical distinctions is that he finds scant evidence in favor of attitude polarization, across a wide variety of experiments on different political issues, with different kinds of treatments, presented in different contexts, and with various convenience and national samples. He also engages with existing literature in great detail, either arguing against their experimental design choices (and backing up his arguments with replications) and/or describing in very precise terms where his results overlap and where they differ. Lastly, in addition to the substantive contributions, he also makes an important methodological contribution to questions of experimental sampling, and also tackles questions regarding the persistence of new information. Overall, for both his empirical and methodological contributions, we believe that Alex's dissertation greatly merits the APSA Experiments Section dissertation prize.