Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science

Laboratory experiments, survey experiments, and field experiments occupy a central and growing place in the discipline of political science. The Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science is the first text to provide a comprehensive overview of how experimental research is transforming the field. Some chapters explain and define core concepts in experimental design and analysis. Other chapters provide an intellectual history of the experimental movement. Throughout the book, leading scholars review groundbreaking research and explain, in personal terms, the growing influence of experimental political science. The Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science provides a collection of insights that can be found nowhere else. Its topics are of interest not just to researchers who are conducting experiments today, but also to researchers who believe that experiments can help them make new and important discoveries in political science and beyond.

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Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science

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Contents

List of Tables ix
List of Figures xi
Contributors xiii
Acknowledgments

INTRODUCTION

1 Experimentation in Political Science
   James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia 3

PART I: DESIGNING EXPERIMENTS

2 Experiments: An Introduction to Core Concepts
   James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia 15
3 Internal and External Validity
   Rose McDermott 27
4 Students as Experimental Participants: A Defense of the “Narrow Data Base”
   James N. Druckman and Cindy D. Kam 41
5 Economics versus Psychology Experiments: Stylization, Incentives, and Deception
   Eric S. Dickson 58

PART II: THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERIMENTS IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

6 Laboratory Experiments in Political Science
   Shanto Iyengar 73
Contents

vi

7 Experiments and Game Theory’s Value to Political Science
   John H. Aldrich and Arthur Lupia
   89

8 The Logic and Design of the Survey Experiment: An Autobiography of a
   Methodological Innovation
   Paul M. Sniderman
   102

9 Field Experiments in Political Science
   Alan S. Gerber
   115

PART III: DECISION MAKING

10 Attitude Change Experiments in Political Science
   Allyson L. Holbrook
   141

11 Conscious and Unconscious Information Processing with Implications
   for Experimental Political Science
   Milton Lodge, Charles Taber, and Brad Verhulst
   155

12 Political Knowledge
   Cheryl Boudreau and Arthur Lupia
   171

PART IV: VOTE CHOICE, CANDIDATE EVALUATIONS, AND TURNOUT

13 Candidate Impressions and Evaluations
   Kathleen M. McGraw
   187

14 Media and Politics
   Thomas E. Nelson, Sarah M. Bryner, and Dustin M. Carnahan
   201

15 Candidate Advertisements
   Shana Kushner Gadarian and Richard R. Lau
   214

16 Voter Mobilization
   Melissa R. Michelson and David W. Nickerson
   228

PART V: INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS

17 Trust and Social Exchange
   Rick K. Wilson and Catherine C. Eckel
   243

18 An Experimental Approach to Citizen Deliberation
   Christopher F. Karpowitz and Tali Mendelberg
   258

19 Social Networks and Political Context
   David W. Nickerson
   273

PART VI: IDENTITY, ETHNICITY, AND POLITICS

20 Candidate Gender and Experimental Political Science
   Kathleen Dolan and Kira Sanbonmatsu
   289

21 Racial Identity and Experimental Methodology
   Darren Davis
   299
## Contents

22 The Determinants and Political Consequences of Prejudice
   *Vincent L. Hutchings and Spencer Piston*

23 Politics from the Perspective of Minority Populations
   *Dennis Chong and Jane Junn*

### PART VII: INSTITUTIONS AND BEHAVIOR

24 Experimental Contributions to Collective Action Theory
   *Eric Coleman and Elinor Ostrom*

25 Legislative Voting and Cycling
   *Gary Miller*

26 Electoral Systems and Strategic Voting (Laboratory Election Experiments)
   *Rebecca B. Morton and Kenneth C. Williams*

27 Experimental Research on Democracy and Development
   *Ana L. De La O and Leonard Wantchekon*

### PART VIII: ELITE BARGAINING

28 Coalition Experiments
   *Daniel Diermeier*

29 Negotiation and Mediation
   *Daniel Druckman*

30 The Experiment and Foreign Policy Decision Making
   *Margaret G. Hermann and Binnur Ozkececi-Taner*

### PART IX: ADVANCED EXPERIMENTAL METHODS

31 Treatment Effects
   *Brian J. Gaines and James H. Kuklinski*

32 Making Effects Manifest in Randomized Experiments
   *Jake Bowers*

33 Design and Analysis of Experiments in Multilevel Populations
   *Betsy Sinclair*

34 Analyzing the Downstream Effects of Randomized Experiments
   *Rachel Milstein Sondheimer*

35 Mediation Analysis Is Harder than It Looks
   *John G. Bullock and Shang E. Ha*

### AFTERWORD

36 Campbell’s Ghost
   *Donald R. Kinder*

**Name Index**

**Subject Index**
List of Tables

4.1 Comparison of Students versus Nonstudent General Population  page 52
9.1 Approximate Cost of Adding One Vote to Candidate Vote Margin  118
9.2 Voter Mobilization Experiments Prior to 1998 New Haven Experiment  119
11.1 Schematic of Racial Implicit Association Test Using Pleasant and Unpleasant Words and European American and African American Stereotype Words  162
15.1 Methodological Consequences of Differences between Observational and Experimental Studies of Candidate Advertisements  217
25.1 Testing the Uncovered Set with Previous Majority Rule Experiments  361
26.1 Payoff Schedule  375
26.2 Payoff Schedule  377
28.1 Potential Coalitions and Their Respective Payoffs  406
32.1 One-by-One Balance Tests for Covariates Adjusted for Blocking in the Blocked Thirty-Two-City Study  466
32.2 One-by-One Balance Tests for Covariates in the Blocked Eight-City Study  467
32.3 One-by-One Balance Tests Adjusted for Covariates, by Post-Stratification in the Blocked Thirty-Two-City Study  471
33.1 Intent-to-Treat Effects  489
34.1 Classification of Target Population in Downstream Analysis of Educational Intervention  499
List of Figures

1.1 Experimental Articles in the American Political Science Review
4.1 Sampling Distribution of $b_T$, Single Treatment Effect
4.2 Sampling Distribution of $b_T$, Heterogeneous Treatment Effects
4.3 Sampling Distributions of $b_T$ and $b_Tz$, Heterogeneous Treatment Effects
6.1 Race of Suspect Manipulation
6.2 Facial Similarity Manipulation
9.1 Graphical Representation of Treatment Effects with Noncompliance
10.1 Pre-Test–Post-Test Control Group Design
10.2 Pre-Test–Post-Test Multiple Experimental Condition Design
10.3 Post-Test–Only Control Group Design
10.4 Post-Test–Only Multiple Experimental Group Design
11.1 Spreading Activation in a Sequential Priming Paradigm for Short and Long
Stimulus Onset Asynchrony
21.1 Example of Experimental Design for Racial Identity
24.1 A Prisoner's Dilemma Game
24.2 Contributions in a Public Goods (PGs) Game
24.3 A Common Pool Resource (CPR) Game
25.1 Outcomes of Majority Rule Experiments without a Core
25.2 Majority Rule with Issue-by-Issue Voting
25.3 Effect of Backward and Forward Agendas
25.4 Effect of Monopoly Agenda Setting
25.5 Sample Majority Rule Trajectory for Configuration 1
25.6 (a) Uncovered Set and Outcomes for Configuration 1. (b) Uncovered Set and
Outcomes for Configuration 2
25.7 Senatorial Ideal Points and Proposed Amendments for Civil Rights Act of 1964
26.1 Median Voter Theorem
32.1 Efficiency of Paired and Unpaired Designs in Simulated Turnout Data
List of Figures

32.2 Graphical Assessment of Balance on Distributions of Baseline Turnout for the Thirty-Two-City Experiment Data 466
32.3 Poststratification Adjusted Confidence Intervals for the Difference in Turnout between Treated and Control Cities in the Thirty-Two-City Turnout Experiment 470
32.4 Covariance Adjustment in a Simple Random Experiment 472
32.5 Covariance Adjustment in a Blocked Random Experiment 473
32.6 Covariance Adjusted Confidence Intervals for the Difference in Turnout between Treated and Control Cities in the Thirty-Two-City Turnout Experiment Data 476
33.1 Multilevel Experiment Design 488
36.1 Number of Articles Featuring Experiments Published in American Political Science Review, 1906–2009 526
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This volume has its origins in the *American Political Science Review*’s special 2006 centennial issue celebrating the evolution of the study of politics. For that issue, we proposed a paper that traced the history of experiments within political science. The journal’s editor, Lee Sigelman, responded to our proposal for the issue with a mix of skepticism – for example, asking about the prominence of experiments in the discipline – and encouragement. We moved forward and eventually published an article in the special issue, and there is no doubt that it was much better than it would have been absent Lee’s constant constructive guidance. Indeed, Lee, who himself conducted some remarkably innovative experiments, pushed us to think about what makes political science experiments unique relative to the other psychological and social sciences. It was this type of prodding that led us to conceive of the *Cambridge Handbook of Experimental Political Science*. Sadly, Lee did not live to see the completion of the *Handbook*, but we hope it approaches the high standards that he always set. We know we are not alone in saying that he is greatly missed.

Our first task in developing the *Handbook* was to generate a list of topics and possible authors; we were overwhelmed by the positive responses to our invitations to contribute. Although we leave it to the reader to assess the value of the book, we can say that the experience of assembling this volume could not have been more enjoyable and instructive, thanks to the authors. Nearly all of the authors attended a conference held at Northwestern University (in Evanston, IL, USA) on May 28 and 29, 2009. We were extremely fortunate to have an exceptionally able group of discussants take the lead in presenting and commenting on the chapters; we deeply appreciate the time and insights they provided. The discussants included Kevin Arceneaux, Ted Brader, Ray Duch, Kevin Esterling, Diana Mutz, Mike Neblo, Eric Oliver, Randy Stevenson, Nick Valentino, and Lynn Vavreck. Don Kinder played a special role at the conference, offering his overall assessment at the end of the proceedings. A version of these thoughts appears as the volume’s Afterword.
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We view this Handbook as a testament to the work of many scholars (a number of whom are authors in this volume) who set the stage for experimental approaches in political science. Although we cannot be sure what many of them will think of the volume, we do hope that it successfully addresses a question raised by an editor’s (Druckman’s) son who was seven when he asked, “Why is political ‘science’ a ‘science’ since it doesn’t do things that science does, like run experiments?”

– James N. Druckman, Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia