

## ④ 早稲田政治経済学術院実験室に関する外部評価

### THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA



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Professor Shiro Yabushita  
Project Leader, 21 COE-GLOPE  
School of Political Science and Economics  
Waseda University  
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Tokyo, Japan 169-850

Dear Professor Yabushita:

I am writing, as you and Professor Kohno have requested, to offer my observations and recommendations about the Experimental Lab at the School of Political Science and Economics. I visited the lab and gathered information about it while I was attending the Conference on Experimental Social Science at the end of October. I have relevant experience for this review in that I was largely responsible for establishing a lab for political psychology experiments at the University of Illinois, and I am now completing the establishment of the Political Opinion Lab at the University of British Columbia. Much of my research is based on experiments and surveys.

To learn about the lab, I have talked several times with Professor Funaki and Professor Kohno. In a lengthy interview, Professor Kohno showed me the records of studies that have been done, translating some of the key data about them, and answered a number of questions that I had sent him via email. Professor Funaki provided a tour of the lab itself during the conference.

I understand that the lab was created primarily through the initiative of the economics faculty but is also used by the political science faculty. The facility has twenty stations with computers, outfitted with the z-Tree software for game theory- and other experiments, along with equipment for monitoring experimental subjects, an eye-movement recording device, and other equipment. The management of the lab is informal; no one has formal administrative responsibility for it. It is made available for studies by graduate students as well as faculty.

My first observation is that the lab has been a notably productive resource for the school. The list of projects undertaken in the lab covered a wide variety of topics, with funding both from within the university and from external sources. Unfortunately, no one has kept a list of the publications that have resulted from research in the lab. But several papers that are likely to lead to high-quality publication based on experiments conducted in the lab were presented or discussed during the conference. The Experimental Social Science Conference and the joint Workshop with the Center for Research in Experimental Economics and Political Decision-Making (CREED) of the University of Amsterdam were compelling evidence of the achievements that the lab has facilitated. The school has developed a fruitful partnership with internationally prominent scholars in experimental economics and other areas of experimental social science at the University of Amsterdam, other European universities, and the United States. Without the lab, the School would not be a participant at the international level in these important areas of research. The school should be highly pleased with these outstanding accomplishments, which bring international distinction to the university.

Nevertheless, the lab has some rather serious shortcomings, in both its facilities and its administrative arrangements. With respect to facilities, the most important point is that the space is too small for the number of stations. The distance between work stations is so small that one has some difficulty merely walking through the room, even when the stations are not occupied. This makes the experience of participating in experiments less attractive, and will reduce people's willingness to participate. More important, the research subjects are seated so close to each other that they will sometimes distract each other, reducing the effectiveness of the experiments.

Related to the size of the space, the observation area is not separated from the area with the workstations. The staff person performing the observation is within view of the subjects and is also likely to distract them, especially because these workers will not always strictly comply with appropriate procedure. They may, for example, exchange gestures with subjects they happen to know. This potential for distraction is a serious problem. Experiments are often highly demanding of subjects' attention and powers of calculation; the objective often is precisely to find out how their decisions compare with those posited in normative economic models. So even modest distractions can seriously undermine an experiment, especially because you can't determine whether it is happening. Distraction will just reduce differences in performance between treatment and control groups, resulting in weaker findings. *I strongly recommend that you find a larger space for the lab, and one that will permit a separate control room.*

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There are also some other problems with the physical arrangements. The lab does not have a separate waiting room. Subjects for the next session of an experiment must wait in the corridor, where they interfere with the normal traffic patterns, and are likely to make noise that may distract the subjects. The main room should have soundproofing, for the same reason. Finally, I noticed that the signage for the lab in the building is very poor. Subjects undoubtedly spend a good deal of time finding the lab.

With respect to administrative arrangements, no one has formal administrative responsibility for managing the lab—that is, for allocating use, acquiring and maintaining equipment, raising funds for improvement, hiring staff, and dealing with the relevant departments and programs. Professor Funaki, Professor Kohno, and others end up doing most of what needs to be done, but it is not appropriate to expect such efforts on a volunteer basis, and naturally some tasks are overlooked. I suspect a formally appointed director would have been able to give me a list of publications.

From conversation with Professor Kohno, it strikes me that the best administrative arrangement would be one that located the lab as centrally as possible within the university—so that there would be incentive to make the facility available to all the researchers who could benefit from it. In particular, he mentioned that the Psychology Department does not have a lab for computer-based experiments. A great deal of research in cognitive and social psychology, in particular, is done with such experiments. The principal software is entirely different, but quite affordable. (The main programs—the MediaLab-DirectRT suite from Empirisoft, and Inquisit—cost a few thousand dollars.) *I strongly urge that the university appoint a director of the lab and clarify its reporting responsibilities—and that it consider locating the lab more centrally within the university to make the resource more widely available.*

In closing, I want to congratulate everyone connected with the lab on its remarkable accomplishments. I hope it will receive the support needed to make the contributions of the lab even greater.

Sincerely,



Paul J. Quirk  
Professor