

March 29, 2018

Dear MPSA Leadership (Vincent L. Hutchings, President; Elisabeth Gerber, President-Elect; and Jan Leighley, Immediate Past President),

Writing as the APSA Women's Caucus as a group, we are concerned about the Midwest Political Science Association lack of transparency thus far on the allegations of sexual harassment against Bill Jacoby, editor of the *AJPS*. *AJPS* is one of our discipline's top journals, and as such it should uphold the highest ethical standards. We believe waiting for three investigations to be completed is insufficient, for several reasons, as detailed below. Instead, we ask that MPSA leadership suspend Jacoby as editor until the results of independent evaluations are complete. It taints our discipline as a whole for Jacoby not to be visibly investigated. In addition, if he is found to be in violation of ethical standards as a political scientist (separate from the MPSA and his own institution's investigation), it reflects poorly on our discipline to belatedly remove him from a position of great power within the discipline.

While only one sexual harassment allegation has been made publicly (via the statements by Rebecca Gill at the Southern Political Science Association's Annual Meeting and her subsequent social media posts), we know of at least one more that has been privately filed with MSU. In that case, we have facilitated a connection between the second accuser and a senior scholar in the field to ensure her allegations are taken seriously. However, she has asked to remain anonymous to be protected from any retaliation. Although we cannot publicly share this woman's story, we believe that these two accusations, along with everything we know from research on sexual harassment, indicates that it is highly likely to reflect a pattern of behavior that affects many more victims.

We have also learned that Jacoby (and others in collusion with him at MSU) created such a negative environment for female graduate students in that Department that a large number just left the program (and the discipline of political science) entirely. This is one of the most unfortunate and pernicious effects of this kind of harassment, and further damages the already leaking pipeline for women in our field. For many years, the situation in the MSU Department was so bad for women that the Department started a special "female retention program" to address the issue, which itself is evidence of a deeper set of problems. Generally, with these cases it is not just sexual harassment, but a larger negative climate that disproportionately impacts women and other minorities. At MSU, that appears to be the case in no small part because of the behavior of Bill Jacoby, as well as those who protected him in this kind of negative behavior. Our professional codes of conduct are clear that this kind of behavior is unacceptable, but they are worthless words on paper if not enforced.

It is inadequate to wait for the conclusion of the university investigations into Jacoby for two key reasons. First, the incentives are not correctly set up for a single university to do the work that political science as a discipline should do in this regard. For example, as the recent Larry Nasser case at MSU painfully reveals, universities have a very hard time holding accountable the "stars" that make them famous on a national and international level. Furthermore, the more recent situation with the Jorge Dominguez at Harvard is illustrative here. A conscientious set of investigators at a single university may realize that it is indeed in their best interests to uncover and expose the truth, if his actions have been predatory. Nevertheless, recent events have shown that we cannot always assume conscientious investigators: Nasser was investigated many times over, with no effect. Also, the current university investigation into Jacoby, being part of a university bureaucratic process, may also take a very long time. Our discipline's reputation continues to suffer in the meantime.

Perhaps even more importantly, we believe it sends the wrong signal for our discipline (which is national) not to investigate at the national level, and instead to wait for an individual institution to police those active at the national level in our field. As our national organization has recognized, and encoded in its rules, it is very much to our discipline's advantage to maintain and enforce high standards of ethical behavior. MPSA itself also has its own rules, which may not be the same as those for the individual investigating university. We fear a crisis of confidence within our discipline until this is thoroughly investigated, whether Jacoby is either condemned or cleared.

Despite much progress made in recent decades toward improving workplace situations for women, as recent news and research has made abundantly clear, the problem of sexual harassment has far from disappeared. APSA's recent Survey of Sexual Harassment at APSA Meetings systematically revealed the dimensions of the continuing problem within our own profession. To not visibly act on the most prominent, recent case of harassment does not send a good signal. The lack of action will have significant repercussions for women in our profession. As an example, we also note that research on publication rates by gender have found AJPS to have the lowest rate of publishing female authors among the major journals, with a mere 18% of journal articles being written by women (Teele and Thelen 2017). With an editor accused of sexual harassment, more women may choose not to submit their articles to the journal, as we have heard some are doing. This will further erode the journal's gender gap. We have also learned of an alarming number of scholars within our discipline who say they will not send their work to AJPS nor serve as reviewers while Jacoby continues to serve as editor. This should be thought of as akin to a vote of "no confidence." If others choose to no longer accept requests for peer review until the editor changes, this could drastically affect the journal's ability to function, and certainly could undermine scientific integrity. We understand that some scholars are choosing this exit option as a way of voicing their dissatisfaction with the process. MPSA should recognize that this creates a crisis for its flagship journal. Until our discipline acts, the journal that should be our primary publishing organ is compromised.

Institutionally, the gold standard of action here would be for the MPSA council to ask Jacoby to step aside while the council conducts its own investigation, which should be informed by – but not limited to – the results of the MSU university investigation. We believe more people, from outside Jacoby's own institution, would come forward if the MPSA council made a public call for information in the interests of clearing the air and finding the facts. Our discipline needs a public process, one conducted by political scientists in the name and interest of strengthening our discipline, rather than relying on individual universities to police the behavior of our national leaders.

For these reasons, we recommend five concrete actions that the MPSA leadership should take:

1. AJPS and the MPSA should develop and implement policies to investigate and remove scholars in leadership positions who have been accused of misconduct.

- The council and journal leadership teams should be exemplars of professional behavior.

2. We call for the immediate removal or suspension of Jacoby during this investigation.

- As editor in chief of AJPS, Jacoby is still making the final decisions on all manuscripts save anything that Rebecca Gill (or other survivors who have come forward) may submit. This is major conflict of interest. We are concerned that Jacoby may behave in a retaliatory manner against WCPS members, and our supporters, and other allies because of our vocal

opposition to his powerful position in the discipline. We are particularly concerned about members who may want to submit manuscripts to AJPS who may not have their manuscripts fairly reviewed and/or processed.

3. We demand full transparency – when possible – for this investigation (and all others).

- Audre Lorde forcefully articulated that “it is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence. And there are so many silences to be broken.” These silences often protect the accused. While we believe that due process is tremendously important, we are extremely concerned with the optics of silence and perceived inactivity that occurs when the discipline’s leadership is largely silent regarding these allegations.
- We recommend that the MPSA leadership institute a process for assessing and processing complaints at the MPSA level. It is imperative that this process have integrity for all parties including the accused. This is the opportunity to set the example of how MPSA will act moving forward.

4. We demand that the MPSA develop a code of conduct for all MPSA members as well as AJPS editorial team members.

- Other organizations - such as the National Conference of Black Political Scientists - have similar policies that protect the organization and its members from sexual harassment and misconduct. These policies also have the ability to transform the culture of the organization into one that is more inclusive and welcoming of marginalized groups.

5. We demand a mechanism to increase work about gender, sexuality, and race.

- The near absence of these topics in the AJPS and other top ranked journals contributes to the marginalization of scholars of these topics and to the impoverished incorporation of these issues into the study of politics in ways that, we contend, are related to why harassment and misogyny are as prevalent as they are, both in political science and the world.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

The Women’s Caucus for Political Science