

September 15, 2010

**Grant Report:
Helping Philosophers to Engage Empirically
(The Experiment Month Initiative)**

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To the American Philosophical Association Board of Officers:

In the few months since it began, the Experiment Month Initiative has designed and posted a website on which there have been thousands of hits, eventuating in more than 30 applications for our project. Our goals for the next phase of the initiative involve helping selected participants develop their studies, in advance of our hosting the experiments online in March of 2011. We have so far spent only a small portion of our award, but are planning to spend the remainder over the course of the next year, primarily on conducting online experiments and hosting a poster session presenting selected participants' results at the Eastern APA Division Meeting in 2011. These points are discussed in greater detail below.

So far the initiative has spent very little of its \$5000 grant. The grant staff designed a webpage to announce the initiative: <http://www.yale.edu/cogsci/XM/Home.html>, which it promoted through a variety of philosophy blogs and websites. We purchased two months (June and August) of advertisement space on Leiter Reports for \$500. Posts concerning the initiative also appeared on many philosophy blogs, including Ethics, etc.; PEA Soup; Experimental Philosophy; Thoughts, Arguments, and Rants; and Brains. (I also used a \$100 trial voucher with Google Ad Words to link the initiative with related searches.)

With this investment of \$500 and our efforts, we have been able to generate 2,418 visits to our website since June 1, when our campaign began. Almost 90% of our visits came from four countries: the United States, Great Britain, Canada, and Germany, in descending order (see figure 1). The next ten highest contributors included eight European countries, Australia, and Japan.

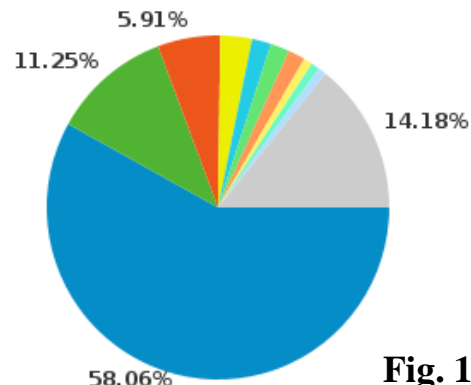


Fig. 1

The deadline for submissions of experiment proposals was September 1st (to allow people to submit before the fall semester began in earnest). Through the months of June, July, and, especially August, individuals interested in submitting contacted the experiment month staff to discuss different ideas for their studies. After many discussions of the validity and worth of numerous experiments, the Experiment Month Initiative received 31 submissions in the form of institutional review board proposals. Completing these proposals, while a challenge to those unfamiliar with the process, preceded in full consultation with the experiment month staff and constituted an important learning experience in itself. Roughly half of our submissions came from professors at a range of different universities including, for example, California State/Northridge, Clemson University, Syracuse, the University of Leeds, and the University of Southern Indiana. The others came from philosophy graduate students (and two undergraduates).

We are now in the review process. It is already apparent that the submissions we received are mostly very good. Soon we plan to announce the accepted proposals and begin a new phase of improvements and revisions to the studies. During this phase participants will be offered independent consultation with highly experienced experimentalists. In March, 2011, we will conduct the selected experiments online. A large portion of our award will be devoted to that phase of the project.

The APA's funding has been crucial to our success—indeed, to the existence of this initiative altogether. We happily acknowledge the APA's support for our efforts and will continue to do so in all ongoing work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Phelan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Phelan
Yale University