

In Honor of Elinor “Lin” Ostrom: The Vincent and Elinor Ostrom Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis, Department of Political Science, Indiana University

James Walker · Mark Isaac

Received: 11 June 2014 / Accepted: 15 June 2014 / Published online: 26 June 2014
© Economic Science Association 2014

Numerous tributes to Elinor (Lin) Ostrom have appeared across a wide spectrum of academic and non-academic venues (e.g., see citations to tributes listed in the references). Certainly, Lin’s academic accomplishments are much too long and too broad for us to begin to adequately capture here. Needless to say, in addition to her path-breaking research, Lin’s career as an advocate for research examining issues of collective action included many honors, including becoming the first woman to win the *Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences*. In addition, Lin’s career included numerous elected offices, including serving as the president of the *American Political Science Association*, the *Public Choice Society*, and the *International Association for the Study of the Commons*. In this special issue of *Experimental Economics*, we wish to highlight two of Lin’s particular accomplishments, her choice to embrace experimental methods as central to the study of collective action and her leadership in creating the biennial conference on social dilemmas that became the impetus for this special issue.

In the 1981–1982 academic year, Vincent and Lin Ostrom were invited to participate in a year-long interdisciplinary program at the Center for Interdisciplinary Research at Bielefeld University in Germany on “Guidance, Control, and Performance Evaluation in the Public Sector.” Their time at Bielefeld provided them the opportunity to interact with leading scholars working in the areas of game theory and experimental methods. Already a pioneer in studying collective action and governance of the commons, at a stage in her career when many researchers are set in their intellectual outlooks, Lin began to plan a new research agenda, namely

J. Walker (✉)
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA
e-mail: walkerj@indiana.edu

M. Isaac
Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, USA

laboratory experiments for studying behavior in common-pool resource decision settings. The early experimental work on common-pool resources, much of which is synthesized in E. Ostrom et al. (1994), helped to pave the way for an ever-broadening collection of experimental studies on behavior in common-pool resource settings, conducted by researchers from around the world. In her role as a pioneer in this area, Lin was the coauthor of more than twenty studies, including Cox et al. (2013), Cárdenas et al. (2004), Janssen et al. (2010), Walker et al. (2000), Ostrom et al. (1992), Ostrom and Walker (1991), Walker et al. (1990), and Gardner et al. (1990). In many ways, the importance Lin placed on experimental research is summarized by the quote from her presidential address to the American Political Science Association:

Puzzling research questions can now be addressed more systematically. New research questions will open up. We need to expand the type of research methods regularly used in political science. We need to increase the level of understanding among those engaged in formal theory, experimental research, and field research across the social and biological sciences. The foundations of policy analysis need rethinking. Ostrom (1998, 15)

In 2002, Lin was among a small group of scholars who organized the working group on Testing Theoretical Models of Individual Behavior in Dynamic Social Dilemmas, its first meeting held at Indiana University Bloomington in 2003. From that first meeting—which included 18 scholars drawn from economics, political science, and other disciplines—this group grew into an informal multidisciplinary network of scholars who held meetings in 2006, 2008, 2010, and 2013 at four different sites (Max Planck Institute, Jena, Florida State University, Rice University, and California Institute of Technology), with 30–40 scholars attending the more recent meetings. Lin participated in each of the first four meetings, and was on the planning committee for the 2013 meeting at the time of her death in 2012. It was at the last meeting that the idea of producing special issues of the *Journal of Theoretical Politics* and *Experimental Economics* was planned in her honor. These two special issues are in each case coedited by core members of the working groups: Eric Coleman and Rick Wilson, Jimmy Walker and Mark Isaac, respectively.

It is an honor for us to have had the opportunity to participate in the creation of this special issue of *Experimental Economics*. We wish to thank the numerous referees who played a key role in bringing together this special issue and, of course, to David Cooper and Jacob Goeree without whom this issue could not have been created.¹

References

Cárdenas, J. C., Ahn, T. K., & Ostrom, E. (2004). Communication and co-operation in a common-pool resource dilemma: A field experiment. In S. Huck (Ed.), *Advances in understanding strategic*

¹ James Walker had no participation in the editorial consideration of the Leibbrandt, Ramalingam, Sääksvuori, and Walker paper. Likewise, Mark Isaac did not manage the editorial consideration of the Dickinson, Ducher, and Rodet paper.

- behaviour: Game theory experiments and bounded rationality—Essays in honour of Werner Güth.* New York: Macmillan.
- Cox, J., Ostrom, E., Sadiraj, V., & Walker, J. M. (2013). Provision versus appropriation in symmetric and asymmetric social dilemmas. *Southern Economic Journal*, 79, 496–512.
- Gardner, R., Ostrom, E., & Walker, J. M. (1990). The nature of common-pool resource problems. *Rationality and Society*, 2(3), 335–358.
- Janssen, M., Holahan, R., Lee, A., & Ostrom, E. (2010). Lab experiments for the study of social-ecological systems. *Science*, 328(5978), 613–617.
- Ostrom, E. (1998). A behavioral approach to the rational choice theory of collective action. *American Political Science Review*, 92(1), 1–22.
- Ostrom, E., Gardner, R., & Walker, J. M. (1994). *Rules, games, and common-pool resources*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Ostrom, E., & Walker, J. M. (1991). Communication in a commons: Cooperation without external enforcement. In T. Palfrey (Ed.), *Contemporary laboratory research in political economy*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Ostrom, E., Walker, J. M., & Gardner, R. (1992). Covenants with and without a sword: Self-governance is possible. *American Political Science Review*, 86, 404–417.
- Walker, J., Gardner, R., Herr, A., & Ostrom, E. (2000). Collective choice in the commons: Experimental results on proposed allocation rules and votes. *Economic Journal*, 110(460), 212–234.
- Walker, J., Gardner, R., & Ostrom, E. (1990). Rent dissipation in a limited-access common-pool resource: Experimental evidence. *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 19, 203–211.

Tributes to Elinor Ostrom

- Arrow, K. J., Keohane, R. O., & Levin, S. A. (2012). Elinor Ostrom: An uncommon woman for the commons. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(33), 13135–13136. doi:10.1073/pnas.1210827109.
- Folke, C., Anderies, J. M., Gunderson, L., & Janssen, M. A. (2012). An uncommon scholar of the commons. *Ecology and Society* 17(2), 31. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5751/ES-05110-170231>.
- Herzberg, R., & Allen, B. (2012). Elinor Ostrom (1933–2012). *Public Choice*, 153(3–4). <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11127-012-0030-1/fulltext.html>.
- International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC). (2012). *IASC deeply regrets the passing of Elinor Ostrom*. <http://www.iasc-commons.org/content/iasc-deeply-regrets-passing-elinor-ostrom>.
- International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI). (2012). *IFRI mourns the passing of founder Elinor Ostrom*. <http://www.ifriresearch.net/2012/09/11/ifri-mourns-the-passing-of-founder-and-nobel-laureate-elinor-ostrom/>.
- Janssen, M. (2012). Obituary, Elinor Ostrom (1933–2012). *Nature*, 487(172). doi:10.1038/487172a.
- Nobel Prize (2009). *Autobiography of Elinor Ostrom*. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/economic-sciences/laureates/2009/ostrom-facts.html.
- The Economist (2012). *Tribute, Elinor Ostrom*. <http://www.economist.com/blogs/feastandfamine/2012/06/tribute>.
- Wilson, R. K., & Eckel, C. C. (2013). Elinor Ostrom: A magnificent and irreplaceable treasure. *Southern Economic Journal*, 79(3), 486–495. doi:10.4284/0038-4038-2012.221.