

Incentives for open science: New prizes to encourage research integrity and transparency in social science.

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The high-profile political science study on same-sex marriage views in the U.S., now determined to be fraudulent, is the latest case exposing the need for incentive structures that make academic research open, transparent, and replicable. The U.S. study has been retracted, largely thanks to the discovery of inconsistencies in the data by an outside group. The academic community must continue to strengthen the systems that ensure the integrity of research evidence. [Temina Madon](#) shares the launch of prizes run by the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences (BITSS) that look to provide recognition, visibility and cash awards to the next generation of researchers and senior faculty who promote more open practices.



In the last decade, the demand for evidence to inform the public policy has increased. While this demand has driven investment in data-intensive research, there are still a number of incentives, norms, and institutions that undermine the openness and integrity of social science research. This leads to a biased and incomplete record of research – which can create significant problems, because scientific evidence is used to support policies that can affect millions of people.

Transparent research practices are integral to the validity of science. To encourage best practices, the Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences (BITSS) has established [The Leamer-Rosenthal Prizes for Open Social Science](#). BITSS is an initiative of the Center for Effective Global Action (CEGA) at the University of California, Berkeley. The prizes, which provide recognition, visibility and cash awards to both the next generation of researchers and senior faculty, are generously supported by the John Templeton Foundation.



Mapping Open Science at [MozFest](#) Image credit: [Billy Meinke](#) / CC BY

“In academia, career advances and research funding are usually awarded on the basis of how many journal articles a scientist publishes. This incentive structure can encourage researchers to dramatize their findings in ways that increase the probability of publication, sometimes even at the expense of transparency and integrity,” according to [Edward Miguel, PhD](#), Professor of Economics at UC Berkeley and Faculty Director of CEGA. “The Leamer-Rosenthal Prizes will help speed the adoption of transparent practices by recognizing and rewarding researchers and educators whose work and teaching exemplify the best in open social science.”

The competition consists of two categories. The Emerging Leaders in Open Social Science Research Prize will award cash prizes of up to \$15,000 to early-career researchers who adopt transparent research practices or pioneer new methods to increase the rigor of research. The Leaders in Open Social Science Education Prize will award up to \$10,000 to faculty leaders who mainstream research transparency into their teaching. Winners will receive their awards, and have the opportunity to present their research, at the BITSS Annual Meeting in December 2015 at UC Berkeley.

Leamer-Rosenthal Prize entries will be reviewed by a distinguished panel of leading scholars. The deadline to enter is September 13, 2015, and winners will be notified by October 13, 2015. To enter or learn more, please go to: www.bitss.org/prizes. BITSS is an international network of researchers and institutions committed to improving the standards of openness and integrity in economics, political science, psychology, and related disciplines. Central to BITSS is the identification of useful tools and strategies for increasing transparency and reproducibility in research, including the use of study registries, pre-analysis plans, code version control, data sharing platforms, disclosure standards, and replications.

Note: This article gives the views of the author, and not the position of the Impact of Social Science blog, nor of the London School of Economics. Please review our [Comments Policy](#) if you have any concerns on posting a comment below.

About the Author

Temina Madon is Executive Director of the [Center for Effective Global Action](#) and provides leadership in the Center’s scientific development, partnerships, and outreach. She has worked as science policy advisor for the National Institutes of Health Fogarty International Center, where she focused on enhancing research capacity in developing countries. She has also served as Science and Technology Policy Fellow for the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, managing an extensive portfolio of global health policy issues. She holds a Ph.D. from U.C. Berkeley and an S.B. from MIT.

About the Center for Effective Global Action

BITSS is a program of the Center for Effective Global Action (CEGA). CEGA designs and tests solutions for the problems of poverty, generating actionable evidence for policy-makers in less developed countries. Using rigorous field trials, behavioral experiments, and tools from data science, we measure and maximize the impacts of economic development programs throughout the world. Find out [more here](#) or follow us on Twitter at [@CEGA_UC](#). Follow BITSS at [@UCBITSS](#).

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