

15 August 2017

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President)

From: Donald Kroodsmma, ex-Fellow, ABS

Re: A few post-resignation thoughts

Erasing my name from the Fellows list was easy. Ignoring the consequences of all that has led to my resignation will not be so easy.

Since being threatened with criminal harassment charges, I have kept detailed notes on everything involving this sorry saga since June 2014, partly to protect myself, but mostly in disbelief (all information is accumulating at http://donaldkroodsmma.com/?page_id=1596). These three years are the story of everything that can go bad in science, and I mean *everything* (the least of which is incompetence), and is destined to become a very public documentary (e.g., just for starters, see <http://andrewgelman.com/2017/08/13/bird-fight/>).

That's inconvenient, to say the least, for those of us who take some pride in calling ourselves scientists, though it may be healthy in the long run for science in general, especially given increasing efforts to identify self-promoting bullshit and root it out. In the short (and, depending on your response, possibly the long) term, it is certainly not good for the Animal Behavior Society, because the primary perpetrator of all this mischief is now your President (not mine!), supported by two past presidents who have been his mentors. How's all this going to play out, especially for the ABS?

I thought I'd ask a senior scientist in another discipline for an opinion. I asked two questions: 1) What's your reaction to all of the documents I have accumulated? 2) If you were an officer of the Animal Behavior Society, what would you do? Here's her response:

Holy shit! Unbelievable. Criminal harassment? You've got to be kidding, but I know you're not clever enough to make this stuff up. I've never seen a field of study so demolished in the way you took on the performance ideas. This kind of thing is unthinkable in my field. Bird song must be so small a field and so ingrown that no one challenges each other, or thinks twice about accepting whatever is published as true. Everyone can't be that stupid, can they? Reminds me of Trump's alternate realities and Fantasyland, given how many groups (though with big conflicts of interest) have dismissed your claims as "just another disagreement of the kind that commonly occurs among scientists," or something like that. It's a pity that your words on marketing and science to Podos weren't heeded over a decade ago; would have saved a lot of people a lot of grief.

That Marc Houser [sic] case intrigues me. Apparently he was exiled from academia for fabricating data, but some defend him because they feel he still got some right conclusions. Podos has obviously cooked everything in lots of other ways, and come up with lots of sexy stories that are probably all wrong. He duped in the process a whole generation of others into believing him. Using federal money for it all, you'd think that would get him into lots of trouble, if not for the research publications themselves then the extreme measures of coverup afterward (think obstruction of justice; maybe the presidents can pardon themselves). What's worse for science, the Howser or the Podos method? Both are really bad, but if I had to choose one, I'd choose Podos. A Howser in sheep's clothing maybe.

What would I do as an officer of that group? If I thought that nobody would find out, I'd be tempted to keep it quiet, and hope it all passed unnoticed. That's easiest. If it's not kept under wraps, and that seems to be the case, I'd take whatever measures I'd need to protect the members of the society. I'd ask that the president resign. Maybe he'd realize that it would be in the best interest of the society if he resigned. I'd be the "zero tolerance" officer when it comes to the kinds of things you've described that have gone on. That's the message that every graduate student entering this field should hear. Otherwise they should just go into creative writing.

You owe me. Took me a whole morning to read your stuff, though I have to admit that it was captivating. Like a good thriller, I couldn't put it down. Couldn't believe all the ways they tried to shut you down. Hope you've retained movie rights. It's certainly a great teaching device for graduate students entering any field of science (and their advisers).

I quit. I've devoted all too much time over the last three years to this effort of trying to "right the ship." Maybe all the effort was worth it. Maybe not. In a sense, you officers of the Animal Behavior Society get to write the ending to the documentary. If I were an officer, I know what I'd have to do in order to maintain the integrity of research on animal behavior and the reputation of my "scientific society." The ending would have to be one I'd be proud of.

I'm headed out to pasture.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsmas