Subjects and Scholars' Views on the Ethics of Political Science Field Experiments

Appendix and Supplemental Materials

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Survey Experiment Vignettes

Informational Field Experiment

The vignette included six manipulations: the topic of study, the presence or absence of informed consent, the size of the study, the hypothetical researcher's initials, the authorship of the flyer, and the potential impact of the study on an election. Most of these manipulated features of the features of the vignette were assigned orthogonally with equal probabilities. The topic of study was flossing, turnout, or vote choice, and the flyer was thus a reminder to floss, a reminder to vote, or a reminder than a candidate had received a DUI. Each was assigned with probability $\frac{1}{3}$. The presence or absence of informed consent was also randomized with equal probability: with probability .5, respondents saw a vignette describing a study where volunteers completed a standard informed consent process, and with probability .5 the respondents were not volunteers and did not know they were in the study. The size of the study was reported as 1,000 subjects with probability .5 and 100,000 subjects with probability .5. The initials of the researcher were randomly assigned to J, K, L, or M, each with probability .25.

There were two manipulations that were not assigned with equal probability: the impact of the study on an election and the authorship of the flyer. The topic of study determined the probability of assignment to one of the impact treatments, that is, whether the experiment might affect an election. If the topic of study was flossing, then there was no statement about the potential impact of the experiment on an election. If the topic of study was GOTV or vote choice, then the vignette included one of the following statements, each with probability .5: "The election is expected to be close and the flyer might affect who wins" or "The election is not expected to be close and the flyer is unlikely to affect who wins".

The authorship of the flyer was also not assigned with equal probability, but depended on the assignment of the consent manipulation. For versions without consent, the degree of deception was varied by either having an anonymous flyer (probability .5 given no informed consent) or a flyer from a fake group (probability .5 given no informed consent). In vignettes assigned to the standard informed consent treatment, all vignettes assigned the authorship of the flyer to the researcher.

One version of the vignette is shown below - in this case, a study on vote choice, performed without informed consent in a close election, with debriefing, and with 1,000 subjects, conducted by "Professor M":

> Professor M wants to see whether a flyer has an effect on who people vote for.
>
> During an election, Professor M chooses 1,000 people from public voter registration records to be in the study. Professor M randomly divides the list of people into two groups, and sends a flyer to one of the groups and nothing to the other group. The flyer reminds voters that one of the candidates was convicted of drunk driving five years ago.
>
> The flyer is sent anonymously with no information about the study or the professor.
>
> After the election, Professor M contacts all the people in the study and asks them who they voted for. The Professor will then see if people who received the flyer report voting differently than people who did not receive the flyer.
>
> The election is expected to be close and the flyer might affect who wins.
>
> The flyer has no return address and subjects are never told that they are in a research study.
>
> The study was approved by all appropriate committees at the researcher's university, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee.

All vignettes always contained the final sentence above - that the design had been approved by the university.

Correspondence Study Field Experiment

The second vignette had the following randomized features: consent, target, topic, burden on subjects, size, and researcher's name. The consent variable here had three values, assigned with equal probability: informed consent, no informed consent but post-study debriefing, and no informed consent without post-study debriefing. The target population was elected officials, businesses, or home sellers, with equal probability. The topic was assigned as

communication or discrimination with equal probability. The time burden on the subjects was assigned as 5, 10, 15, 30, or 60 minutes, with equal probability. The size of the study, that is, the number of hypothetical subjects was randomly assigned to 100, 500, 1,000, or 10,000 with equal probability. Again, the name of the research was assigned with equal probability.[1]

The text below shows the version where there is no informed consent and no debriefing, there are 10,000 subjects, the research is on communication by elected officials, and the experiment has a high burden of 60 minutes on subjects:

> Professor J wants to study public communication. Professor J sends an email to 10,000 elected officials. In the email, Professor J pretends to be someone who lives in the elected official's district, and asks for information about a government program.
>
> Professor J randomly varies something about the hypothetical citizen's request.
>
> Professor J will then see if elected officials are more likely to answer some types of questions than others.
>
> It takes each elected official about 60 minutes to provide the information.
>
> The elected officials are never told that they are participating in a study.
>
> The study was approved by all appropriate committees at the researcher's university, including the Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Committee.

In the version with consent, the researcher recruits volunteer subjects, shows them a hypothetical email from a constituent, customer, or home-buyer, and asks them whether or not they would answer it.

Dependent Variables

For all the vignettes, subjects and scholars were asked to answer the following question:

> To what extent do you agree that it is acceptable to conduct this study?

[1]Each vignette had a different researcher's initials, so their probabilities across vignettes were not independent.

Respondents could then choose any of the following answers, which were coded from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree): Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Somewhat Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Somewhat Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree.

Citizen-subjects were also asked,

> Suppose you learned that a study like the one described above had been conducted in your community, and that you were one of the subjects. Which of the following best describes how you would feel about being included in the study?
>
> I would be glad I was in the study
>
> I would rather not have been in the study
>
> I would not care either way

The wording was slightly different for versions of the vignette where there was no deception. For vignettes with consent, the question was, "Suppose you learned that a study like the one described above was planned for your community. Which of the following best describes how you would feel about being included in the study?", and possible answers were also slightly modified. For example, instead of "I would rather not have been in the study", respondents could choose, "I would rather not be in the study."

Sample

In theory, the sample of scholars could yield duplicate respondents - scholars that answered the survey twice. There are two mechanisms for this. The first is that APSA's database might have multiple emails per individual, as scholars may change institutions or otherwise have different email addresses over time. The second mechanism has to do with a sampling error. APSA reported that the addresses in the two samples were unique, but when the survey was administered, some potential respondents informed me that they had already taken the survey. After some investigation, I discovered that there were 2,862 duplicate email addresses in the two samples. To avoid any subjects' taking the survey twice, I immediately contacted duplicate respondents and asked them not to take the survey. However, because the survey was fully anonymized, I cannot link any email addresses to responses, and thus

cannot identify which subjects completed the survey and which did not. Thus, in theory, some respondents could have completed the survey twice, although given that subjects were uncompensated, scholars would have to feel very strongly to bother doing so.

Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Respondents

	Subjects		Scholars	
Gender				
Male	43 %	1443	58 %	1007
Female	46 %	1559	31 %	540
No Response	11 %	384	11 %	184
Age				
18-25	12 %	399	2 %	43
26-35	17 %	576	32 %	554
36-45	15 %	508	25 %	432
46-55	16 %	535	15 %	263
56-65	15 %	508	8 %	138
66+	14 %	476	7 %	119
No Response	11 %	384	11 %	182
Home				
Not a Homeowner	62 %	2110	56 %	966
Homeowner	26 %	892	33 %	564
No Response	11 %	384	12 %	201
Race				
Native American	1.9 %	58	0.3 %	5
White	82.2 %	2467	87.5 %	1328
Black	8.4 %	252	1.5 %	23
Latino	7.1 %	213	6.4 %	97
Asian	3.5 %	106	3.2 %	49
Other / No Response	1.1 %	32	4.9 %	75

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Respondents (continued)

	Subjects		Scholars	
Education				
Less Than High School	2 %	57		
High School	17 %	570		
Some College	26 %	885		
College	31 %	1037		
Grad Degree	13 %	453		
No Response	11 %	384	100	1731
Position				
Grad Student			17 %	291
Post-Doc			4 %	77
Assist Prof			22 %	376
Assoc Prof			18 %	320
Full Prof			20 %	348
Other			8 %	137
No Response	100	3386	11 %	182
Institution				
Phd			72 %	1249
MA			7 %	128
BA			6 %	96
Comm. College			1 %	14
Other			3 %	58
No Response			11 %	186

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for All Respondents (continued)

	Subjects	Scholars
Field(s)		
American	40 %	614
Comparative	42 %	652
IR	23 %	353
Theory	10 %	157
Methods	16 %	245
Other/NA	5 %	76
Ever Experiment?		
No	43 %	745
Yes	47 %	808
No Response	10 %	178

Table 2: Regressions on Acceptability of Informational Field Experiments

Dependent Variable: Degree to Which R Agrees it is Acceptable to Conduct Experiment

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
No Consent	-0.614*	-1.558*	-1.018*	-2.075*	-1.017*	-2.006*
	(0.075)	(0.131)	(0.140)	(0.215)	(0.140)	(0.219)
GOTV	0.087	-0.314*	-0.334*	-0.549*	-0.340*	-0.517*
	(0.075)	(0.121)	(0.106)	(0.153)	(0.106)	(0.157)
DUI	-0.878*	-1.871*	-1.100*	-2.234*	-1.080*	-2.227*
	(0.075)	(0.112)	(0.105)	(0.160)	(0.105)	(0.164)
Fake Group	-0.382*	-0.299*	-0.388*	-0.340*	-0.387*	-0.396*
	(0.087)	(0.145)	(0.086)	(0.151)	(0.086)	(0.154)
100k Subjects	0.041	-0.031	0.039	-0.129	0.025	-0.099
	(0.061)	(0.094)	(0.086)	(0.127)	(0.086)	(0.132)
Close Election	-0.071	-0.557*	-0.048	-0.594*	-0.037	-0.554*
	(0.061)	(0.094)	(0.086)	(0.127)	(0.086)	(0.132)
No Consent*GOTV			0.837*	0.524*	0.857*	0.377
			(0.150)	(0.253)	(0.149)	(0.260)
No Consent*DUI			0.447*	0.706*	0.410*	0.608*
			(0.149)	(0.223)	(0.149)	(0.227)
No Consent*100K			0.008	0.214	0.003	0.230
			(0.122)	(0.189)	(0.122)	(0.194)
No Consent*Close			-0.039	0.086	-0.029	0.050
			(0.122)	(0.188)	(0.122)	(0.193)
Professor Name: J					-0.083	-0.360*
					(0.086)	(0.136)
Professor Name: K					-0.040	-0.009
					(0.086)	(0.136)
Professor Name: L					0.074	0.014

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Table 2 – *Continued from previous page*

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
					(0.086)	(0.137)
Education					0.074*	
					(0.031)	
Female					-0.129*	-0.270*
					(0.064)	(0.104)
Age					-0.113*	-0.138*
					(0.020)	(0.054)
White					0.182	-0.081
					(0.165)	(0.285)
Black					0.101	0.365
					(0.185)	(0.492)
Asian					0.141	-0.457
					(0.215)	(0.350)
Native American					0.286	1.491
					(0.225)	(0.920)
Latino					0.002	0.200
					(0.163)	(0.279)
Other Race					-0.064	0.008
					(0.319)	(0.322)
Ever Submitted IRB?						0.014
						(0.125)
Ever Experiment?						0.357*
						(0.107)
American						0.300*
						(0.135)
Comparative						0.098
						(0.125)

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Table 2 – *Continued from previous page*

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
IR						0.255
						(0.133)
Methods						0.088
						(0.138)
Theory						-0.324
						(0.174)
Other Field						-0.014
						(0.163)
Institution: MA						-0.183
						(0.176)
Institution: BA						0.075
						(0.206)
Institution: Com College						0.822
						(0.581)
Institution: Other						0.397
						(0.284)
Grad Student						0.035
						(0.154)
Post-Doc						-0.008
						(0.240)
Assoc Prof						-0.083
						(0.152)
Full Prof						0.150
						(0.180)
Other Position						-0.100
						(0.220)
Constant	5.551*	6.313*	5.750*	6.578*	5.808*	6.795*

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Table 2 – *Continued from previous page*

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
	(0.074)	(0.114)	(0.095)	(0.143)	(0.235)	(0.389)
N	3024	1464	3024	1464	3002	1372
* p<0.05						

Table 3: Logistic Regressions on Attitudes About Participation in Informational Field Experiment

Dependent Variable: Would Rather Not Participate ($Y = 1$); Would Be Glad to Participate or Don't Care ($Y = 0$)

(Subjects Only)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
No Consent	0.480*	0.919*	0.889*
	(0.113)	(0.221)	(0.222)
GOTV	-0.226	0.166	0.170
	(0.120)	(0.190)	(0.191)
DUI	0.823*	1.024*	1.011*
	(0.108)	(0.170)	(0.171)
Fake Group	0.345*	0.356*	0.356*
	(0.121)	(0.122)	(0.123)
100k Subjects	-0.066	-0.015	0.003
	(0.091)	(0.139)	(0.140)
Close Election	0.015	0.104	0.075
	(0.091)	(0.139)	(0.141)
No Consent*GOTV		-0.657*	-0.665*
		(0.246)	(0.248)
No Consent*DUI		-0.332	-0.281
		(0.221)	(0.224)
No Consent*100K		-0.092	-0.092
		(0.185)	(0.186)
No Consent*Close		-0.163	-0.135
		(0.185)	(0.187)
Professor Name: J			-0.075

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Table 3 – *Continued from previous page*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
			(0.129)
Professor Name: K			-0.094
			(0.129)
Professor Name: L			-0.253
			(0.131)
Education			-0.015
			(0.046)
Female			0.057
			(0.097)
Age			0.100*
			(0.030)
White			-0.365
			(0.290)
Black			-0.224
			(0.319)
Asian			-0.274
			(0.364)
Native American			-0.338
			(0.367)
Latino			-0.346
			(0.284)
Other Race			-0.336
			(0.518)
Constant	-1.631*	-1.896*	-1.760*
	(0.116)	(0.167)	(0.399)
N	2678	2678	2660
* p<0.05			

Table 4: Regressions on Acceptability of Correspondence Study Field Experiments

Dependent Variable: Degree to Which R Agrees it is Acceptable to Conduct Experiment

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
No Consent	-0.692*	-1.838*	-1.145*	-2.107*	-1.168*	-2.101*
	(0.072)	(0.108)	(0.154)	(0.230)	(0.154)	(0.236)
Target: Businessowner	0.404*	0.312*	-0.078	-0.029	-0.102	0.019
	(0.073)	(0.108)	(0.123)	(0.185)	(0.123)	(0.189)
Target: Govt Official	0.199*	-0.007	-0.068	-0.288	-0.122	-0.208
	(0.072)	(0.108)	(0.126)	(0.188)	(0.126)	(0.195)
Studying Discrimination	0.296*	0.300*	0.165	0.018	0.165	-0.003
	(0.059)	(0.088)	(0.102)	(0.153)	(0.102)	(0.159)
Number of Subjects	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Time to Respond	-0.004*	-0.011*	-0.004	-0.002	-0.004	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.003)	(0.004)
Debrief (if deception)	-0.061	0.055	-0.059	0.064	-0.059	0.099
	(0.072)	(0.108)	(0.072)	(0.107)	(0.072)	(0.110)
No Consent * Biz Owners			0.735*	0.534*	0.782*	0.429
			(0.152)	(0.227)	(0.151)	(0.234)
No Consent * Govt Offcl			0.404*	0.420	0.444*	0.342
			(0.154)	(0.229)	(0.153)	(0.237)
No Consent * Discrimination			0.197	0.438*	0.182	0.478*
			(0.125)	(0.187)	(0.125)	(0.193)
No Consent * Size			-0.000	0.000	-0.000	0.000
			(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
No Consent * Time			-0.000	-0.014*	-0.000	-0.013*
			(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)
Professor Name: J					0.008	0.108

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Table 4 – *Continued from previous page*

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
					(0.081)	(0.123)
Professor Name: K					-0.035	0.052
					(0.087)	(0.135)
Professor Name: L					0.088	-0.005
					(0.083)	(0.127)
Education					0.099*	
					(0.029)	
Female					-0.151*	-0.075
					(0.061)	(0.097)
Age					-0.142*	-0.208*
					(0.019)	(0.051)
White					-0.119	0.241
					(0.158)	(0.247)
Black					-0.279	0.196
					(0.178)	(0.443)
Asian					-0.099	0.009
					(0.207)	(0.312)
Native American					-0.178	0.233
					(0.217)	(0.837)
Latino					-0.020	-0.172
					(0.157)	(0.244)
Other Race					-0.103	-0.095
					(0.307)	(0.281)
Ever Submitted IRB?						0.083
						(0.116)
Ever Experiment?						0.226*
						(0.100)

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Table 4 – *Continued from previous page*

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
American						0.068
						(0.125)
Comparative						0.045
						(0.116)
IR						0.104
						(0.124)
Methods						0.078
						(0.127)
Theory						0.030
						(0.163)
Other Field						0.164
						(0.154)
Institution: MA						-0.222
						(0.167)
Institution: BA						0.166
						(0.192)
Institution: Com College						-0.085
						(0.484)
Institution: Other						0.043
						(0.268)
Grad Student						0.216
						(0.143)
Post-Doc						0.214
						(0.225)
Assoc Prof						0.036
						(0.143)
Full Prof						0.172

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Table 4 – *Continued from previous page*

	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars	Subjects	Scholars
						(0.168)
Other Position						-0.304
						(0.206)
Constant	5.159*	6.279*	5.453*	6.449*	5.849*	6.521*
	(0.083)	(0.122)	(0.121)	(0.184)	(0.238)	(0.379)
N	3027	1597	3027	1597	3002	1493
* p<0.05						

Table 5: Logistic Regressions on Attitudes About Participation in Correspondence Study Field Experiment

Dependent Variable: Would Rather Not Participate ($Y = 1$); Would Be Glad to Participate or Don't Care ($Y = 0$)

(Subjects Only)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
No Consent	0.723*	1.059*	1.104*
	(0.135)	(0.269)	(0.274)
Target: Businessowner	-0.469*	-0.161	-0.147
	(0.106)	(0.206)	(0.209)
Target: Govt Official	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(.)	(.)	(.)
Studying Discrimination	-0.333*	-0.209	-0.230
	(0.106)	(0.207)	(0.212)
Number of Subjects	0.000	-0.000	-0.000
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Time to Respond	0.007*	0.009	0.011*
	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)
Debrief (if deception)	0.180	0.177	0.181
	(0.122)	(0.123)	(0.125)
No Consent * Biz Owners		-0.417	-0.460
		(0.240)	(0.244)
No Consent * Govt Offcl		0.000	0.000
		(.)	(.)
No Consent * Discrimination		-0.173	-0.144
		(0.241)	(0.246)
No Consent * Size		0.000	0.000

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Table 5 – *Continued from previous page*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		(0.000)	(0.000)
No Consent * Time		-0.004	-0.005
		(0.006)	(0.006)
Professor Name: J			0.125
			(0.153)
Professor Name: K			0.298
			(0.160)
Professor Name: L			0.237
			(0.154)
R is Homeowner			-0.051
			(0.136)
R is Bus. Owner			0.026
			(0.126)
Education			-0.063
			(0.055)
Female			0.042
			(0.113)
Age			0.146*
			(0.038)
White			0.185
			(0.277)
Black			0.459
			(0.315)
Asian			0.807*
			(0.381)
Native American			0.169
			(0.372)

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Table 5 – *Continued from previous page*

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Latino			0.169
			(0.271)
Other Race			0.683
			(0.502)
Constant	-1.257*	-1.500*	-2.312*
	(0.146)	(0.223)	(0.464)
N	1832	1832	1819
* p<0.05			