**Ethics Discussion Activity**

Questions

* What are the main ethical considerations to consider when designing experiments?
* Are there topics, partners, or methods that are considered off limits?

Instructions

* Break into groups of 3-4 people each and work together for 30 minutes.
* Please read version A, fill out the worksheet for version A, and then read version B, fill out the worksheet for version B, and so on.
* Don’t try to think in terms of “what would the IRB allow.” We want to know your recommendations. Assume that IRB clearance is not an issue.
* After the 30 minutes, we will come together for a discussion with all groups. We will ask each group to speak briefly about what you thought about each issue.

Vignette: “Ethnicity and voting”

**Version A:**

Researchers working in an ethnically polarized society seek to understand what informational messages can undermine the biased take-up of political information based on ethnicity (ethnic motivated reasoning).

* Messages will be disseminated via community-level pre-election workshops organized and funded by the research team prior to legislative elections.
* Members of the control group receive information about the date of the election, how to register to vote, biographical information about the slate of candidates (which will implicitly reveal ethnicity), and basic information about past performance of their parties (all compiled by the research team).
* Members of treatment groups receive one or more additional messages designed to undermine motivated reasoning. The unit of randomization is the polling station catchment area, and outcomes will be measured using administrative election data.
* Given a within-constituency research design, a large treatment effect has the potential to alter the outcome of an election (raising concerns about the justice principle for candidates and parties involved).
* Polling station level outcomes are not only visible to researchers, but also the parties and candidates which could alter treatment of the community by politicians going forward (raising concerns of the do no harm principle for the communities involved).
* The researchers have blanket administrative permission to work in the country and must receive assent by a local leader to occupy public space in each community.

**Version B:**

Same as Version A, but a local NGO takes responsibility for the

implementation of the workshops, including the compilation of information, and a foreign donor is already funding them (with or without the research component).

**Version C:**

Same as Version A, but a representative sample of the community is asked to consent to the information treatment prior to its provision. Communities are informed about the types of information that will be made available in the treatments. The treatment would not be provided if consent were not given by at least two-thirds of the community.

**Version D:**

Election-related ethnic violence has occurred in prior elections in this country. This raises the stakes of the intervention: both for potential benefits if ethnicity is made less salient, as well as for potential risks, if the information intervention generates unanticipated perverse effects.

Worksheet:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Version | Visceral reaction | Considered reaction | Other remarks |
| # | 0 = No!  10 =  Yes! | 0 = Prohibit  10 = Permit |  |
| A |  |  |  |
| B |  |  |  |
| C |  |  |  |
| D |  |  |  |