

# Online Appendix for: A Field Experimental Test of Vote Swapping

Alexander Coppock\*

March 30, 2018

This online appendix includes the survey instrument used to measure outcomes and the pre-analysis plan for this experiment.

## A Survey

- What is your gender? [Male, Female, Other / Prefer not to say]
- What is your age? [Under 18, 18 - 24, 25 - 34, 35 - 44, 45 - 54, 55 - 64, 65 - 74, 75 - 84, 85 or older]
- Are you Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino or none of these? [Yes, None of these]
- Choose one or more races that you consider yourself to be [White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Other]
- What is your highest level of education? [Less than high school, High school graduate, Some college, 2 year degree, 4 year degree, Professional degree, Doctorate]
- Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or something else? [Republican, Democrat, Independent, Other, No preference]

---

\*Alexander Coppock is Assistant Professor of Political Science, Yale University. This study was approved by the Yale University IRB, Protocol Number 2000021864. This study was conducted in collaboration with trumptraders.org; the author received no compensation for this report, nor were its contents subject to approval by trumptraders.org. This study was registered at EGAP.org prior to the collection of outcome data.

- (If Republican) Would you call yourself a strong Republican or a not very strong Republican? [Strong, Not very strong]
  - (If Democrat) Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or a not very strong Democrat? [Strong, Not very strong]
  - (If neither) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party? [Republican, Democratic, Neither]
- Here is a 7-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal (1, all the way left) to extremely conservative (7, all the way right). Where would you place yourself on this scale? [1 - 7]
  - Did you cast a vote for President in 2016? [Yes, No]
    - (If Yes) Who did you vote for? (If you participated in a successful vote swap, who did you personally vote for?) [Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Evan McMullin, Jill Stein, Gary Johnson, Other]
    - (If No) In your own words, why do you think you didn't vote? [Open]
    - (If No) Which of these reasons comes closest to describing why you didn't vote? [I felt that my vote wouldn't make a difference, I was too busy, I couldn't bring myself to vote for any of the candidates, None of these reasons ]
  - You were invited to participate in this survey because you expressed interest in swapping votes on trumptraders.org. In a few words or sentences, please tell us what attracted you to try to swap votes. Did you have any concerns? [Open]
  - Do you think that people on sites like TrumpTraders.org can be trusted to swap votes if they say they will? [Yes, No]
  - Were you able to successfully swap votes? [Yes, No]
    - (If Yes) How confident are you that the person you swapped votes with voted for your preferred candidate in their own state? [Very confident, Somewhat confident, Not very confident, Not at all confident]

- Do you approve or disapprove of the way Donald Trump is handling his job as President?  
[Strongly approve, Approve, Somewhat approve, Neither approve nor disapprove, Somewhat disapprove, Disapprove, Strongly disapprove]

## **B Preanalysis Plan**

An anonymized copy of the preanalysis plan is appended below; the anonymized version was also posted to the registry at egap.org here: [http://egap.org/sites/default/files/20171002AA\\_PAP\\_anonymous.pdf](http://egap.org/sites/default/files/20171002AA_PAP_anonymous.pdf).

# Preanalysis Plan for TrumpTraders: A Field Experimental Test of Vote Swapping

*Author's name withheld*

*10/2/2017*

This document describes a preanalysis plan for a field experiment designed to test the effect of vote swapping programs on turnout and vote choice. This document was produced after the experiment took place but before outcome data were collected.

## Background

The field experiment was conducted in the weeks preceding the 2016 Presidential election. Trumptraders.org was a website that connected third-party voters in swing states with Clinton supporters in nonswing states. The swing-state voters, presumably, did not want to “waste” their vote by voting for a third party candidate, especially because they wanted to avoid their least-preferred outcome, the election of Donald Trump.

The field experiment consisted of

1. Obtaining 5,000 swing state voters who expressed a desire to be matched with nonswing state voters in order to swap votes.
2. Randomly *failing* to match 500 voters (the control group). The remaining 4500 voters (the treatment group) continued with the process of attempting a vote swap. Some of the treatment group successfully swapped, some did not.

## Outcomes

We will collect two kinds of outcomes: voter turnout data obtained from a voter file vendor and survey data obtained from an email survey.

1. Voter turnout (administrative) (binary, 1 if voted, 0 otherwise, obtained from voter file vendor)
2. Voter turnout (survey) (binary, 1 if voted, 0 otherwise, obtained from survey)
3. Vote choice (Clinton) (binary 1 if voted for Clinton, 0 otherwise, obtained from survey)
4. Vote choice (Third Party) (binary 1 if voted for third party, 0 otherwise, obtained from survey)
5. Swapped votes (binary 1 if swapped, 0 otherwise, obtained from survey)

We will also collect the following open ended responses

1. Among those who did not vote, “In your own words, why do you think you didn’t vote?”
2. Among everyone “In a few words or sentences, please tell us what attracted you to try to swap votes. Did you have any worries about swapping votes?”
3. Among those who swapped, You responded [response] when asked how confident you were in your swap partner. In a few words or sentences, please say why.
4. Among everyone “Thank you so much for your participation. Is there anything else you’d like to tell us about?”

These open-ended responses will help to characterize potential swappers' motivations for doing so and will form the empirical basis for a small qualitative section that will be aimed exclusively at descriptive, not causal, inferences.

## Analysis

I will conduct all analyses under the “intention to treat” principle. I will not use two-stage least squares to estimate a complier average causal effect among those who would swap if and only if assigned to be treated because I am concerned about violations of the exclusion restriction resulting from failed attempts to swap.

I will use two estimators of the Average Treatment Effect: difference-in-means and ordinary least squares with adjustment for the following pre-treatment covariates:

1. Previous voter turnout (I am unsure of how many years of turnout I'll get from the voter file vendor, but I will adjust for general election turnout in presidential and midterm elections for as many years as are available.)
2. Age
3. Gender
4. 7 point Party ID
5. 7 point political ideology
6. Education
7. four-level race (white, black, hispanic, other)
8. Pre-election 3rd party candidate preference (usually Stein or McMullin)

I will prefer the covariate-adjusted estimate to the difference-in-means estimate as the “best guess” because of the expected precision gains.

I will use HC2 Robust standard errors and two-sided normal approximation-based p-values. I will label average treatment effect estimates with associated p-values that are less than 0.05 as “statistically significant.” For vote choice (Clinton), I'll test against two null hypotheses: the ATE is 0 and the ATE is 1.

Both the survey data and the administrative data are likely to be incomplete; i.e., some attrition is likely to have taken place. Unless missingness appears to be related to treatment (as determined by estimating the Average Treatment Effect on reporting using the two estimators discussed above), I will assert that there are only two kinds of subjects, always-reporters and never-reporters. My analysis will be limited to the always-reporters. If missingness *does* appear to be related to treatment assignment, I will estimate extreme value bounds.

## Prespecified Exclusions

I will *not* estimate the heterogeneous effects of treatment by pretreatment characteristics. If compelled to do so by reviewers, such analyses will be marked as exploratory.

I will *not* estimate any mediation estimands because sequential ignorability is unlikely to be satisfied.

## Predictions

The main point of vote swapping is *increasing* the probability that a potential swapper votes for Clinton. In the absence of the swap, the swing state vote should vote for the third party candidate. However, it's possible that the swapping sites select people who have *already* decided to vote for Clinton, but are seeking to assuage their conscience by having someone in another state vote for their preferred candidate. My guess

is that the effect will be far smaller than 100% (the implicit effect size that undergirds the market). I don't think it will be negative. My prior is that it is at most 5 percentage points.

Vote swapping should, if anything, increase voter turnout. I'd expect the mechanisms to include engaging the subject in an informal contract with another voter; we'd expect social pressure to exert some influence on following through on the promise. Then again, the average effect might be pretty close to zero, seeing as these people are extremely interested in politics (interested enough to investigate a vote-swapping site.).