

Who Participates in Focus Groups?

Diagnosing Self-Selection

Appendix

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1 Analysis of Journal Articles

To assess how scholars publishing in top political science journals use focus groups in their research, I examined all articles published in print in the *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and *Journal of Politics* between 2013 and 2022. These journals are consistently ranked as the top three in reputational surveys of political scientists (Garand and Giles, 2003; Garand et al., 2009; McLean et al., 2009). I searched the full text of these three journals (using ProQuest for APSR, Wiley Online Library for AJPS, and University of Chicago Press Journals for JOP) for articles containing the phrase “focus group” or “focus groups.” Reviewing the resulting list of articles, I identified 36 that conveyed findings from original focus groups, along with 21 that only use the phrase in passing or in the bibliography or that analyze focus groups conducted by others.

The 36 articles using original focus groups, and the variables on which I coded them, are listed in Table 1. *Recruitment Details* and *Descriptive Statistics* report whether the article or its online appendix provide any information about the recruitment process or any descriptive statistics on focus group participants. I also coded whether articles compared focus group participants to a relevant baseline, such as sampling frame, national census, or representative survey, but none did, so this column is omitted. *Purpose* describes the analytical purpose that focus groups serve: to inform a study’s research design, such as developing or pretesting experimental treatments or survey instruments; to triangulate other sources of evidence, including Cyr’s (2016) category of “integration”; to measure the study’s dependent variable; and to administer an experimental treatment. *Combo With* describes the main method of the study: field experiment, survey experiment, lab-in-the-field experiment, or quantitative analysis of observational data. Finally, *Percent of Text* reports what percentage of the article’s overall word count conveyed focus group findings and design details; online appendices are excluded from both the numerator and denominator.

Table 1: Research Using Focus Groups, 2013–2022

Article	Country	Subfield	Recruitment Details	Descriptive Statistics	Purpose	Combo With	Percent of Text
APSR							
Blair et al. (2022)	Colombia	IR/CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.31
Blair, Grossman and Weinstein (2022)	Uganda	IR/CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	0.71
Badrinathan (2021)	India	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.52
Dasgupta and Kapur (2020)	India	CP	1	1	Triangulate	Observational	5.11
Magaloni, Franco-Vivanco and Melo (2020)	Brazil	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	0.11
Lyall, Zhou and Imai (2020)	Afghanistan	IR/CP	1	1	Triangulate	Field exp.	0.91
Grossman and Michelitch (2018)	Uganda	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Field exp.	0.26
Williams (2017)	Ghana	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	1.44
Avdeenko and Gilligan (2015)	Sudan	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.63
McCauley (2014)	Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.81
Thachil (2014)	India	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	0.39
Lyall, Blair and Imai (2013)	Afghanistan	IR/CP	0	0	Design	Survey exp.	0.15
Paler (2013)	Indonesia	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.41
Beath, Christia and Enikolopov (2013)	Afghanistan	CP	1	0	DV measure	Field exp.	1.05
AJPS							
Molina-Garzón et al. (2022)	Honduras	CP	1	1	Design	Observational	0.34
Lindsey (2022)	DR Congo	IR/CP	1	1	DV, Triang.	Observational	18.38
Poertner (2021)	Bolivia	CP	0	0	Design	Survey exp.	1.57
Bowles, Larreguy and Liu (2020)	Liberia	CP	1	0	Triangulate	Observational	1.91
Haas and Khadka (2020)	South Sudan	IR/CP	0	0	Triangulate	Survey exp.	3.06
Ferrali et al. (2020)	Uganda	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	1.50
Boas, Hidalgo and Melo (2019)	Brazil	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Field exp.	4.09
Corbacho et al. (2016)	Costa Rica	CP	0	0	Design	Survey exp.	0.19
Coleman and Mwangi (2015)	Kenya	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	2.24
Blair, Imai and Lyall (2014)	Afghanistan	IR/CP	0	0	Design	Survey exp.	0.96
Longo, Canetti and Hite-Rubin (2014)	Palestine	CP	0	0	Design	Observational	0.29
Gilligan, Pasquale and Samii (2014)	Nepal	IR/CP	0	0	Triangulate	Lab-in-field	0.92
JOP							
Boas, Hidalgo and Toral (2021)	Brazil	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.26
Brulé and Gaikwad (2021)	India	CP	1	0	Design	Observational	0.69
Grossman, Humphreys and Sacramone-Lutz (2020)	Uganda	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.35
Brulé (2020)	India	CP	0	0	Triangulate	Observational	0.73
Marshall (2019)	Mexico	CP	0	0	Design	Observational	0.20
Pavão (2018)	Brazil	CP	1	0	Triangulate	Obs., survey exp.	11.96
Van der Windt (2018)	DR Congo	CP	0	0	Treatment	Field exp.	1.40
Bush and Prather (2017)	Tunisia	CP	0	0	Design	Survey exp.	0.51
Weitz-Shapiro and Winters (2017)	Brazil	CP	0	0	Design	Survey exp.	0.69
Chong et al. (2015)	Mexico	CP	0	0	Design	Field exp.	0.17

2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 contains descriptive statistics on the three focus groups conducted for the Boston Brazilians project. I separately characterize survey respondents who did and did not leave their contact info to potentially receive an invitation to a focus group, and, conditional on receiving an invitation, those who did and did not attend. P-values are for two-tailed difference in means t-tests.

3 Alternative Specifications

Table 3 shows results from two alternative regression specifications: a linear probability model, and a logistic regression with penalized log likelihood using the Firth (1993) method for bias reduction with rare events (given that relatively few invitees showed up for the focus group). These specifications yield substantively identical results as the conventional logistic regressions reported in the main text.

Table 2: Boston Brazilians Focus Group Selection: Descriptive Statistics

Group / Variable	Left Contact Info			Attended Invited		
	Yes	No	P-val	Yes	No	P-val
Festival						
Arrival Year	2007.2	2006.4	0.7	2006.8	1997.5	0.0
Evangelical (%)	30.5	29.8	0.9	43.8	66.7	0.4
Catholic (%)	50.8	44.0	0.4	56.2	33.3	0.4
Non-Christian (%)	18.6	26.2	0.3	0.0	0.0	
Church Attendance (1–5)	2.9	3.1	0.5	4.6	4.3	0.4
Political Interest (1–4)	2.8	3.2	0.0	3.3	3.2	0.7
Bolsonaro Supporter (%)	30.4	37.3	0.4	100.0	100.0	
Male (%)	49.1	38.1	0.2	50.0	33.3	0.5
Age	42.2	43.3	0.6	43.4	57.2	0.0
Nonwhite (%)	41.8	46.4	0.6	43.8	16.7	0.3
Education (1–7)	5.0	4.6	0.2	4.1	3.7	0.7
Income (1–5)	3.6	3.3	0.3	3.4	3.2	0.8
Distance From Group (km)	15.9	14.0	0.5	8.7	7.4	0.7
N	59.0	84.0		16.0	6.0	
Round 1						
Arrival Year	2005.5	2005.6	0.9	1999.5	2005.0	0.4
Evangelical (%)	47.6	44.6	0.6	66.7	33.3	0.1
Catholic (%)	30.8	31.4	0.9	33.3	66.7	0.1
Non-Christian (%)	21.6	24.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	
Church Attendance (1–5)	3.1	3.1	0.8	4.1	3.8	0.5
Political Interest (1–4)	3.6	3.6	0.6	3.6	3.8	0.4
Bolsonaro Supporter (%)	61.5	57.1	0.5	100.0	100.0	
Male (%)	42.9	57.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	1.0
Age	45.7	44.8	0.6	49.6	49.5	1.0
Nonwhite (%)	32.6	41.7	0.1	29.3	50.0	0.3
Education (1–7)	4.9	4.9	1.0	4.3	5.3	0.2
Income (1–5)	3.7	3.6	0.6	3.7	3.8	1.0
Distance From Group (km)	33.2	23.5	0.0	26.3	13.8	0.2
N	189.0	121.0		42.0	6.0	
Round 2						
Arrival Year	2003.3	2004.4	0.3	2003.9	2001.0	0.4
Evangelical (%)	42.9	42.6	1.0	74.6	83.3	0.6
Catholic (%)	36.5	31.5	0.3	25.4	16.7	0.6
Non-Christian (%)	20.7	25.9	0.2	0.0	0.0	
Church Attendance (1–5)	3.0	3.0	0.6	4.0	3.7	0.2
Political Interest (1–4)	3.5	3.7	0.0	3.8	3.3	0.1
Bolsonaro Supporter (%)	62.3	65.4	0.5	100.0	100.0	
Male (%)	44.2	47.2	0.6	50.7	66.7	0.5
Age	45.6	46.7	0.4	49.0	50.8	0.7
Nonwhite (%)	41.6	36.1	0.3	35.7	16.7	0.4
Education (1–7)	4.9	5.0	0.6	4.8	5.5	0.3
Income (1–5)	3.9	3.9	0.9	3.8	4.2	0.5
Distance From Group (km)	36.1	38.6	0.5	39.0	23.6	0.2
N	207.0	198.0		71.0	6.0	

Note: P-values are from two-tailed difference in means t-tests.

Table 3: Predictors of Boston Brazilians Project Focus Group Selection (Linear Probability/Firth Logistic)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Left Contact Info		Attended Invited
	<i>OLS</i>	<i>OLS</i>	<i>logistic</i>
Distance (Log)	-0.02 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	-0.14 (0.21)
Arrival Year	0.001 (0.003)	-0.01 (0.004)	-0.06 (0.04)
Evangelical	0.03 (0.06)	0.11 (0.08)	1.21 (0.77)
Non-Christian	0.15* (0.07)		
Church Attendance	0.03 (0.02)	-0.10* (0.05)	-1.14* (0.52)
Political Interest	0.10*** (0.03)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.34 (0.37)
Bolsonaro Voter	0.07 (0.06)		
Male	0.11* (0.05)	-0.003 (0.07)	0.07 (0.65)
Age	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.004)	0.01 (0.04)
Nonwhite	0.02 (0.05)	-0.05 (0.07)	-0.40 (0.67)
Education	0.01 (0.02)	0.01 (0.02)	0.20 (0.22)
Income	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.19 (0.28)
Observations	465	107	107

Note: Entries are regression coefficients with standard errors in parentheses. Columns 1–2 estimate a linear probability model; column 3 estimates a logistic regression with penalized log likelihood using the Firth (1993) method for bias reduction with rare events. Group fixed effects estimated but not reported. *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001.

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