

Effective Animal Activism
PROTOCOL FOR 2013 HUMANE EDUCATION STUDY

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I. Title of Project

A study to investigate the effectiveness of humane education presentations in causing dietary change

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SPONSORING ORGANIZATION: Effective Animal Activism

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II. Background and Specific Aims

Terms used in this protocol:

For the purposes of this paper, the term **students** refers to high school and college students.

HEP (Humane Education Presentations) refers to presentations that document the abuse of animals on factory farms. They provide a call to action to students to reduce or eliminate animal meat and animal products from their diets. Overall, HEP offer a clear pro-animal message to their audience.

The Fall 2013 Humane Education study aims to improve upon the Spring 2013 Humane Education study¹. Both the research design and survey questions are meant to reduce bias as well as to build upon findings from the previous year.

Primary Objective:

1. The primary objective of this study is to measure changes in self-reported meat consumption in students who viewed HEP.

Secondary Objectives:

1. If sample sizes are adequate, measure the effects of geographic location, presenter, style of presentation, gender, and/or student age on survey results. Geographic location refers to the state HEP and surveys were administered in (e.g. California vs. Texas). Presenter refers to the non-profit administering the HEP (e.g. the Humane League vs. FFAC). Presentation style includes different facets of presentations (showing a short clip of factory farming vs. no clip at all, emphasizing the health benefits vs. animal suffering). Student age refers primarily to high school vs. college students but relevant differences across any age

¹ <http://effectiveanimalactivism.org/humane-education>

will be analyzed.

2. Document the motivation behind changes in self-reported meat consumption in students who viewed HEP. This includes health, animal, social justice, and environmental incentives.
3. In addition to these secondary objectives, there are two more that will be added if and only if there is room for additional questions in the survey.² This will be determined once the survey questions are finalized.

The Role of Covariates:

1. Geographic location, presenter, style of presentation, and student age and gender will be used as covariates when analyzing any changes in self-reported meat consumption (the primary analysis in this study). By incorporating these factors as covariates, the primary analysis controls for potentially confounding or interacting variables. Note that the covariates used for the primary analysis will **not** be used as covariates for the secondary analyses, since the secondary analyses are no longer on a whole group level but broken up by aforementioned categories. It is possible, however, that each secondary analysis will include the other characteristics as covariates; for example, an analysis on male vs. female changes in meat consumption after viewing HEP will control for the other characteristics (location, presenter, age, and so forth).

III. Materials

- [Instructions for Presenters](#)
- [Email Sign-Up Sheets](#)
- Business Cards
- Survey for Control Group
- Expanded Survey for Experimental Group

IV. Study Design

1. This study relies on a number of animal advocacy organizations giving HE presentations in classrooms across the U.S. These organizations include but are not limited to The Humane League, Ethical Choices, Compassionate Action for Animals, and Factory Farming Awareness Coalition. Presentations will take place where speakers from these organizations have been invited to address classes. Presentations that take place during the time period of the study will likely occur in similar circumstances to presentations that will occur in the future.
2. *Acquiring Participants*
 - Before introducing the speaker, the teacher will be instructed to hand out a sheet of paper that invites students to write down their email address in exchange for being entered in a raffle for a \$500 cash prize. The primary objectives at this stage are twofold: first, to acquire as many emails as possible, and second, to reduce any bias resulting from a self-selecting pool or the priming of potential participants. In an ideal experiment, participants will not suspect that they will be surveyed about the HEP until the survey is administered.
 - The teacher will **not** be told that students providing email addresses will be sent a follow-up survey, so that they do not pass that information to their students. Either the teacher or the presenter will say, "We are passing the sheet for entry into a \$500 raffle as a thank you to all audience members of the Humane Education Presentation."
 - The email collection sheet will simply read, "Please enter your email address for the

² Secondary objective 3: In addition to self-reported meat consumption, a secondary objective is to measure the effect of the HEP on student attitudes towards animal intelligence, sentience, and emotions. Secondary objective 4: Measure the relationship, if any, between attitudes on animal intelligence, sentience, and emotions, and self-reported meat consumption.

- chance to win a \$500 cash prize.”
- Importantly, students who do not take the follow up survey will **still** be entered into the \$500 raffle by providing their email. They will be entered again to increase their chances of winning if they do take the survey. Students will not be given this information before viewing HEP as it would require informing them of the survey, which may prime them. However, in the interest of transparency, and incentivizing students, this system of multiple entries will be explained to them once they are emailed the survey.
3. *Presentations*
- Each HEP will document the abuse on factory farms, is pro-animal, and will ask students to reduce or eliminate animal meat and products from their diets. Focus will be mainly on the ethical implications of factory farming, and will also touch on health and environmental consequences.
 - However, presentation style, visuals, and wording will vary depending on the non-profit administering the presentation. Each presenter will summarize the ethical issues of factory farming differently.
4. *Survey Distribution*
- Students will be emailed around 60 days (2 months) after viewing HEP with a link to the survey. The landing page will specify that though they have already been entered into the \$500 drawing, their names will be entered again by completing the survey, thus increasing their odds of winning.
 - Two months is considered a sufficient amount of time to measure longer-term effects of HEP on meat consumption in students. It allows engagement with the students within the same semester the talk was given, but provides adequate time for students to return to their previous diets if the impact was minimal.
5. *Control Group*
- While on campus, presenters will also acquire control group participants – students **not** in the class in which they have just presented. The control group will access the survey link via business cards.
 - Presenters will acquire control group participants by finding a teacher or volunteers willing to distribute their business cards to another class of students, or by placing the cards in a location on campus where fliers, newspapers, and other such materials are available for students to pick up. The business cards will not contain any reference to the presenter’s organization, only text offering the chance to take a survey and be entered in a \$500 prize drawing, and a link to the website where the survey is hosted.
 - Presenters are not expected to acquire control participants from each school. However, they are expected to acquire a broad sample of students. Overall, the control group is expected to be representative of the experimental group’s demographic.
 - A conservative 2% or 3% response rate is expected; to ensure an adequate sample size 3000 to 4000 business cards will be distributed.
 - Participants in the control group will be allowed to access the survey immediately upon entering the link from the business card.
 - It is possible that students will be primed and process the survey differently based on whether they navigated to it from the business card link (as part of the control group) or from email (as part of the experimental group). To minimize the risk of priming, the email and landing page directing the experimental group to the survey will refer only to “an event at your school”, without specifying what event or when it took place.
 - All questions on which the experimental and control group responses will be compared will take place as the initial section of the survey, which will be identical between groups, to avoid unintentional differences in priming within the survey itself.

V. Data Analysis

- To meet the primary objective, participants in both the experimental and control groups will be

asked to report on their recent and typical levels of meat consumption, as well as on any recent changes in their diet.

- Because prior research shows that non-vegetarians commonly label themselves as vegetarians³, the most valuable data is expected to come from questions about meat consumption in the past day and in a typical week.
- To assess whether HEP lead to changes in meat consumption, self reported meat consumption averages in the experimental and control group will be compared. Self-reported meat consumption increases or decreases in the past two months will also be compared.
- Any participants who self-report **after** viewing HEP as eating 0 meals of meat per week three months ago (i.e. before HEP) and currently (i.e. after viewing the HEP) will be considered already vegetarian. After participants view the HEP and receive the survey link via email, the question “How many meals with meat did you eat, on average, three months ago?” will be used to ascertain their eating habits before HEP. Participants classified as already vegetarian will not be included in all the analyses.
- Students may also be asked to label their general diet (e.g., Paleo, Atkins, low-fat, vegetarian). This information may be beneficial given other data on the tendency to falsely self-identify as vegetarian. Since labeling questions might prime students’ answers to the questions about recent meat consumption, it would be placed after rather than before questions on meat consumption.
- For the primary objective, geographic location, presenter, presentation style, age, and gender will be added as controls. For more detail on controls refer to “The Role of Covariates” farther above.
- The effect of geographic location, presenter, presentation style, age, and gender on meat consumption changes after HEP will be analyzed separately to meet secondary objectives.

Noted Weaknesses:

1. Resource constraints do not allow the study to include a specially designed uniform presentation. Working with multiple organizations will allow the largest possible sample size with current resources. However, variability between presentations may introduce noise into the data that makes it harder to detect the impact of HEP. This weakness will be neutralized if the sample size is large enough to test whether certain presentation styles, lengths, or messages are more effective than others in reducing meat consumption. In the event the sample size is not large enough to analyze data across presentations, this weakness is not expected to compromise the primary objective of the study. However, it is a noted weakness, and worth consideration for future studies.
2. The experimental group will not have access to the survey until they are emailed two months after HEP. This is to ensure a sufficient response rate (i.e. if control group participants use the business card link only to be delayed another two months, we expect participation to drop significantly). The control group, however, will have immediate access to the survey. This may present a bias, as the experimental group and control group will be completing the survey during different time frames. Since the Standard American Diet likely does not have significant seasonal variation in the amount of meat and animal products consumed, the risk for bias here is considered minimal.
3. It is possible that students will be primed and process HEP differently simply by virtue of writing their emails down for a \$500 cash prize. In other words, they may be primed despite best efforts otherwise.
4. Despite best efforts to minimize priming, as noted in the design, it is possible that students will be primed and process the survey differently based on whether they navigated to it from the business card link (as part of the control group) or from email (as part of the experimental group).

³ Source: <http://ajcn.nutrition.org/content/78/3/626S.long>