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PATRIOTISM AND PARTICIPATION IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

INTRODUCTION

National symbols, such as flags, are crucial part of a country and its citizens identify. Flags are displayed on different occasion to express national pride and patriotism. Such symbolic signs derive their importance and meaning through numerous ways. An example could be the educational system, as happen in the U.S. elementary schools, where students take the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag (Kemmelmeier, 2008).

As an important symbol of nationalism and patriotism, what people think about country's flag influences their behavior and actions. Soldiers fight and sacrifice for the honor of their flag, athletes wave their flag in celebration of their achievements, diplomats work to preserve the prestige of their country's flag, and citizens take actions or avoid to take actions for the sake of their flag (Fozdar, Spittles & Hartley, 2015).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flags have an important place in the literature of nationalism. One group of literature is focused on examining the relationship between flags and its contribution to increasing nationalistic sentiments of the people. Kemmelmeier (2008) examines the importance of exposure to the flag on American sense of nationalism and patriotism. The paper conclude that it can lead to an increase in nationalism (defined as "sense of superiority over others"). However, exposure to the flag may not lead to patriotism ("love and commitment to one's country"). Fozdar, Spittles & Hartley (2015) determine that Australians who have good feelings about their flags flying it in their cars tend to have higher nationalism and patriotism than those who that are not carrying flags. Similarly, Butz, Plant, & Doerr (2007) run multiple studies to assess the relation of flag and nationalism. Exposure to flag seemed to have positively impacted people's thinking about equality, as well as reduced their hostility and anger towards Arabs and Muslims.

Another group of literature is devoted to the potential side effects of too much exposure to the flag. Webster (2011) argues the increased display of flags after 9/11 incidents contributed to "a form of collective amnesia that limited their receptivity to the facts about the appropriateness of the invasion of Iraq". Consequently, there was less opposition to President Bush's decision to invade Iraq as people tried to portray themselves patriotic citizens. Barnett & Roselle (2008) shows that American citizens are receptive of patriotic symbolism of media with the probability of compromising of objectivity and fairness of news.

In line with the discussion of flag and patriotism, in this paper, I am examining the relation between American's feeling about U.S. flag and voting for President in 2016 election. As sign of the values American people cherish, people's feeling regarding the flag reflects their commitment and responsibility as citizens towards their country. Drawing insights from the above discussion of flag and patriotism, I theorize that people who have good feeling when seeing American flag tend to have more patriotism, hence, feeling responsible to decide future of their country by participating in the presidential election. On the hand, people who don't have good feeling about the flag may not be passionate about voting for the president in the elections.

> Having good feeling about flag => patriotism and
> responsibility towards country => take part in influencing
> who lead the country through voting in presidential election.

To this end, I would like test following hypothesis in this paper.

> H1: Americans who have good feelings about U.S. flags tend to participate in
> presidential election.
> H0: Americans who don't have good feelings about U.S. flags do not tend to participate
> in presidential election.

DATA

For my analysis, I use 2016 American National Election Studies (ANES). ANES is a research program happening every four years to study the Americans voting behavior. The 2016 ANES survey was conducted after presidential election. It includes data on a large

number of variables, such as voter turnout, candidate preferences, party identification, political ideology, issue attitudes, and demographic characteristics, to demonstrate voting behavior of U.S. citizens.

MODELS

For the purpose of this paper, my outcome variable is whether the respondents voted in for president in 2016 election or not (*VAR: V162034*). The value 0 indicates that participant did not vote for president in the election, while value 1 shows a positive response. The independent variable is how good/bad does respondent feel to see American flag (*VAR: V162034*). The variable had three observations (good, bad and neutral). As the main focus of the paper is to find how having good and bad feeling about the paper affect participation in presidential election, I dropped the neutral responses.

As hypothesized above, my expectation is that those who have good feelings about flag tend to participate in presidential election than those who have bad feelings. To find out the causation, I run a logistical regression which is summarized by Table 1 below.

Table 1: Participants' feeling about the flag and voting for president

|	Voted For the President (0 = no, 1 = yes)
Respondent's feeling about the flag (1 = good, 2 = bad)	-1.341[*]
	(0.620)
_cons	5.590[*]
	(0.695)
N	2261
Pseudo. R^{2Po}	0.0096

Standard errors in parentheses

[+] $p < 0.10$, [*] $p < 0.05$

The results support my hypothesis. The probability of voting for president goes down as people's feeling about the flag changes from good towards the bad. The results are also

statistically significant with the p-value of 0.031, which is lower than threshold of 0.05 for 95% confidence interval. Figure 1 visualizes the causation.

Figure 1: Participants' feeling about the flag and voting for president
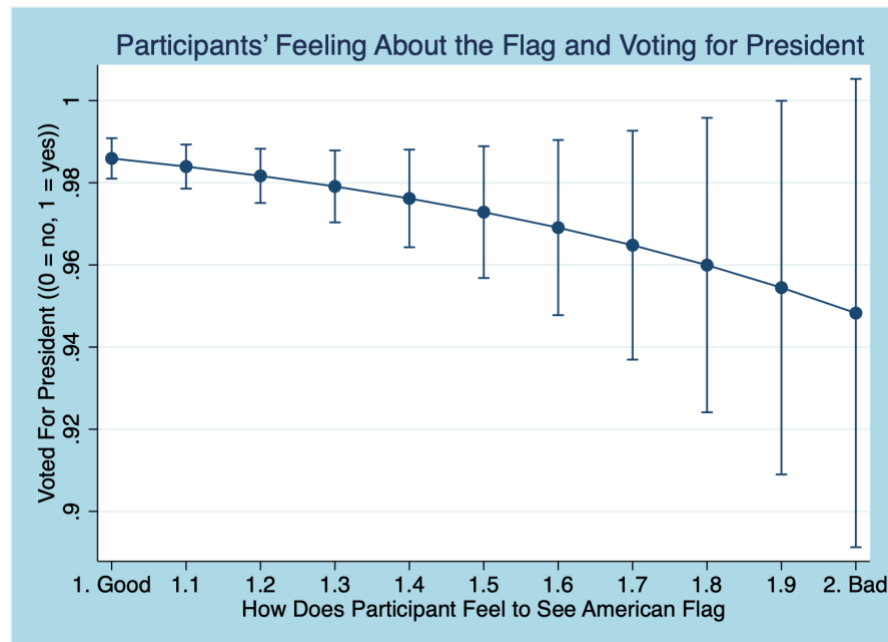
However, the 0.0096 Pseudo. R^2 of the model indicates that the independent variable explains a small portion of variance in the outcome variable. Also, the model run the risk of omitted variable. The dataset has other variable that can potentially provide explanation for the variance in the outcome variable. Hence, to get a better accuracy in the model, I control the model for other predictor variables with potential explanatory power of the change in the outcome variable. I want to test following hypotheses with new predictor variables.

> H2: Participants who voted for president in 2012 elections tend to also participate in 2016 presidential election.

> H3: Participants who think that it does not matter who win election tend to not vote in 2016 presidential election.

> H4: Participants who consider voting as choice rather than duty tend not to vote in 2016 presidential election.

H5: Participants with higher level of education tend to vote in 2016 presidential election

H6: Participants with disagree with statement that "most politicians do not care about the people" tend to vote in 2016 presidential election.

As can be seen in Table 2 below, I am only able to reject the null hypotheses for two predictor variables including my main independent variable and the independent variable of whether a participant care about the winner of election. Also, I fail to reject the null hypotheses for all other control variables.

Table 2: Voting Behavior in U.S. 2016 Presidential Election

	Vote for Trump
Respondent's feeling about the flag	-1.546*
	(0.645)
Did participant vote for President in 2012	-0.533
	(0.413)
Care who wins Presidential Election (1= great deal, 5=not at all)	-0.519*
	(0.148)
Voting as duty or choice (1= strongly duty, 7= strongly choice)	-0.0323
	(0.0770)
Highest level of Education (1= less than 1st grade, 16 =Phd)	0.0757
	(0.0794)
Most politicians do not care about the people (1 = agree strongly, 5= disagree strongly)	0.208
	(0.168)
_cons	6.149*
	(1.378)
N	2218
Pseudo. R^2	0.0697

Standard errors in parentheses

[+] $p < 0.10$, [*] $p < 0.05$

Controlling for all other predicator variables enhanced the explanatory power of the model increasing from the initial 0.0096 Pseudo. R^2 to the 0.0697. As is shown by Figure 2, the strength of my main predicator variable has also slightly increased from -1.341 to -1.546.

Figure 2: Participants' feeling about the flag and voting for president
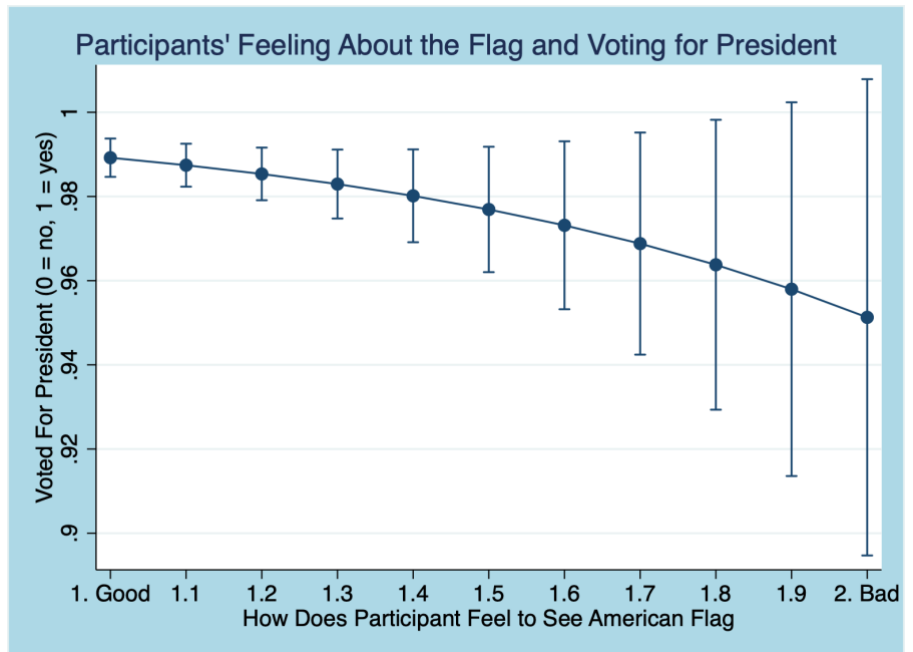
The result also supports hypothesis three in my model. Those who don't care who win the presidential election are more likely not to vote in presidential elections.

Figure 3: Participants' thinking about election winner and voting for president
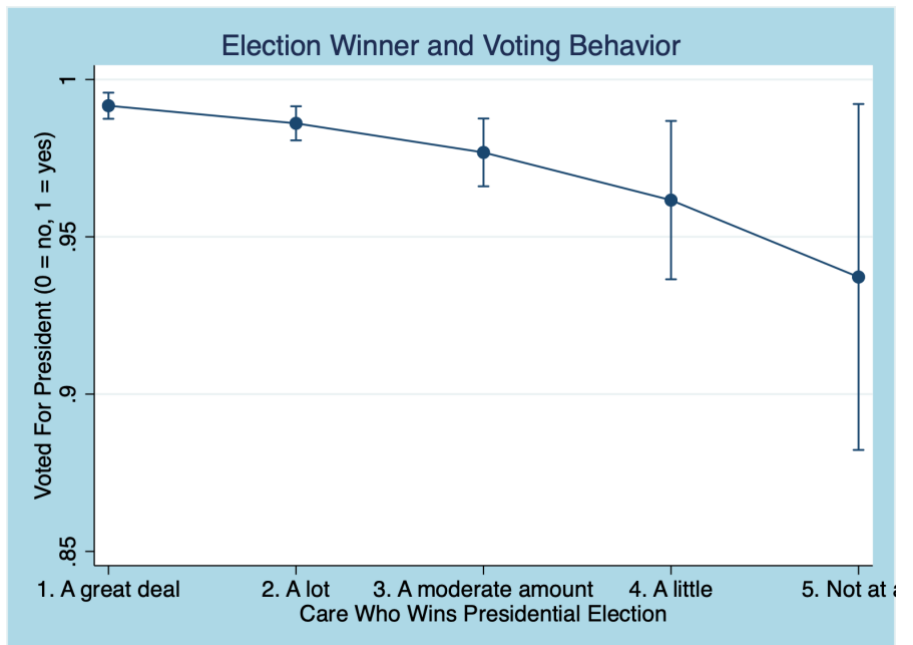
CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have tried to examine the relation people's feeling about flag and its impact on voting for president in the election. The result of statistical model supports my hypothesis that people's participation in presidential election is associated with their feeling towards the flag. The more people have good feelings about the flag, the more they are likely to vote for president in the election. The causal relation is strengthened while controlling for predictor variables that had potential for explaining the variance in the outcome variable.

A potential area for future research could be to examine the impact of feelings toward flag on people's participation in U.S. congressional elections to see if the theory is supported in other seniors or not. Also, this can be further extended to other countries.

Reference

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