

# Guns, Pets, And Strikes: An Experiment On Identity And Political Action

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# How does political participation influence prosocial behavior?

Why should we care?

- ▶ Promoting Civic Engagement – If political participation enhances prosocial behavior, it could be a powerful tool to foster civic engagement and social cohesion.
- ▶ Understanding social dynamics that underpin political movements.
- ▶ Implications for strengthening democracies. At a broader level, understanding the factors that drive political participation is crucial for the health of a democracy

# Methodology

- ▶ Experimental design with three decision stages.
  1. Use of trust game and dictator game to simulate social interactions – measure trust and altruism at baseline.
  2. Individuals either i) sign a guns petition, ii) sign a fireworks petition, iii) participation in a national strike.
  3. Use of trust games and dictator games to simulate social interactions – measure trust and altruism at endline.
- ▶ Sample: 308 students from Universidad de Los Andes.
- ▶ Control factors: gender, semester of study, whether the subject studies economics, socio-economic status, self-reported willingness to take risks, and depth of reasoning.

# Findings

- ▶ Individuals who participate in collective action receive payoffs in subsequent social interactions with fellow participants.
- ▶ Shared participation gives rise to in-group favoritism between participants, creating a common group identity.
- ▶ This identity emerges both when participation cost is low and when the cost is high, and for right-wing, left-wing, and politically neutral causes.

# My questions

- ▶ Can we disentangle if this is due to protest participation or participation in a common event a "mere belonging" effect? Concert, Football match, etc? Depetris-Chauvin, Durante, Campante (2020). A combination of both could also be a potential mechanism.
  - ▶ Ideally: Compare the effects of participating in a protest with the effects of participating in a non-political common event. This could help to disentangle the effects of the shared cause or goal (specific to protest participation) from the effects of the shared experience (common to any group event).
  - ▶ A different approach could be to disclose information about shared characteristics (predetermined characteristics would do).

## My questions (2)

- ▶ Is a common identity necessarily a good thing?
  - ▶ A common identity can foster social cohesion, collective action, and reduce conflict but can lead to out-group discrimination and polarization.
- ▶ The first petition asks to change the Colombian law to allow citizens to carry guns, whereas the second deals (indirectly) with animal rights. (Polarization!)
  - ▶ Is a petition to carry guns prosocial? While it could be seen as prosocial if the intention is to promote personal safety and protect individual rights it may well not be so due to high homicide rate in Colombia.
- ▶ Would it be possible to implement the use of vignettes as an alternative measures of trust?

# (Some) Suggestions

- ▶ I think it would benefit the paper to have a clearer section on the experiment.
  - ▶ Balancing should be placed in the text
  - ▶ Are there changes in the levels? Are there people that were asked to just play a second round but no signing decision?
  - ▶ The re-matching should be stated clearer
- ▶ Include and exclude unbalanced controls in the regressions.
- ▶ Indicators for left-right spectrum

# Measurement

- ▶ Reliance on self-reported measures which may not accurately reflect the true attitudes or behaviors of the participants.
- ▶ Self reported measure to take risk versus self reported measure of pro-sociality?



# Conclusion

- ▶ I find this question important and the findings interesting. For sure opens up ideas for future research
- ▶ Interaction effects among baseline characteristics and  $T_1$  or  $T_2$  with  $T_3$  would be interesting to explore