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Strike one hundred to educate one: measuring efficiency of collective sanctions experimentally

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we test if sanctions applied to an entire group for the free-riding of one of its members can increase the level of cooperation within that group. To measure the efficiency of such collective sanctions, we conducted a lab experiment based on a standard public good game. The results show that overall, collective sanctions are inefficient. Moreover, when subjects are able to punish their peers, the level of cooperation is lower in the regime of collective sanctions than under individual sanctions. Both outcomes can be explained by a general disapproval of the collective responsibility for an individual fault: in the post-experimental survey, an absolute majority evaluated such regimes as unfair. But although collective sanctions are not an effective means to boost group compliance, there are nevertheless two insights to be gained here. First, there are differences across genders. Under collective sanctions, males' level of compliance is substantially higher than under individual sanctions while the opposite is true for females. Second, there were intriguing differences in outcomes between the different regime types. Under collective sanctions, a person who is caught tends to comply in the future, at least in the short term. In contrast, under individual sanctions, an individual wrongdoer decreases his or her level of compliance in the next period.

ATTACHMENTS

[CP - No Sanctions.docx](#) [CP With Int Sanctions.docx](#) [IP - No Sanctions.docx](#) [IP with Int Sanctions.docx](#) [Script for Collective liability experiment.docx](#)

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KEYWORDS

collective sanctions, public good game, cooperation, sanctions

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Instructions and script for 'Collective sanctions' experiment.