

Causal Mechanisms of Outgroup Antagonism: the Case of the Greek Riots

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Research Question

What motivates people to harm those in outgroups?

Examples

- ▶ Civil conflict
- ▶ Racial discrimination
- ▶ Riots

NB: cost of the harmful action varies

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- └ Explaining outgroup antagonism
 - └ Research question
 - └ Examples

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1. We're planning an experiment; we want to check on our hypotheses and our research design. Mechanisms we've missed?

Existing answers

- ▶ Social psychology
 - ▶ Social identity theory: individuals discriminate in order to bolster their “social identity” as a group member.
 - ▶ But NB: SIT is a “theory of ingroup love rather than outgroup hate” and discrimination with respect to negative effects is hard to find in the lab.
 - ▶ Tests tend to use lab-grown (“minimal”) groups; and not real payoffs.
- ▶ Political science
 - ▶ Narratives of civil conflict
 - ▶ Hatred is stirred up by politicians or the media
 - ▶ Violence requires the breakdown of a social norm against harming others
 - ▶ Plausible but not lab-tested

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1. SIT is the dominant explanation in SP, there are others. Mixed evidence whether strong ingroup identifiers are more likely to display bias. Re politicians and media, quote from a Belgrade journalist: “You must imagine a United States with every little television station everywhere taking exactly the same editorial line - a line dictated by David Duke. You too would have war in five years.” Re norm breakdown - sometimes deliberately fostered, e.g. by language putting the victims outside the bounds of the moral community. Hutu referred to Tutsi as *cockroaches*.
2. So our goal is to take the soc psych theories closer to real world data and real-money outcomes; and the narrative theories into the lab.

Hypotheses

1. Most antagonism is displayed by individuals who identify strongly with the “student” group.
2. Antagonism can be increased by “primes” in the environment.
3. Antagonism is fostered by group norms favouring discrimination and/or the breakdown of norms prohibiting it.
4. Antagonism is mediated by blame attributions.

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1. The first comes from soc psych. (We’d be interested in other possibilities... “group threat”?) The “primes” seems a plausible mechanism for media impact. RCT explanations of media spreading hatred have problems, since it is cheap talk. 3. comes from pol sci and also soc psych. 4. also part of the process of demonizing out groups, and particularly interesting in the Greek case where there were explicitly political motivations for the violence; cf. also “grievance” theory of civil conflict.

The Greek riots

- ▶ Sparked by the shooting of an unarmed teenager in December 2008
- ▶ Context: a long history of antagonism between police and students, going back to the end of the dictatorship

Experimental framework

- ▶ Dictator games* between subjects (Thessaloniki university students) and targets
- ▶ Targets identified by profession only: police or others (4 other selected professions)
- ▶ Donations sent by post
- ▶ Measure antagonism by the difference between police and other targets

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1. Not actually dictator games. Gerhard will describe in more detail.
2. How many different targets to use - tradeoff between relevant data and concealing our motives to avoid demand effects.
3. Police can't enter university; and riot risk!
4. Gerhard will say more about this

Experimental design

- ▶ Social identity and blame attributions:
 - ▶ Questionnaire items on centrality of student identity
 - ▶ On blame attribution towards street-level police
- ▶ Cues: “priming” with neutral vs. riot words, using a sentence-unscrambling task
 - ▶ Used in the soc psych literature
 - ▶ E.g. Sharif and Norenzayan 2007): *dessert divine was fork the* unscrambled to *the dessert was divine* (a prime for religion).
- ▶ Norms: private versus public choices
 - ▶ Public choices will be revealed to two neighbours
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1. The priming task is a strong way to prime but runs the risk of subjects becoming consciously aware of the prime; we will debrief subjects carefully to check. Present norms of discrimination versus absent norms against discrimination: we could test by comparing public and private giving to control groups. $PRIOTHER = PUBOTHER = PRIPOLICE > PUBPOLICE$ means that there's a norm of discrimination. $PRIPOLICE = PUBPOLICE = PRIOTHER < PUBOTHER$ means a norm is absent in the police case. (Can we decompose these effects if both are present?)

Experimental design

Neutral prime				Violence prime			
Private police	Private other	Public police	Public other	Private police	Private other	Public police	Public other
Private other	Private police	Public other	Public police	Private other	Private police	Public other	Public police
Public police	Public other	Private police	Private other	Public police	Public other	Private police	Private other
Public other	Public police	Private other	Private police	Public other	Public police	Private other	Private police
Questionnaire							

Dictator Game

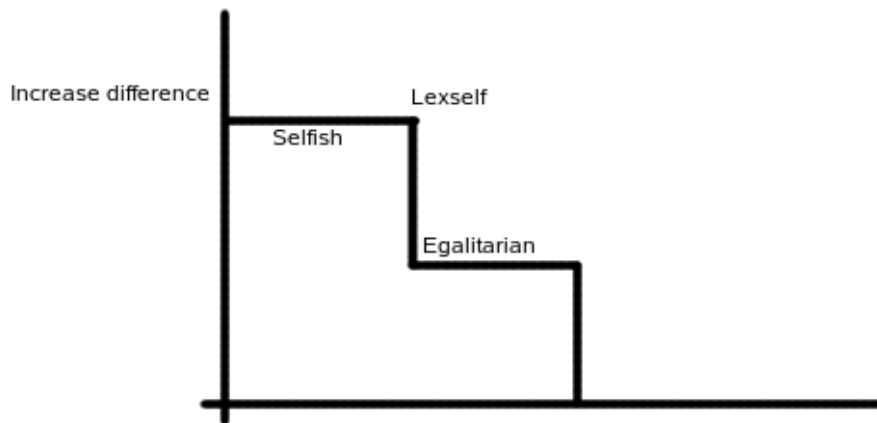
- ▶ Subjects get presented two modified version of a simple dictator game
 - ▶ Vary prices for giving to the other subject
 - ▶ At the end of each session subjects choose a point on a step shaped set

Varying Prices

- ▶ Present 30 linear budget sets per opponenet (Police or Other)
- ▶ Subjects choose a point on the budget line (we do not allow for free disposal)
- ▶ Then the next budget set

Step Shaped set

- ▶ At the end of each session (police or other) subjects choose a point on a step shaped budget set
- ▶ Helps to immediately identify “prototypical” social preferences



Advantages of Setup

- ▶ From the linear budget sets
- ▶ Estimate demand parameters within subject. (Assuming a CES utility function)

$$U_s = [\alpha(\pi_s)^\rho + (1 - \alpha)(\pi_o)^\rho]^{1/\rho}$$

- ▶ Able to classify preferences, depending on the value of ρ
 - ▶ Increasing total payoff $0 < \rho < 1$
 - ▶ Reducing inequality $-1 < \rho < 0$

Questions

- ▶ Is it new?
- ▶ Is it interesting?
- ▶ Right hypothesis?
- ▶ Perception of group threat.
- ▶ Measure of trust in or threat by institutions

Future plans

- ▶ Rerun experiments after 1 year to examine decay of antagonism
 - ▶ Interaction with cues will be interesting