

FLS 6415 - Causal Inference for the Political Economy of Development

Week 4 - The Effects of Social Organization & Lab
Experiments

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The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ How do social constructs like identity affect development?

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- ▶ How does social organization alter the impact of institutions?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ How do social constructs like identity affect development?
- ▶ How does social organization alter the impact of institutions?
- ▶ Big questions:
 - ▶ Does Weber's 'Protestant Ethic' explain western growth?
 - ▶ How do elites maintain their power over generations?
 - ▶ Why are some people more willing to pay taxes than others?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ 'Norms' and 'culture' structure interactions within and between social groups
- ▶ What is a social norm?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ 'Norms' and 'culture' structure interactions within and between social groups
- ▶ What is a social norm?
 - ▶ Social norms as 'informal institutions'
 - ▶ Social norms as mutual expectations/coordination devices
 - ▶ Social norms as punishments in game theory

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What question is Whitt (2014) trying to answer?

The Effects of Social Organization

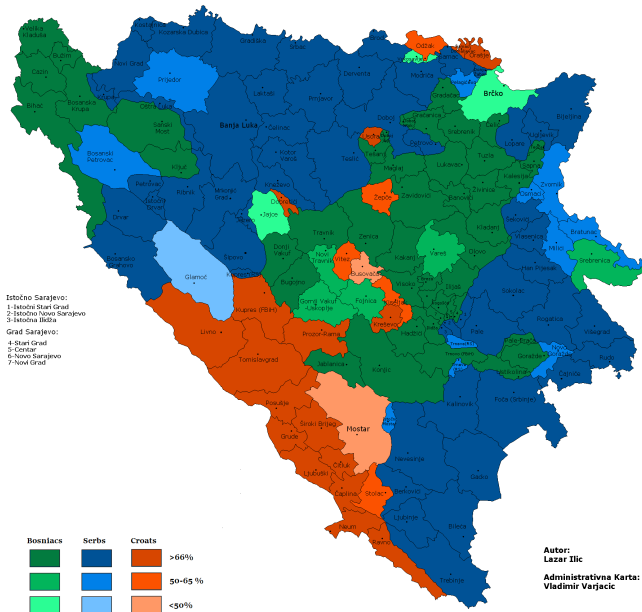
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 - ▶ "This study examines the impact of ethnic violence on a basic norm of fairness."

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What question is Whitt (2014) trying to answer?
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 - ▶ Can social norms of fairness across ethnic divisions persist after ethnic violence?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What question is Whitt (2014) trying to answer?
 - ▶ "This study examines the impact of ethnic violence on a basic norm of fairness."
 - ▶ Can social norms of fairness across ethnic divisions persist after ethnic violence?
 - ▶ Does ethnicity affect how Bosnians treat each other?



The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Why use a lab experiment?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Why use a lab experiment?
 - ▶ We can't manipulate ethnicity directly
 - ▶ Lots of confounders affect real-world ethnic interactions: wealth, location, context etc.
 - ▶ Hard to measure outcomes of varying real-world interactions

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **population**?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **population**?
- ▶ What is the **sample**? / sampling procedure?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **population**?
- ▶ What is the **sample**? / sampling procedure?
- ▶ Does the sample (over-sampling) matter for inference?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **treatment**?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **treatment**?
- ▶ What is the **control**?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **treatment**?
- ▶ What is the **control**?
- ▶ What is the **treatment assignment mechanism**?

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The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **treatment**?
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- ▶ What is the **treatment assignment mechanism**?
- ▶ What is the **lab/game context**?
 - ▶ Choice set
 - ▶ Information/instructions
 - ▶ History/sequence
 - ▶ Physical and social setting

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What is the **treatment**?
- ▶ What is the **control**?
- ▶ What is the **treatment assignment mechanism**?
- ▶ What is the **lab/game context**?
 - ▶ Choice set
 - ▶ Information/instructions
 - ▶ History/sequence
 - ▶ Physical and social setting
- ▶ What does the researcher control and what do they not control?

Table 3. Experimental Allocations by Subject and Recipient Ethnicity.

Subject ethnicity	Recipient R1	Mean to recipient R1	Recipient R2	Mean to recipient R2	SD	% Bias against R2	N	t-test for difference in means (R1 = R2)
Bosniak	Bosniak	5.55	Croat	4.45	1.33	22.5	80	5.23***
	Bosniak	5.86	Serb	4.14	1.70	37.5	88	6.71***
	Croat	5.37	Serb	4.63	1.72	22.9	83	3.86***
Croat	Croat	6.05	Bosniak	3.95	1.92	31.3	64	6.19***
	Croat	5.81	Serb	4.19	1.71	31.5	73	5.72***
	Serb	5.08	Bosniak	4.92	1.93	19.7	66	0.48
Serb	Serb	5.68	Bosniak	4.32	1.77	36.8	76	4.74***
	Serb	5.57	Croat	4.43	1.57	28.0	75	4.45***
	Croat	5.07	Bosniak	4.93	1.57	13.4	67	0.52

***Significant at $p \leq .010$.

The Effects of Social Organization

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 - ▶ Is that large or small?

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- ▶ Higher allocations go to co-ethnics (in-group)
 - ▶ Croats are the most biased to their in-group
 - ▶ Serbs are the 'fairest'
- ▶ When forced to choose between two non-co-ethnics (out-group members)
 - ▶ Croats and Serbs show no preference
 - ▶ Bosniaks allocate more to Croats than Serbs
- ▶ Differences in allocations also correlated with attitudes
 - ▶ Caring about identity -> more bias
 - ▶ Fearing out-groups -> more bias
 - ▶ Bias -> Expectations of bias

The Effects of Social Organization

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The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ How does Whitt interpret these findings?
 - ▶ In-group solidarity
 - ▶ Out-group aversion/punishment
- ▶ Could it represent anything else? What norm are we really measuring?
 - ▶ Deference/dependence?
 - ▶ Charity?
 - ▶ Fairness doesn't mean equality - maybe compensating for average wealth/power

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Are responses likely to be accurate?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Are responses likely to be accurate?
 - ▶ NOT an incentive-compatible, behavioural measure
 - ▶ Anticipating what researchers wanted?
 - ▶ Did they really believe that people would receive the money?
 - ▶ Sequencing effects from previous experiments?
 - ▶ What if there was no clear focal point (5:5)?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What do the findings about recipient gender suggest?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ What do the findings about recipient gender suggest?
 - ▶ No difference in allocation
 - ▶ So do we really think there's no discrimination or unfairness to women?

The Effects of Social Organization

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 - ▶ Where are political actors/manipulations/discourse here?

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- ▶ How much can we generalize?
- ▶ What are the policy implications?

The Effects of Social Organization

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- ▶ But how?
 - ▶ Preferences - in-group fairness
 - ▶ Technology - social networks permit identification and sanctioning
 - ▶ Strategy Selection - choose to cooperate more often

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Lab-in-the-field
- ▶ **Population:** Ugandans
- ▶ **Sample:** 300 people in a diverse, low public-goods poor area
- ▶ **Treatment/Control:** Various Games
- ▶ **Treatment assignment:** Random assignment to co-ethnic/non-co-ethnic

The Effects of Social Organization

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 - ▶ Yes (43% vs 28% success)

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The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ **Conclusion:** Norms and Networks allow co-ethnics to provide more public goods

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ **Conclusion:** Norms and Networks allow co-ethnics to provide more public goods
 - ▶ ...But where are the public goods here?
 - ▶ Are public goods organized by voluntary contributions or coercive central authority?
 - ▶ Is this true of all parts of Kampala? Uganda? All ethnic groups?

The Effects of Social Organization

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- ▶ Why use a lab experiment?

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Hoff and Pandey 2004
 - ▶ Past inequality -> Expectations -> Poor's Behaviour -> Current Inequality
 - ▶ Effect of the Indian caste system on development through **expectations**
- ▶ Why use a lab experiment?
 - ▶ Can't manipulate caste directly
 - ▶ Want to isolate differences in social treatment, not differences in opportunities
 - ▶ Focus manipulation on *social treatment* of caste

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ **Population:** Indians with a caste (all religions)

The Effects of Social Organization

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The Effects of Social Organization

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- ▶ **Sample:** High School Boys in one village in Uttar Pradesh
- ▶ **Treatment:** Others' **awareness** of caste
- ▶ **Control:** Lack of awareness of caste
- ▶ **Outcome measure:** Performance in completing 15 mazes;
Rewards allocated by a local person

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Results
 - ▶ **Caste unknown:** No difference in performance between castes

The Effects of Social Organization

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- ▶ **Castes segregated:** Low-caste perform even worse
- ▶ **No discretion in rewards:** No difference in performance

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Interpretation:

The Effects of Social Organization

- ▶ Interpretation:
 - ▶ Low caste expect to be judged poorly
 - ▶ So the reward is less motivating
 - ▶ So they try less

The Effects of Social Organization

► Issues:

- Is the effect due to other boys knowing caste, or the evaluator?
- Could this be a lab-specific effect?
- Any bias in the type of low-caste boys who go to school?
- What was the political context of caste in the village?
- What about the very different south of the country?

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Causal Inference

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Causal Inference
- ▶ Why lab experiments?

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Causal Inference
- ▶ Why lab experiments?
 - ▶ Treatments we cannot administer in reality
 - ▶ Outcome measurements that are hard to take in reality
 - ▶ Random treatment assignment not permitted in reality

Lab Experiments

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Lab Experiments

- ▶ **Treatment Assignment:** Same as a Field Experiment
- ▶ **Treatment:** Not a manipulation of real world political or economic processes, but establishing controlled 'lab' conditions
 - ▶ The advantage: Control over context helps isolate mechanisms
 - ▶ The disadvantage: Can we generalize to the real world from this artificial context?

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Problems generalizing from the lab:
 - ▶ **Hawthorne effect:** Lab context influences behaviour, social desirability bias
 - ▶ **Context effects:** The real-world always provides more information, more history
 - ▶ **Process effects:** People care *how* decisions are made
 - ▶ **Selection effects:** Actors in specific roles are rarely representative samples, 'WEIRD' or pro-social lab subjects

Lab Experiments

- ▶ The lab differs from the field

Lab Experiments

- ▶ The lab differs from the field
 - ▶ The stakes
 - ▶ The norms (specific norms of being an experimental subject)
 - ▶ The degree of scrutiny
 - ▶ The sample of individuals
 - ▶ The degree of anonymity

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Levitt and List 2006 argue lab experiments are *inherently* flawed because the decisions we want to measure are likely to change depending on the degree of **scrutiny**

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Levitt and List 2006 argue lab experiments are *inherently* flawed because the decisions we want to measure are likely to change depending on the degree of **scrutiny**
- ▶ “You tip more when you’re on a date”
- ▶ Social norms are activated, eg. treating one-shot games like repeated games
- ▶ Scrutiny alters who wants to make a decision as well as the decision they make
- ▶ Subjects use cues (heuristics) to draw on ‘similar’ situations from the real world

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Many studies find more cooperation in the lab than in the real world

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Many studies find more cooperation in the lab than in the real world
 - ▶ Scrutiny increases cooperation
 - ▶ Anonymity reduces cooperation
 - ▶ That's interesting in itself! We can manipulate the degree of scrutiny/anonymity etc.

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Lab experiments may be generalizable where norms/morality is less important

Lab Experiments

- ▶ Lab experiments may be generalizable where norms/morality is less important
 - ▶ ???

Survey Experiments

- ▶ Treatment occurs *within* the survey questionnaire
 - ▶ Different versions of the questionnaire randomly applied
 - ▶ Not a field experiment: Still an artificial context
 - ▶ Not a lab experiment: People not brought to a single location or interacting

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ How do people make choices between many options?
- ▶ Treatments are often 'bundles', but which aspect matters most?

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ Hainmueller et al 2013 - How do attitudes to immigrants depend on immigrant characteristics?

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ Hainmueller et al 2013 - How do attitudes to immigrants depend on immigrant characteristics?
- ▶ Vary education, profession, language, gender, national origin, etc.
- ▶ Profiles
 - ▶ Attributes
 - ▶ Values
- ▶ Randomize attribute order to prevent bias

Please read the descriptions of the potential immigrants carefully. Then, please indicate which of the two immigrants you would personally prefer to see admitted to the United States.

	Immigrant 1	Immigrant 2
Prior Trips to the U.S.	Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa	Entered the U.S. once before on a tourist visa
Reason for Application	Reunite with family members already in U.S.	Reunite with family members already in U.S.
Country of Origin	Mexico	Iraq
Language Skills	During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English	During admission interview, this applicant spoke fluent English
Profession	Child care provider	Teacher
Job Experience	One to two years of job training and experience	Three to five years of job training and experience
Employment Plans	Does not have a contract with a U.S. employer but has done job interviews	Will look for work after arriving in the U.S.
Education Level	Equivalent to completing two years of college in the U.S.	Equivalent to completing a college degree in the U.S.
Gender	Female	Male

Immigrant 1 Immigrant 2

If you had to choose between them, which of these two immigrants should be given priority to come to the United States to live?

	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--	-----------------------	-----------------------

On a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 indicates that the United States should absolutely not admit the immigrant and 7 indicates that the United States should definitely admit the immigrant, how would you rate immigrant 1?

Absolutely Not Admit									Definitely Admit
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Using the same scale, how would you rate immigrant 2?

Absolutely Not Admit									Definitely Admit
1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Fig. 1 Experimental design: Immigration conjoint. This figure illustrates the experimental design for the conjoint analysis that examines immigrant admission to the United States.

choice outcomes hereafter. Second, in "rating-based conjoint analysis," respondents give a numerical rating to each profile which represents their degree of preference for the profile. This format is preferred by some analysts who contend that such ratings provide more direct, finely grained information about respondents' preferences. We call this latter type of outcome a *rating outcome*.

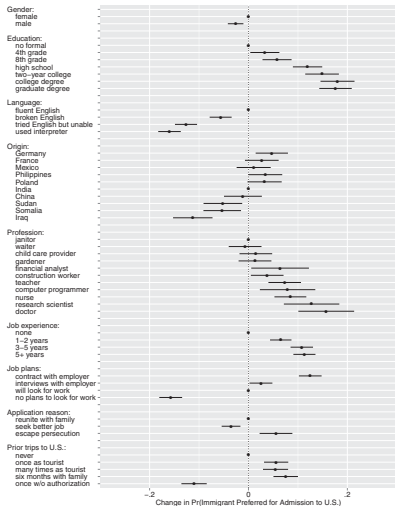


Fig. 3 Effects of immigrant attributes on preference for admission. This plot shows estimates of the effects of the randomly assigned immigrant attributes on the probability of being preferred for admission to the United States. Estimates are based on the regression estimators with clustered standard errors; bars represent 95% confidence intervals. The points without horizontal bars denote the attribute value that is the reference category for each attribute.

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ Estimating results uses a simple regression of respondent choices on profile attribute-values

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ Estimating results uses a simple regression of respondent choices on profile attribute-values
- ▶ But each specific profile arises too rarely to make comparisons of individual attribute-values
 - ▶ So this is **not** an Average Treatment Effect
 - ▶ Eg. the effect of gender when age, language etc. are held constant
 - ▶ It is an **Average Marginal Component Effect**
 - ▶ Eg. the effect of gender averaging across all possibilities of age, language, etc.

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ How realistic are the responses?
 - ▶ Not a behavioural measure; nothing at stake
 - ▶ Social desirability bias
 - ▶ Not like real-world preference-formation process
- ▶ Hainmueller et al 2014 - compare conjoint responses to a Swiss referendum
- ▶ Citizens voted on specific naturalization applicants (Really!)

Figure S11: Effects of Applicant Attributes on Opposition to Naturalization Request (Un-weighted Survey Sample)

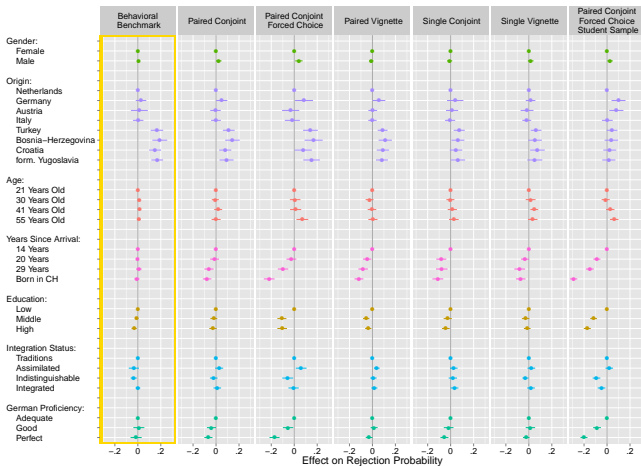


Figure shows point estimates (dots) and corresponding, cluster-robust 95 % confidence intervals (horizontal lines) from ordinary least squares regressions. The dots on the zero line without confidence intervals denote the reference category for each applicant attribute.

Conjoint Survey Experiments

- ▶ But note the conjoint method still hugely under-estimated the overall rejection rate
- ▶ 21% versus 37% in reality

List Experiments

- ▶ Survey experiments are also valuable for measurement

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List Experiments

- ▶ Survey experiments are also valuable for measurement
 - ▶ Most survey responses are biased to impress the researcher
 - ▶ Social desirability bias has differential effects across respondents and topics
- ▶ List experiments make individual responses invisible to the researcher
- ▶ Knowing this, hopefully the respondent answers more accurately
- ▶ Gonzalez-Ocantos et al (2010) - list experiment on vote-buying

List Experiments

Im going to hand you a card that mentions various activities, and I would like for you to tell me if they were carried out by candidates or activists during the last electoral campaign. Please, do not tell me which ones, only HOW MANY:

- ▶ they put up campaign posters or signs in your neighborhood/city;
- ▶ they visited your home;
- ▶ they placed campaign advertisements on television or radio;
- ▶ they threatened you to vote for them.

List Experiments

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Please, do not tell me which ones, only HOW MANY:

- ▶ they put up campaign posters or signs in your neighborhood/city;
- ▶ they visited your home;
- ▶ they gave you a gift or did you a favor;
- ▶ they placed campaign advertisements on television or radio;
- ▶ they threatened you to vote for them.

List Experiments

- ▶ Nicaragua 2008 municipal elections
- ▶ **Direct Question:** Have you received a gift or favour in exchange for your vote?
 - ▶ 3%

List Experiments

- ▶ Nicaragua 2008 municipal elections
- ▶ **Direct Question:** Have you received a gift or favour in exchange for your vote?
 - ▶ 3%
- ▶ **List experiment:**
 - ▶ Just the difference in mean responses between treatment and control lists
 - ▶ 24% = 2.31 - 2.06

List Experiments

- ▶ Do respondents really understand anonymity?
- ▶ Bias towards a 'reasonable'/central number?
- ▶ Floor/ceiling effects

- ▶ When should we use a lab or survey experiment?