Voting and Protesting During Times of Economic Adversity in Latin America

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Aim of the Paper and Research Questions

Microlevel mechanisms

* To examine the micro-level causal mechanisms underlying different macro-level claims on the relationship between economic downturns and political participation in elections and protest.

- Do individuals who experience financial hardship in the context of an economic crisis are more likely to participate in protest and punish the incumbent in elections?

- Is this relationship conditioned by other factors such as a) the attribution of blame to the government for the economic crisis, and b) whether the individual belongs to the formal or informal sector?
Previous Research. Elections

The Relationship between the Economy and Political Participation

* Macro-level analyses

1) Vote shares for the incumbent decrease as a consequence of an economic crisis -inflation- in the pre-election period (Remmer, 1991).
2) Voters severely punish incumbents during economic downturns, but do not reward them when the economy is doing well (Pacek and Radcliff, 1995).
3) In contrast to OECD countries, in developing countries turnout increases during times of economic adversity. Differing levels of welfare state development help to explain this difference (Radcliff, 1992).
4) Institutional and political factors account for variation in electoral participation much better than socioeconomic variables (*economic crisis?) (Fornos et al., 2004; Kostadinova and Power, 2007).
Previous Research. Protest

The Relationship between the Economy and Political Participation

* Macro-level analyses
1) Few studies on the causes of protests in developing countries on a comparative basis.
2) Initial hypothesis: parallel process of democratization and economic reforms = demobilization of citizens, reduced political participation in elections and collective protest (Kurtz, 2004).
3) More recently, empirical evidence to the contrary. Citizens of developing democracies do overcome collective action problems and participate more in protest and elections in the face of globalization (Arce and Bellinger, 2007; Bellinger and Arce, 2011).
4) Economic crisis and protest: declines in GDP increases collective protest focused on economic reform and higher levels of inflation are associated with increased number of strikes (Franklin, 2010).
Hypothesis

H1. Individuals facing financial hardship in the context of an economic crisis will be more likely to participate in politics:

* Join a protest

* Participate in elections

* Punish the incumbent

a) Blame-attribution (Arceneaux, 2003)

H.1.a Individuals facing economic adversity who attribute responsibility for the economic crisis to the government are more likely to participate as compared to those who do not.

b) Formal-informal sector divide in LA:

H.1.b Individuals facing economic adversity who belong to the formal sector will be more likely to participate (organizational resources, direct access to state institutions)
Informal sector workers in Latin America

Importance:

- Size: more than 50% of workers belong to the informal sector (but variation across countries).

- Workers employed in precarious jobs. Do not contribute to social security which means that in most countries they do not have access to health insurance and other benefits and will not receive pensions when retired.

- It is a real problem in terms of unequal access to welfare state policies.
Methodology

- Data from the LAPOP, 2010. Several questions with regards to the economic crisis.

- Protest: Logit models (1=participation in a protest in the last 12 months 0=did not)

- Multinomial logit models: punish incumbent and electoral participation

* Vote intention. If the next presidential elections were being held this week, what would you do? Wouldn't vote or would purposely cancel my vote (1), would vote for the incumbent candidate or party (2), would vote for a candidate or party different from the current administration (3).

- Protest models:

* N = 17 (all LA countries but Honduras and Haiti), n=15,750

- Electoral participation models:

* N = 15 (all LA countries but Chile, Colombia, Honduras and Haiti), n=12, 324

* Control variables
Perception of the severity of the crisis

Perception of the Economic Crisis
Latin America, 2010

Source: LAPOP 2010
Over the past two years has your income increased, stayed the same, reduced?

- Increased or stayed the same: 70%
- Reduced: 26%
- Other: 3.3%

LAPOP 2010
Who is the most to blame for the current economic crisis in our country?

- Ourselves, the rich people, the problems of democracy, the rich countries, etc. (33%)
- The government (the previous or the current administration) (5.2%)
- The government (the previous or the current administration) (61%)

LAPOP 2010
Empirical Analysis

Baseline Model on Protest

Average Marginal Effects with 95% CIs
Empirical Analysis

Baseline models on Voting Behavior: punish incumbent

Average Marginal Effects with 95% CIs

Effects with Respect to
Empirical Analysis

Baseline models on Voting Behavior: Abstain
Empirical Analysis

Protest = Interaction Effects: crisis blame - no insurance
Empirical Analysis

Punish incumbent = Interaction Effects: crisis blame - no insurance

Average Marginal Effects of 1.incomereduced with 95% CIs

- Effects on Pr(Vote2 = 3)
- Effects on Pr(Vote2 = 0)

- crisisblame: 0 to 1
- Do you have access to health insurance? yes no

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Empirical Analysis

Voter turnout = Interaction Effects: crisis blame - no insurance

Average Marginal Effects of income reduced with 95% CIs

Effects on Pr(Vote2 = 1)

-0.02

crisisblame

0 1

Do you have access to health insurance?

yes no

-0.04

-0.02
**Conclusions and next steps**

* Contributions

- The first attempt to analyze how economic crisis affect political participation in Latin America at the individual level.

- to focus on two different major forms of political participation
- participation in elections (routine and less costly) and protest (extra-institutional and costly).

- Incorporation of the formal-informal divide in terms of political participation

* Future steps:

- Explore other regions of the world to analyze whether we observe similar logics

- Multilevel models to incorporate country-level indicators of economic crisis