Noviembre 2021

ART6_A1_2021_3 N° de serie

Artículo Científico

When losses can be a gain. A large lab-in-the-field experiment on reference dependent forgiveness in Colombia

Autores

Enrique Fatas

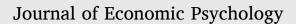
Lina M. Restrepo





Contents lists available at ScienceDirect





journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/joep

When losses can be a gain. A large lab-in-the-field experiment on reference dependent forgiveness in Colombia^{\star}

Enrique Fatas^{a, b, *}, Lina Restrepo-Plaza^{c, 1}

^a Center for Social Norms and Behavioral Dynamics, University of Pennsylvania, United States

^b Escuela de Administración, Universidad ICESI, Colombia

^c Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Económicas, Universidad del Valle, Colombia

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Forgiveness Framing Defaults Reference dependence Experiment Restorative justice

ABSTRACT

We test the effectiveness of two behaviorally inspired manipulations promoting forgiveness in a lab-in-the-field experiment in Cali, Colombia. Offenders (mostly juvenile) can only participate in a restorative justice program if victims agree to forgive them and let them participate. In our experiment, 756 participants were recruited using a panel maintained by a large public university. Participants are randomly assigned to one condition in a 2×2 between-subjects factorial design. In all conditions, restorative justice is introduced to participants using requests sent by real offenders to victims asking for their forgiveness. In one dimension, we manipulate the way the program is presented to them, using equivalent losses (risks of recidivism) or gains (successful rehabilitation). In the other dimension, we manipulate the default option (forgive or not-toforgive), from which participants can easily opt-out. Decisions are incentivized by a sequence of lotteries. In all lotteries, a certain option is associated with the benefits of conventional justice (the opportunity cost of restorative justice) and a risky choice represents restorative justice, with large potential earnings (if the offender does not relapse into crime) and a chance of null earnings (if the offender does). Our results show that reluctance to forgive significantly decreases in the domain of losses relative to the domain of gains, while similar reluctance rates are observed in both default conditions. Disclosing objective information about the low recidivism rate of offenders also has a large impact, strongly reducing reluctance to forgive. Consistent with attentionbased models, the magnitude of expected losses plays no significant role, and victims of crime are more willing to forgive than non-victims.

1. Motivation

Restorative justice (RJ) is a justice administration framework addressing crimes committed by juveniles and adults. In essence, restorative justice is an alternative to conventional frameworks based on retribution and imprisonment. While incarceration may deter offenders from committing crimes (Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Cullen, Jonson, & Nagin, 2011), spending time in jail is most

* The field work questionnaires and the database are available in https://osf.io/s6ynr/.

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: efatas@upenn.edu, efatas@icesi.edu.co (E. Fatas), lina.restrepo@correounivalle.edu.co (L. Restrepo-Plaza).

¹ The author's contribution to this paper is funded by the Colombia Científica-Alianza EFI Research Program, with code 60185 and contract number FP44842-220-2018, funded by The World Bank through the call Scientific Ecosystems, managed by the Colombian Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2021.102463

Received 12 March 2021; Received in revised form 11 November 2021; Accepted 12 November 2021 Available online 28 November 2021 0167-4870/© 2021 Published by Elsevier B.V.