“It could have been me":
Empathy, civic engagement, and violence in Mexico

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Rebecca V. Bell-Martin graduated from Whittier College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and majors in Political Science, Comparative Cultures, and Spanish Language. She received a Master's Degree in International Studies from the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver in 2013 and her Master's Degree in Political Science from Brown University in 2015. She was awarded the Brown University Graduate Program in Development's IGERT Fellowship (funded by the National Science Foundation) in 2015 and won the Watson Institute for International Affairs' Interdisciplinary Opportunities Fellowship in 2017. In 2015, Rebecca received the P. Terrence Hopmann Award for Teaching Excellence for her work as a teaching assistant in Introduction to International Relations. Rebecca maintains an active research agenda on conflict processes, political behavior in the Global South, and the politics of public security.

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1. INTRODUCTION: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AMIDST VIOLENCE

In the early hours of March 19, 2010, two students passed through the gates of el Instituto Tecnologico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM, or "el Tec"), a prestigious private university in one of Mexico's most prominent cities, Monterrey. Located just three hours from the US border, Monterrey was once considered a safe-haven from the criminal violence afflicting Mexico's northern region. But by 2010, Monterrey citizens – or *Regios* – had sensed a change was on the horizon. Violence had become more visible (Durán-Martínez 2018), with bodies appearing in the streets and shootouts occurring in broad daylight. While most citizens still believed that such violence could not happen to them, they could not deny that the violence they associated with other parts of Mexico had finally descended upon their city.

Upon their return to campus, the two students were ambushed by members of the Mexican military who shot and ultimately killed the young men. The military maintained that these students of excellence were in fact cartel hitmen, or *sicarios*, and thus were merely evidence of the state doing its job to address insecurity. Despite the precipitous increase in violence in recent years, the public outcry to this specific case of violence was remarkable. As we might expect, the students' parents and family members joined the movement for justice for the students. But in addition to the students' families, hundreds of other Monterrey citizens with

no personal connection to the case and no victimization experience of their own also pursued civic action as a response to the students' death. In the days, weeks, and months after the event, these citizens organized protest marches, stood up new NGOs, and started community improvement projects, all with the aim of addressing violence. For many of these citizens, these actions would constitute the first act of civic engagement in which they had ever participated and sparked what would become a lifelong civic practice.

Not all Monterrey citizens responded in this way. Many were quick to dismiss what had happened. One prominent businessman, for example, sided with the government's account, saying, "Surely the murdered young men were criminals and even if they were to prove they were students, we have to understand that it was necessary and that the army was just doing its job" (as qtd. in González-Ramírez 2015, 22). Others were notably unmoved by the case since the students were not originally from Monterrey.[1] As one man remarked, "It's not so bad, they weren't from here" (as qtd. in González-Ramírez 2015, 22). Another reportedly commented, "It's just as well, now the rich will know what it feels like to lose one of their own" (ibid.).

The case of the two students is just one among many in Mexico. With over 200,000 dead and disappeared (Guevara - Rosas 2018), similar reactions to criminal violence – that is, civic action and inaction – are repeated among citizens across the country. That so many citizens in Mexico would pursue greater engagement in civic life precisely when other citizens retreated from it (Villareal 2015) is puzzling. However, this outcome is just one case in a similar trend that others have identified across the globe. From Africa to the United States and Eurasia, exposure to violence is positively associated with future political participation and civic engagement (Blattman 2009; Shewfelt 2009; Bellows and Miguel 2009; Bateson 2012; Cassar, Grosjean and

[1] Interview with Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro).

Whitt 2013; Bauer, et al. 2016; Ley-Gutiérrez 2014; De Luca and Verpoorten 2015).

What explains these varied responses to violence? Why are some citizens mobilized to civic engagement through violence while others are not? Why do so many pursue civic engagement in violent contexts while others retreat from it out of fear? In this dissertation, I use the case of Mexico and one Mexican city in particular, Monterrey, to address these questions. I pay particular attention to the puzzle of civic engagement among citizens who are not themselves victims of violence by investigating the processes through which citizens are mobilized to civic action by violence they do not directly experience. I argue that these citizens are motivated to pursue civic action through sharing a sense of empathy with direct victims. Imagining oneself in the shoes of a victim so that one senses a victim, "could have been me," increases the likelihood that citizens who are not direct victims will pursue civic engagement as a response to violence befalling others.

I call those who live in violent contexts but are not themselves targeted *indirect victims*. Those who have been directly threatened with violence are referred to as *direct victims.*[2] I refer to these two types of "victimization" to capture the impact of living in violent contexts. In these contexts, all citizens' lives are upended in some way by the violence. In this sense, all citizens are victims.[3] The most relative distinction is thus not whether one has been victimized, or not, but instead between types of victimization: indirect vs. direct. I elaborate on this distinction later in the dissertation.

[2] For readability, I will use "direct victims" and "victims" interchangeably. Indirect victims will always be called "indirect victims."

[3] I am grateful to Ana Villareal for raising this point.

Post-Cold War Citizenship: Civic engagement in violent contexts

The overarching question this dissertation addresses, "What is the relationship between violence and civic engagement?" speaks to an increasingly common but poorly understood aspect of contemporary politics, democratic political life in the face of violence. Although inter-state and civil war have declined dramatically since the Cold War, sustained violence persists, particularly in young democracies. Seven of the 10 most violent countries today are democracies not in civil war (UNODC). These "violent democracies" (Arias and Goldstein 2010) tend to be clustered in the Global South and in Latin America in particular. They are defined by the existence of democratic elections and broader inclusionary politics alongside high rates of state and nonstate violence. "Indeed," Arias and Goldstein write, "if one considers violence as a measure of democratic failure – with greater levels of violence indicating a breakdown of democratic institutions and values – then Latin American democracies could be considered profoundly *un*democratic" (2). Bolivia, Brazil, Guatemala, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, El Salvador, and Mexico are just some among many "violent democracies" that exist today (ibid.).

Even as these contexts are increasingly common, we know relatively little about citizen politics in them. What explains variation in political and civic engagement when democracy is accompanied by bullets? Existing theories have little to say on this question. While the political science discipline boasts a long-standing tradition of studying political and civic engagement, our foundational theories emerged from the modern US context and other developed democracies (see for example Tocqueville 1988; Campbell, et al. 1960; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1993; Putnam 1994; Aldrich 1993; Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995; McAdam 1986; Skocpol 2003; and Lodge and Taber 2013).[4] These are radically different political settings

[4] Almond and Verba's (1963) classic analysis of civic culture does include pre-democratic Mexico. Still, the context of violence is missing.

that do not reflect contemporary trends in violence, nor the lived experiences of citizens in such violent spaces. My dissertation research corrects for this oversight. It instead recognizes that violence creates the overarching context in which citizens interpret their political world and their resulting political choices. In doing so, I shed light on poorly understood processes of citizen politics in violent contexts and reveal a heretofore unrecognized mechanism of civic engagement, empathy.

The research also makes an important contribution to how we understand the relationship between violence and democratic political development. We typically think of violence as destructive and antithetical to democratic projects. This is certainly true, but it need not be wholly so. My research suggests that violence, while tragic, can stimulate the cultivation of civil society, what Putnam (1994) labelled the cornerstone of a thriving democracy. Thus, while we typically think of violence as the harbinger of democratic erosion, it may very well signal a democratic wellspring through which democratic development *advances* and *deepens* via the conduit of citizen civic responses to violence. My findings lend credence to Arias and Goldstein's (2010) claim that, "Instead of viewing violence as indicative of democratic failure, we can… understand violence as critical to the foundation of [Latin American] democracies, the maintenance of democratic states, and the political behavior of democratic citizens" (5).

Why should we care about civic engagement in violent contexts in particular? Put simply, while we tend to think of violence as antagonistic to democracy, civic engagement is hypothesized to strengthen it (Tocqueville 1988). Putnam (1994) argues that the continued interaction citizens experience in civic associations fosters interpersonal trust, cooperation, and tolerance of others, all of which foster social capital, help aggregate citizen interests, and pave the way for organized, collective action toward those interests. Participation in civic activities,

even those that are not expressly political, may also raise citizens' awareness about political issues and impart to them the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in political action (Almond and Verba 1963; Warren 2001). It can also foster political discourse and bridge existing social cleavages while promoting democratic representation and citizen voice (ibid). As Gaventa and Barret (2012) observe, "… more aware citizenship, coupled with stronger citizenship practices, can help to contribute to building responsive states, which deliver services, protect and extend rights, and foster a culture of accountability" (2406). In that same study, in fact, citizen participation in local associations proved more influential in positive democratic outcomes than participation in formal institutions (ibid., 2407). All these may be particularly important in new, violent democracies, where the ability of citizens to hold the government accountable and demand democratic rights despite *and in response to* emergency-like conditions of violence may in fact prompt violence to indirectly and unexpectedly advance democratic development rather than undermine it.

This is not to say that civic engagement is a silver bullet for the problem of democracy in times of violence. As Huntington (1968) and Berman (1997) show, a mobilized citizenry without the appropriate political institutions through which to channel its grievances can also breed discontent, authoritarian backsliding, political chaos, and more violence. These divergent pathways, one virtuous and one degenerative, makes understanding how violence shapes civic engagement amidst the precariousness of violent democracies all the more crucial. My attempts to understand the positive association between experiences with violence and civic engagement thus should not be interpreted as a call for more violence. It is instead an effort to recognize both the constructive and destructive roles that violence plays in the development of democratic

citizens in the contemporary political landscape, more and more of whom are living under conditions of sustained violence.

What is Civic Engagement?

The civic engagement concept merits attention not only because it is this project's primary dependent variable; clarity is important because there is a wide degree of variation in what political scientists regard civic engagement to be. From Putnam's (1994) apolitical bowling leagues to more explicitly political actions like signing a petition, marching in a protest, and voting, civic engagement has become an umbrella term to include any and all activities that have to do with public or social life. Berger (2009) goes so far as to advocate against the use of the term on the bases of extreme "conceptual stretching" (Sartori 1970). I will not engage that debate here, but I will prevent further confusion by being explicit about the formulation of civic engagement I employ in the dissertation and outlining my logic for doing so.

I define civic engagement as individual or collective actions citizens take to address issues of common concern (Adler and Goggin 2005; Zukin, et al. 2006). These actions may involve forms of conventional political participation that take place within formal institutions (i.e., voting), but also includes extra-institutional political acts (i.e., protest demonstrations). Similarly, such actions may directly engage the state and/or aim to change government behavior (i.e., signing a petition), but also includes activities that do not directly engage the state or political institutions (i.e., community improvement projects). This conception maintains the associational life foundations of interest to nearly all civic engagement theorists, while allowing for active engagement with the state. The latter represents an important aspect of civic

engagement that is often sidelined by contemporary scholarship, despite claims that an active civil society is crucial to the strengthening of those very institutions (Skocpol 2003).

While this definition may seem broad at first, it is in fact a conservative middle-ground between more extreme definitions, with Putnam's (1994) apolitical "associational life" on one end of the spectrum and Verba, Nie, and Kim's (1987) "communal activities" on the more explicitly political end of the spectrum. I depart from Putnam's (1994) conception of civic engagement, which emphasizes associational life and the importance of social ties in all spheres, regardless of any link to politics or the state. The activities that emerge from experiences with violence can hardly be understood as mere social activities, like Putnam's bowling leagues. They are instead actions taken with an explicit intent to address the roots of crime and violence. Even if this were to manifest in the form of a bowling league the ultimate aim of the group is to address insecurity and its root causes, not bowling per se.

My theory of civic engagement during violence more closely aligns with Verba, Nie, and Kim's (1987) conception of "communal activities," which refer to individual or communal activities taking place outside electoral processes that aim to address some social issue (54). However, for Verba, Nie and Kim (1987), those activities are only considered political in-so-much as they aim to effect government behavior. This would describe many, but not all forms of civic action taken in contexts of violence. In these unique contexts, some citizens actively choose to sidestep the government because they see it as unwilling or unable to address security. Such actions should not be considered apolitical simply because they do not engage the government. On the contrary, the active circumvention of the state is a radically political choice (Scott 1987). For this reason, I maintain that civic engagement as a response to violence is a political action

with political consequences, regardless of the degree to which it aims to influence government behavior.

The Argument

Based on my qualitative research, I identify the process through which indirect experiences with violence provoke citizens to civic engagement in violent contexts. In doing so, the dissertation makes three theoretical contributions to existing scholarship. First, this project recognizes and embraces the multitude of ways that citizens in violent contexts may experience violence. It theorizes a conceptual distinction between violence experienced directly and violence experienced indirectly. It is only by making this distinction that I am then able to identify a relationship between indirect experiences and civic engagement, thus prompting an important shift away from existing scholarship's emphasis on direct victimization. The dissertation's third contribution is to identify the mechanism linking indirect experiences with violence to civic engagement: empathy. Here, I summarize the key points of the theory, which I develop fully in Chapters 2 and 3.

I theorize two types of experiences with violence: direct victimization and indirect victimization. Direct victimization refers to acts of violence in which an individual or their family member is harmed or at immediate risk of harm. Indirect victimization refers to violence that happens to someone else, but which an individual witnesses firsthand or learns of through secondary means, such as through the media or word-of-mouth. These conceptual categories emerged from and are grounded in a logic of victimization, which expects different cognitive and emotional outcomes from violence that occurs within one's personal circle versus violence happening to others outside it.

I argue that indirect victimization mobilizes citizens to civic engagement and that it does so through the mechanism of empathy. Empathy refers to the ability to see oneself reflected in another and, in doing so, to share their same or similar emotions as if they were our own. Empathy is stimulated by a sense of shared similarities with another. That is, perceiving similar demographic characteristics, life experiences, or values, all of which facilitate seeing oneself reflected in the other and, consequently, imagining oneself in the other's place. Existing research shows that empathy for another can spark pro-social behaviors (Krebs 1975; Batson, et al. 1981; Batson and Oleson 1991; Hartman and Morse 2018).

In violent contexts, the cognitive processes of empathy are sparked by indirect victimization, that is, witnessing or learning of an act of violence happening to someone else. I argue that when an individual perceives a shared sense of similarities between themselves and a victim, they are more likely to imagine themselves in the place of that victim. Taking the perspective of the victim in turn generates a vicarious sense of vulnerability as the individual imagines that what happened to the victim could have happened to him/her. This vicarious sense of vulnerability links the individual's interests with the plight of the victim as the individual now feels compelled to address their vicariously-stimulated vulnerability with preventative action. The unique link that empathy makes between the plight of the victim and the individual's interest in preventing their own victimization stimulates civic engagement activities addressing violence. Unlike other prevention strategies, civic engagement is distinctively designed to pair individual citizen interests with a broader, collective good – in this case, increased security. Summarized, the theory is as follows:

> Indirect victims are more likely to pursue civic engagement after exposure to a violent event prompts them to imagine themselves in the place of the victim. This re-imagining occurs through perceived similarities with the victim. Taking the perspective of the victim in turn generates a vicarious sense of vulnerability. This vicarious vulnerability links the

indirect victim with the plight of the direct victim, increasing the likelihood that indirect victims pursue preventative action in the form of civic activities addressing violence.

Existing Scholarship: Violence and Civic Engagement

Existing literature yields contradictory expectations of how individual experiences with violence should impact civic life. One set of arguments suggests exposure to violence should have a demobilizing effect. Cárdia's (2002) study in Brazil, for example, suggests that exposure to violence prompts a withdrawal from social life. Her findings are corroborated by research in South Africa (Marks and Goldsmith 2006), Mexico (Schedler 2015, 16) and elsewhere (Elias 1986; Melossi and Selmini 2000). Others show that victims of crime tend to become distrustful and lose their faith in society (Shapland and Hall 2007, 178; Shewfelt 2009), signifying a loss in social capital and a sense of collective efficacy, two elements known to be important for political participation and collective action (Finkel, et al. 1989; Muller et al. 1991; Finkel, Muller and Opp 1986; Putnam 1994). Parás (2013) documents this negative relationship between living in contexts of violence and social capital. Ley-Gutiérrez (2014) meanwhile demonstrates that exposure to crime and violence depresses institutional forms of political participation, like voting.

Another set of arguments suggests the opposite outcome. An emerging literature suggests that experiences with violence can instead motivate civic engagement and political participation. This is true for ex-combatants of violent conflict from Indonesia, to Bosnia, Uganda, and among American veterans of the Vietnam War (Shewfelt 2009; Blattman 2009). This is also true for noncombatants and those living outside war zones across multiple continents (Bateson 2012). Though counterintuitive, scholars continue to find a remarkably consistent, positive relationship between individual exposure to violence and future political participation and civic engagement (see also Wood 2003; Bellows and Miguel 2009; Cassar, Grosjean and

Whitt 2013; Ley-Gutiérrez 2014; De Luca and Verpoorten 2015). However, our understanding of *why* this relationship exists remains sorely underdeveloped. We can categorize existing explanations into three schools of thought: (i) post-traumatic-growth theory, (ii) expressive politics, and (iii) network-based explanations, among which post-traumatic growth theory predominates.

Post-traumatic growth theory

Post-traumatic growth theory (Tedeschi and Calhoun 1996) (hereafter PTG) suggests that processing experiences so traumatic that they upend one's worldviews and core beliefs can spur personal development. Such development may elicit a greater appreciation for life, improved relationships with others, a sense of new possibilities, a greater sense of personal strength, and spiritual change, among other positive outcomes. Political scientists have borrowed this theory from psychology to make the claim that violence spurs such personal development within individuals traumatized by it, leading them to pursue positive, pro-social behaviors like civic engagement (e.g., Bellows and Miguel 2009; Blattman 2009; Shewfelt 2009).

Yet, PTG does not explain the relationship between exposure to violence and civic engagement well. First, PTG presents no compelling reason for why gains from post-traumatic growth should be channeled through civic engagement specifically. Indeed, one can imagine any number of areas to which one might direct their personal development energies, like improving familial relationships, going back to school, or improving one's health. There is no obvious reason that these energies should be directed to civic engagement rather than alternative outlets. Thus, we are left with the question: what explains the unique relationship between exposure to violence and civic engagement specifically?

Second, PTG explanations tend to neglect variation in how citizens experience violence. Most studies emphasize direct victimization, meaning that the individual or their family member is a target of violence (cf. Blattman 2009). However, citizens experience violence in many ways. Some will become victims, but others will only witness it. Some will witness violence firsthand, others only via media outlets. Some will witness barbaric acts like torture, others shootouts in the streets. Some will partake in violence. Distinguishing between different forms of exposure to violence matters because we cannot assume that all acts of violence have the same effect on civic engagement, nor can we assume that all experiences with violence are equally traumatic or traumatic at all. Indeed, the psychology literature suggests that direct experiences with violence are not necessary for violence to shape individual behavior (Yehuda 2002).

What is more, the empirical evidence for the proposed mechanism leaves much to be desired. To begin, existing scholarship faces an overabundance of large-n data relative to small-n qualitative data. As a result, the bulk of our knowledge on this topic is generated from large-n correlational or experimental analyses (cf. Shewfelt 2009) and the "black box" of the mechanism is rarely interrogated. Similarly, many studies rely on aggregate level data while proposing individual-level mechanisms, thus suffering from ecological fallacy and casting doubt on the validity of the proposed mechanism.

Mobilizing Networks

Ley-Gutiérrez's (2014) network-based account suggests that embeddedness in mobilizing networks, such as neighborhood associations, labor unions, or parent-teacher associations, pushes indirect victims and direct victims alike to pursue high-risk protest activities against violence. In her words, "Violence and a vibrant civil society stimulate citizen mobilization" (94).

This is so because these networks give indirect victims the opportunity to interact with victims, thus raising their awareness about crime and violence. Yet, this mobilizing network approach leaves many of the same questions unanswered as PTG. Most importantly, the mechanism leading indirect victims to civic engagement is still unclear. The theory suggests that getting to know victims raises awareness about crime and violence. However, citizens in violent contexts are hyper-aware of the violence around them, regardless of whether they personally know a victim, or not. What is more, awareness could just as plausibly lead to fear, anxiety, and a withdrawal from civic life (Cárdia 2002). Thus, like PTG's trauma mechanism, it remains unclear why awareness would lead to civic engagement in particular.[5] And, since mobilizing networks are formed through engagement in civic activities, we are left with no explanation of instances in which citizens who are not currently active in civil society pursue civic engagement as a response to violence.

Expressive Politics

For direct victims, theories of expressive politics suggest that participating in politics after victimization can channel pain, anger, hatred and other emotions into the civic or political activity, thus ameliorating victimization's emotional consequences (Bateson 2012). Indirect victims may respond in similar ways. Wood (2003), for example, shows how citizens are politically mobilized by "moral outrage," which is stimulated by violent state repression of others. Like PTG and the mobilizing networks explanation, expressive factors also fail to adequately explain the relationship between violence and civic engagement. While we can

[5] It in fact suggests there is something special about the awareness provoked by hearing the personal story of victims, a uniqueness that is explained by empathy. By measuring interactions between victims and what she calls "nonvictims," I believe Ley-Gutiérrez (2014) is capturing empathy.

reasonably expect victims to feel anger or pain after their victimization, the link between indirect victims and emotive factors is more complicated. Even if emotive factors are at the heart of the relationship between violence and civic engagement, existing theories do not explain why indirect victims are emotionally provoked by only certain cases of violence. Why doesn't all violence merit moral outrage? It also fails to explain why only some indirect victims are emotionally-provoked by those events. In sum, the theory cannot tell us why only some indirect victims are provoked to political action by only some events.

Existing scholarship thus leaves several critical questions unanswered:

(i) Why is exposure to violence so tightly linked with civic engagement in particular?

(ii) How do different forms of exposure beyond victimization shape civic engagement?

(iii) How do we explain cases of civic engagement in which individuals who are not directly victimized are motivated to action by violence?

These questions are especially important when we consider that most citizens will not fall victim to violence. In the nationally-representative survey I carried out for this research, 83% of respondents reported that neither they nor anyone in their family had experienced a violent crime. Thus, understanding how the civic lives of indirect victims – that is, the political majority – are affected by violence befalling others is just as important as it is poorly understood.

The Research Context and Empirical Puzzle

I use evidence from one case, Mexico, and within Mexico, one key metropolitan area, Monterrey, to explore the poorly understood link between experiences with violence and civic engagement. Rather than study the question across a number of cases, I chose to study one case in-depth due to the project's theory-building aims. The project's primary mission is to reveal the

mechanisms through which the observed relationship between experiences with violence and future civic engagement operates, particularly for indirect victims. It is thus appropriate to select a smaller number of cases in which that relationship exists and collect in-depth qualitative data to reveal those mechanisms, something that cannot be achieved via large-n, crossnational analyses. Logistically, focusing my efforts on one case and one city in particular allowed me the time necessary to build trust with my research contacts. Such trust is imperative to collecting qualitative data on two potentially sensitive topics, experiences with violence and civic and political action. I elaborate on my subnational research design and research methods in the second half of this chapter.

Mexico is an ideal context in which to study the relationship between experiences with violence and civic engagement. First, Mexico is a case of "violent democracy," where citizens live amidst sustained violence alongside democratic institutions. Violent crime increased precipitously leading up to and after Mexico's 2000 democratic transition (Camp 2007, 59). Organized crime played a key role in the growing insecurity because democratization disrupted protection arrangements between political parties and organized crime groups (Snyder and Durán-Martínez 2009; Trejo and Ley-Gutiérrez 2017). Just six years after its democratic transition, the Mexican state launched its *Guerra contra el Narco,* or War against Drug Trafficking (hereafter the "drug war").[6] This military campaign against organized crime groups plunged many regions of the country into civil war-like violence. The confrontation has since claimed over 200,000 victims (Guevara - Rosas 2018), prompting comparisons between

[6] I use the term "drug war," because that is the term my research participants use ("*la guerra contra el narco*"). However, Mexico's criminal groups are involved in much more than drug trafficking. They are multilevel, organized, and often transnational criminal enterprises that engage in human trafficking, extortion, illegal weapons sales, oil theft, kidnapping, and a range of other illicit, profit-driven activities.

Mexico's drug war and the wars in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.[7] Citizens have been exposed to that violence in a multitude of ways. The majority of citizens are exposed in secondary, indirect ways, such as hearing about violence in the media. Others, meanwhile, will experience the violence firsthand either through their own victimization or the targeting of a loved one. In 2017, Mexico recorded over 31,000 murders and the government estimated that approximately 67,000 citizens had been kidnapped during the previous year (INEGI 2017).[8] Mexico thus exhibits the appropriate variation on the independent variable, exposure to violence, with some citizens experiencing violence through their own victimization and others experiencing it only indirectly.

Beyond providing an appropriate research context in which to study civic engagement amidst violence, the Mexico case also presents a number of empirical puzzles. The country is experiencing an unprecedented crisis of violent crime in which many citizens find themselves and their loved ones living under sustained threat of violent aggression. Scholars investigating the consequences of violence in similar conditions have found evidence for what I call the civic withdrawal thesis – that is, that citizens living in violent contexts tend to withdraw from the public sphere (Cárdia 2002; Villareal 2015). Yet, we also see evidence of what I call the civic engagement thesis, that is, that citizens advance into the public sphere as a response to violence, rather than retreat from it. In 2011, the death of Juan Francisco Sicilia launched a nationwide protest movement that would eventually become the Caravan for Peace. The Caravan traveled from Mexico's southern region to the northern border, and across to Washington, D.C. where it culminated in a protest outside the United States (US) Department of Defense. In 2014,

[7] See for example Reuters 2017.

[8] National Institute of Statistics and Geography (Mexico's state-run demographics and analytics bureau). Kidnapping does not imply death. Citizens are frequently kidnapped for money and later returned. That same study, for example, showed that over 66% of victims were kidnapped for less than 24 hours.

meanwhile, the disappearance of 43 students provoked nationwide protests and, in Ciudad Juárez, the victimization of women has roused civil society to its feet. Both the predominant explanation, post-traumatic growth theory, and theories based in expressive politics posit that these cases can be explained as victims channeling trauma and other negative emotions brought on by their victimization into political action. However, victimization cannot explain the overwhelming numbers of citizens, many of whom are not direct victims, that participated in such protests and joined social movements against violence, like the Caravan for Peace (Ley-Gutiérrez 2014).

What is more, there is little evidence of the observable implications of an explanation rooted in direct victimization. Most obviously, we should observe a positive relationship between rates of civic engagement and homicide rates if victimization drives civic action. If true, we would expect rates of civic engagement to rise with the number of direct victims. In fact, survey data indicate no statistically significant relationship between the homicide rate in one's city and individual participation in anti-violence protest demonstrations nor individual willingness to help anti-violence activists by donating material support or signing a petition (Schedler 2015, 277).[9] Similarly, Durán-Martínez (2019) demonstrates no consistent relationship between homicide rates and the number of civil society organizations in Mexican cities.

In this dissertation, I argue that this puzzling pattern exists because the impact of exposure to violence is not explained through the experience of direct victimization. Instead, it is both direct and indirect experiences that motivate civic engagement, albeit through different channels. While the civic actions of victims may be explained through direct victimization, indirect victims are motivated through empathy. Indirect victims who are exposed to a case of

[9] National Survey on Organized Crime (ENVIO) 2013.

violence that prompts them to feel empathy for victims are more likely to take civic action as a response to violence than those whose sense of empathy is not stimulated. My individual-level theory cannot explain cases of broad, social mobilization like anti-violence protests and the existence of civil society organizations. However, by investigating the processes through which experiences with violence make individual citizens politically available and willing to participate in such civic action, I shed important light on one piece of these larger puzzles.

Research Design

To understand the microprocesses of civic engagement amidst violence, I employ a subnational, mixed methods research design that pairs the richness of in-depth qualitative data in one case with experimental and statistical analyses outside that case. As outlined above, existing theories on the relationship between violence and civic or political participation lack adequate evidence for the mechanisms they most frequently propose. What is more, the predominant alternative explanation, post-traumatic growth theory, tends to sideline the experiences of indirect victims. To address this theoretical void, the dissertation is divided into two parts: (i) an inductive theory-building element in which I uncover and theorize the mechanism linking indirect victimization with future civic engagement; and (ii) a theory-testing element in which I test my inductively-generated theory. In the theory-building part of the project, I carried out in-depth qualitative analysis of the catalyzing factors that provoked individuals in one important case, Monterrey, Mexico, to pursue civic engagement as a response to violence, or not. I drew on 16 months of field research in Mexico, primarily carried out in Monterrey but also in Mexico City. I paired in-depth interviews with participant observation in violent and nonviolent neighborhoods of Monterrey to inductively theorize possible mechanisms linking exposure to violence with civic engagement. In the theory-testing part of the project, I test the theory within

the broader Mexican context via a nationally-representative survey experiment. I test the theory outside the context of Mexico and outside the context of criminal violence through statistical analysis of large-n survey data from Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan. In the remainder of this chapter, I elaborate on the project's research design. I first outline the logic behind the project's theory-generating and theory-testing elements, along with the subnational and mixed method design I employ. I then describe the design and methods used for the ethnographic research that supports the inductive theory-building element of the project. I outline the methods used for each of the two theory-testing strategies in Chapters 5 and 6.

Fitting the Puzzle Pieces Together: Subnational mixed-method research design

I employ a mixed-methods, subnational research design in which each of the methods I use plays a particular and necessary role. The design addresses critical shortcomings in existing studies that have hindered scholars from adequately explaining the relationship between violence and civic engagement. It simultaneously addresses the limitations of any single method within its own research design by pairing qualitative, experimental, and large-n statistical methods in a mixed-methods design. The persuasiveness of the dissertation's claim is derived from the amalgamation of evidence provided by these three methodological strategies.

In the inductive theory-generating part of the dissertation, I use qualitative data to build a theory linking indirect experiences with violence to future civic engagement. Such fine-grained, qualitative data was necessary to reveal the theoretical mechanisms that the large-n survey and aggregate data typically used by existing scholarship obscures. The qualitative research is the foundation of the project.

I then use the nationally-representative survey experiment to advance the argument in two ways: first, the experiment allows me to assess the degree to which my theory explains citizen responses to violence outside of my qualitative research sample but within the Mexican context. I also use the survey experiment to estimate the average causal effect of empathy on civic engagement. While the qualitative data can reveal the mechanism (empathy), the experimental analysis allows me to precisely measure *how much* empathy for victims affects future civic engagement, which the qualitative research cannot do.

The survey experiment's persuasiveness is derived from its coupling with the qualitative data via the mixed-methods design. Though experiments are particularly useful for studying cognitive processes like empathy, it is difficult to test mechanisms through experiments just as it is through many methods (Bullock, Green and Ha 2010). Put simply, the experiment can show a relationship between the experimental treatment and the outcome variable, but we can never be certain that the cognitive process linking them is what we theorize it to be, in this case empathy. The qualitative data provides logic and evidence for a) why the experiment yielded the relationship it did; b) why we believe the mechanism proposed is accurately reflected in the experimental design; and c) that the process we capture in the experimental analysis is reflective of the same mechanism. Thus, although the survey experiment provides important tests and measurement of the theory, any conclusions derived from it cannot stand without the theoretical grounding provided by the qualitative research. I elaborate on the design of the survey experiment in Chapter 5.

Since this dissertation's goal is to identify the mechanism motivating the relationship between violence and civic engagement that others observe in cases beyond Mexico, a third and essential piece of the research design is to test the theory in these other contexts. I achieve this

through large-n statistical analysis of survey data from Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan. These out-of-sample tests assess the degree to which my theory of empathy politics explains trends in civic engagement outside the context of Latin America, outside the context of criminal war, and in contexts that exhibit different levels of democratization, thereby addressing a potential limitation of the subnational approach (Lankina 2012, Moncada and Snyder 2012). This also serves as a compelling assessment of the explanatory power of my theory relative to the predominant alternative explanation, post-traumatic growth theory, because it applies my theory to the region and conflicts from which post-traumatic growth theory emerged and, in the case of Uganda, using the same data and analyses. In this way, I am poised to show whether and how the empathy politics theory can explain trends that this existing scholarship cannot, namely why and how indirect exposure to violence provokes future civic engagement. However, the results from the large-n statistical analyses are most persuasive when paired with the qualitative data. In the absence of that data, all we can show is an association between experiences with violence and civic engagement; we cannot speak to the processes through which that relationship obtains. Revealing this mechanism is a key contribution of the dissertation. I elaborate on the large-n out-of-sample statistical analyses in Chapter 6.

Subnational research in one city

There are several benefits to the subnational approach I use. By focusing my data collection within one violent context, Mexico, I hold constant macro-level factors that may shape the relationship between violence and citizen civic engagement, like the type of violent conflict (i.e., criminal conflict vs. civil war),[10] regime type, or electoral cycles (Snyder 2001). By limiting

[10] See Kalyvas 2015 and Lessing 2015 for analyses of how civil wars and criminal wars are similar and the ways in which they differ.

the research to one metropolitan area, Monterrey, I further control for potential mediating factors that vary within Mexico, such as local legacies of political mobilization (Wood 2003; Bateson 2013; Osorio, Schubiger and Weintraub, working paper), local political context (Hiskey and Bowler 2005), electoral competition, local political institutions and local security context.

I also employ within-city variation, selecting two communities that served as primary research sites for the ethnographic participant observation. Embedding myself in these local communities was important for two reasons. First, local communities are the most relevant locus of political action for studying civic engagement processes since most civic activities take place in proximity to one's quotidian life. Second, individual exposure to violence is shaped by highly localized security contexts (Kalyvas 2006; Wood 2003). I conducted research with and lived among communities in San Pedro Garza García (hereafter "San Pedro"), a municipality of the metropolitan zone, and communities in the south of Monterrey municipality (hereafter "South Monterrey"). The neighborhoods vary on a number of relevant conditions. First, San Pedro and South Monterrey varied in their levels of security during the violence. Though both spaces existed in an overarching context of violence, San Pedro was considered "safe" relative to South Monterrey, which was a hot spot for violence. In South Monterrey, citizens were more likely to be direct victims than citizens in San Pedro. Citizens in both spaces were indirectly exposed to violence via the media or word of mouth. Working in both spaces ensured that the experience of research participants would reflect sufficient variation on the independent variable, most importantly direct vs. indirect experiences with violence. To be clear, the variation I aim to explain is at the individual level. Doing work in these different communities helped me come into contact with individuals with a sufficient range of experiences with violence.

These spaces also varied along known correlates of political participation, the most prominent of which are socioeconomic status and education (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Citizens of San Pedro are predominantly wealthy or in the middle-to-upper income range of citizens in the metropolitan zone. Consequently, they also tend to have higher levels of formal education. Citizens in my field sites in South Monterrey, in contrast, are among the city's poorest. I worked in what the state calls *polígonos de pobreza* or zones of poverty, where many women and men are un- or underemployed and/or work in the informal sector. The communities there range from moderate to extreme poverty. While not the norm, illiteracy is common and it is rare that individuals pursue education beyond junior high. Conducting the ethnographic participant observation and recruiting research participants in these disparate communities allows me to assess the degree to which these established correlates of political participation, rather than different victimization experiences, shape civic engagement in violent contexts.

Case Selection: Monterrey, Nuevo León

Monterrey is the capital of Nuevo León province in the northeast of Mexico. A major industrial hub, Monterrey is Mexico's third-largest metropolitan area with a population of nearly 4.5 million. It is an ideal context in which to investigate the microprocesses of civic engagement during violence because there is substantial individual-level variation on both the independent and dependent variables of interest, direct vs. indirect victimization and civic action vs. inaction. On the aggregate level, Monterrey is also a case of the relationship between violence and civic engagement that motivates this dissertation: as violence in the city increased, so too did rates of civic engagement. Despite its location in the tumultuous northeast of Mexico, Monterrey was

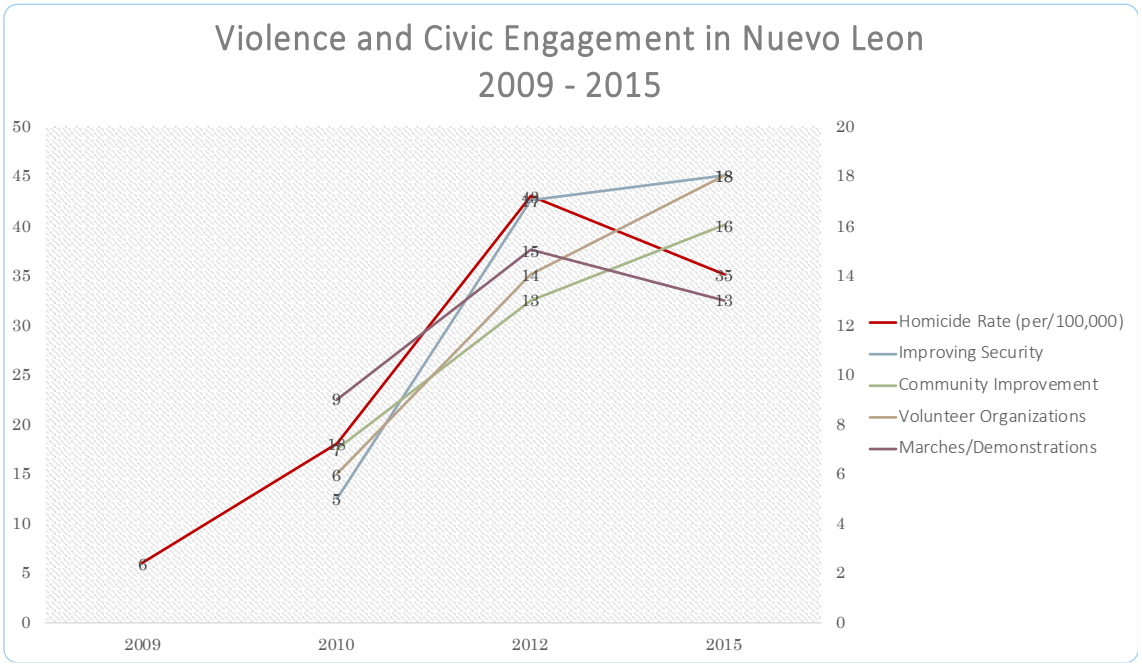
long-considered one of Mexico's safest cities. This began to change in the years leading up to 2009, when conflict between two organized crime groups, *los Zetas* and *el Cartel del Gulfo*, and the state came to a head. Monterrey's homicide rate spiked from about 6/100,000 to more than 40/100,000 between 2009 and 2011 (Indice de Paz México) and did not abate for nearly five years. What is more, the qualitative nature of the violence, which included beheadings, mutilations, and the public display of bodies in addition to targeted killings and shootouts in the street, made violence remarkably visible (Durán-Martínez 2018). News editors had the perverse luxury of curating the grisliest photos for the morning papers.[11] *Regios* were thus exposed to violence in a multitude of ways. For many, their exposure to violence was limited to what they read or heard on the news or via word of mouth. Others might see a dead body on their way to work, witness an assault, or find themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time, trapped in the middle of a shootout. Still others were victimized themselves or had family members killed or disappeared. Others committed violence against their fellow citizens.

Regios with the resources to do so frequently fled Monterrey for safety across the US border. Others, meanwhile, stayed. Among them, some retreated to the safety of their homes, waiting for the violence to pass (Villareal 2015). Some maintained an air of indifference, reasoning that the violence was a fight between criminals and had nothing to do with regular citizens. Yet, others chose a different path, leaving the safety of their homes for the politics of the streets, proactively engaging their communities in civic initiatives to promote peace, in spite of the very real threat of violence. Between 2010 and 2012 (the most intense years of the violence), participation in protest marches and community improvement organizations nearly doubled, participation in voluntary organizations tripled, and participation in community action

[11] Interview with Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey)

to improve security more than tripled (Encuesta de Cultura Ciudadana 2010, 2012; see Figure 1.1). Explaining how and why citizens participated in civic engagement during the most intense period of violence and what role their experiences with violence played in those trends is the question this dissertation addresses. I describe Monterrey in greater detail in the next chapter.

Figure 1.1



Data: Encuesta de Cultura Ciudadana

Inductive theory-building research in Monterrey

The inductive, theory-building component of the dissertation draws on qualitative data to generate a theory of civic engagement amidst violence. I carried out this research during eight

months of fieldwork in Monterrey between 2016 – 2017.[12] As part of my ethnographic approach, I embedded myself in both violent and nonviolent communities of the metropolitan area, living and working alongside residents. I also carried out semi-structured interviews with Monterrey citizens, including both victims and non-victims, and citizens who are both active and not active in civil society. For critical contextual understanding, I carried out additional interviews with local elected representatives, NGO and government bureaucrats, and public officials. I also gathered additional qualitative data from local news reports, governmental and human rights documents, and bibliographic material.

Research participants and risks of selection bias

Since I am interested in explaining individual-level political behavior, my qualitative research leveraged individual-level variation between citizens who experienced violence directly and indirectly and those who participate in civic activities and those that do not (Figure 1.2). For many research participants, I can also leverage within-case variation over time by tracing the processes that led formerly inactive citizens to later choose civic engagement:

Figure 1.2 Variation in the Qualitative Research Sample

Variation of Interest	*Civic Participator*	*Civic Non-Participator*
Direct Victim	Victim Participator	Victim Non-Participator
Indirect Victim	Indirect Victim Participator	Indirect Victim Non-Participator

[12] These 8 months were preceded by two months of field research in Mexico City and a number of preliminary in-country research trips. In total, I spent 16 months in Mexico, split between Mexico City and Monterrey.

One might argue that since the project's main interest is to build a new theory about the mechanisms linking violence to civic engagement, that this degree of variation is not necessary (Collier, Mahoney, and Seawright 2004; George and Bennett 2005; Lieberman 2005). However, such a design would not allow me to identify that mechanism as unique to indirect victims unless I compared them to victims. Under the same logic, I cannot confidently say that any given variable is key to mobilizing indirect victims to civic engagement if I have not confirmed that this variable is not also present among those that do not participate in civil society (Jacobsen and Landau 2003).

While simple in theory, achieving this variation was challenging in practice. One of the most common ways to recruit research participants is to approach an organization where one might find the profile of person with whom you would like to speak (i.e., if I were conducting a study about the inner workings of law enforcement agencies, I might recruit participants from local police departments). This was not an empirically sound strategy for this research. Since my outcome of interest is civic engagement, approaching local organizations, community groups, or social movements would have been selecting on my dependent variable. I would thus ensure that my participants – that is interviewees and others with whom I interacted - were "civic participators" and I would be unable to compare their logic of civic action against non-participators' logic of inaction.

I faced a similar challenge in establishing variation on the independent variable (direct vs. indirect victimization). One option would be to gain access to victims through an organization that supports victims. This recruitment strategy runs the risk of two forms of selection bias. First, it would produce a sample with no variation on the independent variable because research participants would likely all be direct victims of violence. Second, this strategy produces the

same selection on the dependent variable. That is, this would yield a sample in which all participants are active in a civil society organization. This is particularly true in Monterrey, where the two primary victim support agencies are also involved in some level of activism and/or government engagement. Such selection bias would nearly ensure that I would a) find a relationship between direct victimization and future civic engagement; and b) reveal the mechanism to have something to do with direct victimization. Even if I were to compile a large enough sample of participants who were not direct victims, I would still lack a necessary comparison group of non-participators in my sample.

My selection of violent and nonviolent neighborhoods in which to conduct my ethnographic participation observation research is intimately connected to my aforementioned concern with selection bias. Not wanting to select on my dependent variable (civic engagement) nor limit myself to one type of experience with violence, I needed to identify and recruit research participants with varying forms experiences with violence (direct and indirect) and ensure that I was working in contexts representative of both experiences. So, I opted to conduct participant observation in neighborhoods with varying levels of insecurity under the logic that individuals living there were more or less likely to have these varying types of experiences and that since I had not selected the neighborhoods based on levels of civic engagement, individuals within them should exhibit variation in participation patterns.

Through my daily activities living and working in these neighborhoods, in addition to leveraging my existing social and professional network, I was able to construct a snowball sample of interview participants that represent a range of experiences with both violence and civic life. Snowball sampling does not yield a strictly representative sample, but the ethnographic element's primary purpose was theory generation, so representativeness was less crucial in this

part of the project. I also guard against the bias associated with snowball sampling by ensuring that I did not oversample a single network and that I based my sample off a multitude of seeds. For example, while many interview participants are the result of my ethnographic participant observation, many others are the result of my preexisting social and professional networks.

I embedded myself in the daily life of San Pedro and South Monterrey. I spent four months living in both communities and was able to easily move between them throughout my eight months in Monterrey, building and maintaining relationships throughout. My ethnographic participant observation included living and working alongside residents, often accompanying them in routine activities, like morning exercise, birthday parties, selling *doritos* (a typical Monterrey snack), embroidering, meeting to solve a neighborhood problem, or attending to an ill neighbor. During these quotidian interactions, I shared hundreds of informal conversations with them. In addition to this, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 citizens, primarily from these communities but also from elsewhere in the metropolitan area. The average interview lasted between 1 – 1½ hours, but many interviews lasted upwards of three hours and I met with many interviewees on several occasions. In total, I carried out over 150 hours of interviews.

In the interviews, I aimed to trace the interviewee's civic engagement trajectory from their first act of civic engagement to the activities in which they engage now, documenting the processes through which they were mobilized from civic inaction to civic engagement. I also ascertained their stated motivations for their engagement and the logic of any changes in their civic engagement practice. One of the key questions I asked was, "Tell me about the very first time you got involved in these types of activities." For interviewees that did not participate in civil society, this was determined early on in the interview and, later, we discussed their ideas

about why many citizens in general do not participate in civil society.[13] Interviewees that do participate also discussed their ideas on this issue. Though the interviews were semi-structured with a pre-established set of questions, I gave interviewees ample control over the direction of the interview, allowing them to highlight for me what they felt was most important to understanding civic and political life amidst violence. This strategy was pivotal for the research project because it was only through listening to their accounts in this open-form, participant-driven manner that the transformative role of empathy emerged. Indeed, I did not enter the field site looking for the empathy mechanism. The research participants revealed it to me.

Though I was interested in understanding what role, if any, violence played in processes of civic mobilization, I did not ask interviewees about this potential link. In fact, I avoided connecting violence with civic engagement, lest I predispose them to identifying a link they would not have otherwise identified. In a typical interview, pre-planned questions about civic engagement were separated from the questions about experiences with violence and, when possible, the interview started with the civic engagement topic so as not to prime the interviewee by talking about violence. Remarkably, I rarely had to raise the issue of violence via one of my pre-scripted questions. In the majority of my interviews and in informal conversations, violence and insecurity emerged organically and was most often raised by the research participant. Tragically, violence remains at the forefront of *Regios'* minds, despite the relative calm in the city today. For those that participated in civic engagement, our conversation about violence regularly began when they described a case of violence as their primary motivation for their civic

[13] Where possible, I avoided asking participants directly why they do not participate because it sounded accusatory. I worried it would invite feelings of shame or guilt for the interviewee and perhaps social desirability bias in their response. Asking respondents what other people do tends to generate answers about their own behavior, but in a way that does not directly connect the individual to the potentially uncomfortable response.

activities – again, with no solicitation by me. This makes the interview evidence I present in later chapters of the dissertation particularly compelling.

To collect information about the interviewee's exposure to violence, I asked them to describe what it was like living in Monterrey during the violence; to describe how they learned about violent events; and to describe how violence has affected their lives. While not asking directly what the interviewee had seen or experienced, which may have made them uncomfortable or put them at risk, these questions opened up conservation about the topic and prompted participants to share enough information that I could discern whether they had experienced violence directly, indirectly, or both and, critically, the instances of violence that had the greatest impact on them. I asked if the participant or their family were victims of crime only when the interviewee had not already addressed this. In most cases, I did not have to ask because the research participant had already voluntarily revealed the information to me during the course of the interview. The interview also included questions about political interest and political efficacy, in addition to a number of other questions about their views on the state and politics in the country.

Lastly, I also observed 35 public meetings and other civic activities where civilians came together to engage the political system and/or address issues of collective interest. This included protest demonstrations, neighborhood watch meetings, memorials for the dead and disappeared, public forums with local elected officials, meetings of activist groups, and community improvement committees, among others. These activities took place both within and outside my San Pedro and South Monterrey research sites.

The ethnographic qualitative research entailed long-term embeddedness with communities and with research participants. This embeddedness was crucial to generating the

data necessary for the project because it permitted me enough time and frequency of interactions to cultivate trust with research participants. Talking about one's experiences with violence can be uncomfortable, as can discussing one's political opinions and activities in a context where fear of the state is common. I do not believe research participants would have shared the information they did if I had not invested this time and energy in their communities. One research participant who is a direct victim told me: "Whenever people ask if I have been a victim of violence, I usually tell them no... But now you have been here with us for a long time, so I will share this with you."[14] One can imagine that other research strategies, such as a survey, or conducting interviews during a brief two-week period, would have yielded radically different data. If the aforementioned research participant were to participate in a survey, for example, her responses would produce measurement error – she would have been categorized as an indirect victim when in fact she is a direct victim. And, we can imagine that many citizens like her might respond similarly.[15] So, although conducting research for a longer period of time in one city versus shorter periods of time in multiple cities or crossnationally has its shortcomings (like generalizability), we also have to consider the credibility of the data we produce. For this

[14] Interview with María, July 2017 (Monterrey).

[15] In the final weeks of my field research I conducted interviews in a third community, Santa Catarina. However, I was not embedded in that community to the degree I was in San Pedro and South Monterrey. I did not live there and only made two visits to the community before I started speaking with residents. Citizens there were far less forthcoming in their interviews and their accounts of the security context in the community often contradicted one another. For example, I knew that a man was recently gravely assaulted there and that drug-addled bands of young men are known to walk through the neighborhood, yielding machetes and looking for trouble. Some neighbors mentioned these things. Some, however, described the neighborhood as completely peaceful and without problems of crime and violence. Contradictions can arise for a number of reasons, but I think my lack of embeddedness (and thus lack of trust) played a role. For this reason, I am less confident about the credibility of that data and consider the interviews I conducted in Santa Catarina only as supplementary to the core of my qualitative evidence, which comes from the work I carried out elsewhere in the city.

dissertation research, long-term embeddedness was fundamental to the validity of the data and the resulting theory.

Plan of the Dissertation

In the remainder of the dissertation, I develop, describe, and test my theory of empathy politics. In Chapters 2 and 3, I investigate this relationship in-depth, drawing on qualitative data to describe the process through which experiences with violence motivated indirect victims to civic engagement. In Chapter 2, I provide important background about Mexico's drug war and my primary research site, Monterrey. I describe how the drug war played out in Monterrey and how a wave of high-intensity violence between 2009 – 2013 impacted Monterrey's residents. I then describe the political context in Monterrey. I draw on qualitative and bibliographic data to describe an atmosphere in which the likelihood of civic engagement is low due to weak traditions of social mobilization, discouragement by local power elites, and few institutional outlets for citizen input. I show evidence suggesting that citizens bucked these trends precisely during the most intense years of violence and present preliminary data indicating that the violence was critical to this pivot. I then focus on individual-level experiences with violence, describing the multitude of ways citizens are exposed to violence and theorizing the distinction between direct and indirect victimization. I ground those observations in existing conceptions of victimology to inductively generate the theoretical construct at the core of the dissertation's argument: a spectrum of victimization.

In Chapter 3, I investigate citizen responses to violence in Monterrey. I first outline common citizen responses to the violence, including responses that align with the civic withdrawal theoretical accounts and civic engagement accounts described in the literature

review. I focus my attention on processes of civic engagement and draw on ethnographic qualitative evidence to demonstrate the processes through which this outcome obtains. I ground that evidence in psychology research on empathy to construct my theory of empathy politics.

Though my theory of empathy politics is an individual-level theory, it carries important implications for how we think about the potential for collective responses to violence because it sheds light on how and why certain citizens become politically available for such action. Collective responses are thus one observable implication of the empathy politics theory. In Chapter 4**,** I assess the degree to which my theory helps us understand one collective response, protest demonstrations, by asking, Why do some violent events provoke more civic responses than others? I explore this question through a comparative analysis of citizen collective responses to three key cases of violence in Monterrey: the massacres at Café Iguana, Sabino Gordo, and Casino Royale. I show that, relative to other explanations, the empathy politics theory sheds greater light on variation in citizen responses to these cases.

Chapter 5 tests the empathy politics theory outside the context of Monterrey but within Mexico via a nationally-representative survey experiment. In the first part of the chapter, I describe the logic of the experimental design, its execution, and the results. Observing that the experimental results do not confirm the theory, I then walk through likely reasons for this unexpected outcome. I identify a mismatch between the processes I observed in my field research and (i) the experimental treatment and (ii) the operationalization of the dependent variable in the survey experiment, both of which I argue factor into the experimental results. In the latter part of the chapter, I outline a revised experimental test of the theory that addresses these shortcomings.

In Chapter 6, I conduct an additional test of the theory, this time outside the context of

Latin America and outside the context of criminal war. The test serves as both an out-of-sample test and a demonstration of the theory's generalizability. Using observational data from Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan, I estimate the effect of indirect victimization on future civic engagement. The findings support the theory. Across research contexts and measurement strategies, indirect victimization is positively and robustly associated with future civic engagement. What is more, direct victimization does not have this same effect. Compared to direct victimization, indirect victimization is a more reliable predictor of civic engagement in these contexts.

I conclude the dissertation in Chapter 7 by summarizing the argument and evidence. I outline avenues for future research, including how we might address questions that remain to be answered and highlighting new questions my research raises. Finally, I elaborate on the work's contributions to broader theoretical debates about the emotional foundations of politics, violent conflict, and democratic trajectories in the Global South.

2. VIOLENCE IN MONTERREY: A SPECTRUM OF VICTIMIZATION

In the first part of this chapter, I introduce the reader to the research setting by "scaling down" to the city-level context of Monterrey (Snyder 2001). I describe the local-level drug war context and situate it against the background of the national-level drug war, describing how these national-level processes played out within Monterrey's metropolitan zone. I then describe the political context in Monterrey, locating Monterrey's experience among broader democratization processes taking place in Mexico and highlighting how these processes are reflected in the Monterrey context. In that section, I draw on qualitative and bibliographic evidence to describe an environment in which civic engagement is stifled due to weak traditions of social mobilization, discouragement by local power holders, and few institutional outlets for citizen input. I then present preliminary evidence suggesting that these trends shifted during a 2009 – 2013 wave of violence and that this violence was crucial to this pivot. In the second part of the chapter, I draw on qualitative data to describe the myriad ways citizens experience violence, including both directly and indirectly. I ground these observations in existing theories of victimization to inductively generate a theoretical "spectrum of victimization" through which I define the theoretical concepts buttressing the dissertation's main argument: direct and indirect victimization.

Monterrey and the Drug War

Monterrey is a large, capital city in the northeastern Mexican province, Nuevo León. Just three hours from the US border, Monterrey is a locus of industry and finance, making it one of the country's most important metropoles. It is also one of its largest, with over 4 million residents. Multinational corporations and Mexican financial pillars congregate in Monterrey, giving it a reputation for entrepreneurialism and a strong, pro-capitalist spirit. Often touted as one of Mexico's wealthiest, most modernized cities, Monterrey is also plagued by striking inequality. At least 220,000 citizens, or *Regios*, live in moderate to extreme poverty[1]. In this city of contrasts, the extremely poor (like those I worked with in South Monterrey) live alongside but cordoned off from the extremely rich (like those I worked with in San Pedro).

Monterrey's drug war experience represents a microcosm of national-level drug war processes. At the national level, democratization processes during the 1990s and 2000s beckoned increased crime and violence. Organized crime played an important role in fomenting insecurity as increased political competition broke up existing political arrangements largely associated with the semi-authoritarian *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (el PRI)* that protected crime groups (Snyder and Durán-Martínez 2009; Trejo and Ley 2017). In Monterrey, too, organized crime violence was minimal until the late 2000s due to agreements between local political leaders and the northeast region's prevailing crime group, the Gulf Cartel. The Gulf Cartel had dominated northeastern trafficking routes since the 1970s, serving as a primary link between Colombian drug supplies and the lucrative US market just across the border. In Nuevo León, the state determined where the Cartel could operate and the Cartel funneled money and resources into its political allies' coffers (Steinberg 2011, 28).

[1] Secretaria de Desarrollo Social de Nuevo León.

2007 marked a turning point in the northeast and in Monterrey in particular. That year, the head of the Gulf Cartel, Osiel Cárdenas Guillén, was extradited to the US, leaving a power vacuum in the organization and the region. Members of *los Zetas*, the Cartel's militarized security and enforcement wing, broke off from the Cartel and began to compete for control of the lucrative northeastern corridor, sparking violence across the region. Prior to that, Monterrey was considered a refuge from the drug war raging elsewhere in Mexico. But by 2009, citizens had witnessed public shootouts, mutilated corpses in the streets, a grenade attack on the US consulate, assassinations of public officials, and more. In the lower-income areas of Monterrey, criminal groups pervaded daily life, occupied homes, and took control of neighborhoods, recruiting from within these most economically vulnerable populations. In my own research sites in South Monterrey, neighbors recounted how *los Zetas* kidnapped families and took over their homes, frequently turning them into *casas de seguridad* or "safe houses" where victims would be kept in transit. Such spaces became hotbeds of violence.

Like then-President Felipe Calderon did nationally, the local state in the Monterrey metropolitan area drew on wartime narratives to portray the violence as a noble fight between good (the state) and evil (the delinquents). Citizens were assured that the only people dying in drug war violence were criminals and that the rising death toll was not a cause for worry, but instead evidence that the state was winning the war on crime. Many citizens thus welcomed the violence. The truth was much grimmer. In fact, innocent citizens often fell victim to criminal and state violence either as targeted attacks or unlucky bystanders. As pressure on the criminal groups grew, their abuse of civilians increased.[2] Meanwhile, the federal government began deploying military troops to Nuevo León to fight criminal elements. Simultaneously, local

[2] Interview with public official, February 2017 (Escobedo)

Monterrey industrialists partnered with local government to stand up an elite, militarized police force, *La Fuerza Civil*, to combat high-impact crimes like murder and kidnapping. Again, this reflected national trends in which, by 2010, President Felipe Calderon deployed over 45,000 troops across the country (Steinberg 2011, 31). So, by September 2011, *Regios* were patrolled by multiple layers of policing (much of it militarized), including municipal police, state police, federal police, military forces and *la Fuerza Civil*.[3] And, just as federal investment in military resources to combat crime resulted in greater human rights abuses against civilians nationally (Amnesty International 2013), so too in Monterrey. In 2010 alone, Human Rights Watch documented eight killings in Nuevo León that "evidence indicates were the result of the military's unlawful use of lethal force" (Steinberg 2011, 31). Like in so many other cases in Monterrey and elsewhere in Mexico, the state alleged that civilians killed were criminals and planted weapons on them in at least two of these eight instances (ibid.).

Though the violence began to wane with the decline of *los Zetas* around 2014, this period of violence looms large in the minds of Monterrey citizens. As I document elsewhere in the dissertation, much of the civic engagement activity I observed in Monterrey is done with unambiguous intent to avoid a return to such violence. As one local elected official told me, "…*los chingazos* [punches or blows] teach you things, the hits. Because the people now have seen what they do not want. So now they demand a lot."[4] At the same time, the fact that such violence could befall Monterrey prompted a seismic shift in how many *Regios* viewed local politics. Like crime and violence did elsewhere during Mexico's democratic transition (Crow

[3] This remains true today. On any given day, one can expect to encounter municipal police and *la Fuerza Civil* at least, usually in addition to soldiers. It is less common today to see state or federal police.

[4] Interview with local legislator of a high-crime area, February 2017 (San Pedro).

2009), the state's inability and/or unwillingness to combat crime in Monterrey spurred a great deal of political disillusionment and distrust among *Regios*:

> …what from the outside looked like a sudden collapse was in reality decades in the making. At its root was the decay of the institutions entrusted with providing law and order, ones that, despite their chronic dysfunction and corruption, had been able to contain drug violence in the old state-run system. But when that system crumbled, and when, in the face of 'the monster' of organized crime, Monterrey's elite, politicians and public turned to those institutions to rescue them, they found them rotten to the core (Steinberg 2011, 28)

Political Context in Monterrey

Monterrey is socially and politically conservative. Stemming from its role as a strong industrial and financial center, Monterrey society is dominated by a small handful of business elites. Historically, citizens have looked to these business elites – especially an exclusive group called *el Grupo Monterrey* – as the seat of local power. While these business elites are more aligned with state interests present-day, historically *el Grupo Monterrey* was known for resisting federal interference in the local economic, political and social affairs of the city and encouraged citizen deference to corporations and their figureheads rather than the state. For example, the business elite successfully discouraged state-led unionization during the 1930s, when unions were gaining strength throughout the rest of the country. Instead, local business channeled worker grievances through corporate-sponsored unions and managed worker (dis)content through patronage relationships that made citizens both dependent on and reverential of local business elite (Herrán Avila 2018, 198). The business elite thus cultivated local political arrangements in which business interests and political interests were inextricable: "Over the years [after the Mexican revolution], *regiomontano* entrepreneurs turned the city of Monterrey into a symbolic site of autonomous power with remarkable capacity to influence local politicians and place them in the structures of the official party" (ibid.). This trend continued into the Cold

War period, when the local Catholic church allied with business leaders to resist an interfering, secular federal state (ibid., 199).

These historical trends generated a contemporary civic culture characterized by citizen compliance with a strong, conservative local government and deference toward the Catholic Church and the powerful business elite, all of which work in tandem to maintain the status quo (González-Ramírez 2015). Unsurprisingly, Monterrey does not have a contemporary tradition of contentious, citizen politics, unlike many other Mexican localities where protest and other forms of contention are commonplace. While there were instances of radical citizen political action between the 1960s and the end of the Cold War, they were frequently short-lived and/or tamped out by a repressive state (see for example Herrán Avila 2018) – something Monterrey's current residents have not forgotten. As I detail in later chapters, fear of state repression and generalized disdain for political agitators (even of the mildest sort) represent a significant barrier to citizen political action in the city. Guillermo explains:[5]

> The story of citizen participation in Nuevo León is really interesting because people often say, 'There's no participation in Nuevo León – we don't really have a tradition of that. There's never been a tradition of participation here.' But that's not true! There was participation at one time. In the '70s, there was so much participation! In fact, they founded the FLN here.[6]
> **Why do you think that type of participation stopped in Nuevo León? How did we go from that to the society we have today?**
> I don't know – that's a good question. The repression from the state was very strong back then. People that were too active ended up disappeared or dead. So, I'm sure that has something to do with it. You should also look at the role of the businessmen and whether and how they co-opted citizen participation for their own interests.

Local, formal institutions reflect this state resistance to citizen participation. Nuevo León's state government has only recently expressed interest or will in encouraging civic

[5] Interview with Guillermo, April 2017 (Monterrey)

[6] *Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional (FLN)* is a socialist guerrilla group founded by *Regios* in 1969. The movement did not last beyond the early years of the 1970s. Its members were pushed out of Mexico's north only to emerge in the south, where it would provide the foundations for the Zapatista movement.

engagement beyond voting, a development that began several years after the most intense period of violence.[7] The government stood up its first office dedicated to civic participation in 2015 with the election of Jaime Rodriguez Calderón, one of only two Independent governors in the country.[8] As one official explained,

> This is the first time we [Nuevo León] have had a government that was really interested in fomenting citizen participation. Before, governments were really only interested in participation in *elections*. So, when we arrived, there was absolutely zero information about citizen participation in the government offices. I mean *nothing*…[9]

In 2017, this same administration passed the landmark Citizen Participation Law, mandating the establishment of participatory governance institutions, something that activists had been advocating for many years. Their victory is likely a result of integration into the new Independent governor's administration: "We've been working for this, but for many years and many governments, the government did not want the law to pass."[10] Other administrations, she hypothesized, may have

> felt very uncomfortable with the idea of citizens being involved, perhaps because there was corruption, or they didn't want someone telling them what they were doing wrong… Keep in mind, I'm not saying that everyone in *this* government wants citizen participation! There are some people we have to battle with…

Indeed, as of early 2019, only one municipality in the metropolitan zone, San Pedro, had taken steps to actually integrate citizens into the mechanisms laid out by the Citizen Participation Law (Pedraza 2019). What is more, the state government in Nuevo León did not formalize mechanisms of citizen governance (such as participatory budgeting, plebiscites, or referendums)

[7] Interview with state government bureaucrat, March 2017 (Monterrey). In future research, I will explore the degree to which civic engagement *during* the violence – the focus of this dissertation - led to these post-violence institutional changes.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

until 2016, again, after the 2009 – 2013 wave of violence had subsided. This is far later than its regional counterparts, which had similar legislation as early as 1996 in Tamaulipas and by 2001 in Coahuila.[11]

Again, this rocky road to democratization, with a civic culture trapped between Mexico's semi-authoritarian past and its democratic future, is reminiscent of national-level trends. In its 2017 – 2023 National Strategy for Civic Culture, Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE) bemoaned the lack of citizen participation in the nation and credited this deficit to citizen disenchantment with uneven democratic advances:

> The traditions of the old regime, even in the midst of political plurality, remained active and society did not find in the new regime sufficient means to participate actively, peacefully, and effectively in the design of public policies, their execution, nor control their outcomes (INE 2017).

Despite being written over five decades ago, Almond and Verba's (1968) observations thus still ring true today in Mexico and in Monterrey:

> …Mexican democratic infrastructure is relatively new. Freedom of political organization is more formal than real, and corruption is widespread throughout the whole political system. These conditions may explain the interesting ambivalence in Mexican political culture: many Mexicans lack political experience and skill, yet their hope and confidence are high; combined with these widespread participant aspirational tendencies, however, are cynicism about and alienation from the political infrastructure and bureaucracy ([1989], 39).

Add a context of fear created by intense drug violence on top of these challenges associated with democratization, and we can imagine Monterrey as a political context in which civic engagement is unlikely. Take, for example, a clear case of civic voluntarism, volunteer poll workers. One official described this changing landscape through his experience recruiting volunteers to serve in polling stations:

> In [the year] 2000, I could knock on someone's door and say, 'Hello, Mr. So-and-so, you have been randomly selected to serve in this year's elections. Come! Participate!' It was easy. But 10 –

[11] According to information provided by electoral officials during the 2017 National Meeting on Civic Education, May 19, 2017 (Monterrey)

> 12 years later, in 2009, the context is different. Here, I have to try harder, to really articulate the positives of participating. They would tell me, 'Why should I? Politics doesn't serve anyone,' or 'They're all corrupt. Why bother?' And in 2012, it's even more different because now we also have a context of fear. This was no longer just the context of [democratic] transition. And many people didn't want to participate as volunteers because of fear.[12]

"This awoke the citizenry"[13]: A preview of violence and civic engagement in Monterrey

Remarkably, fear did not always dissuade. The official went on to explain, "We would tell them, 'That is precisely why you *should* participate! This is your chance to change things – to make a difference!'" Come election day, the electoral commission successfully filled all its polling stations. Just as the electoral commission's staff members experienced, my research suggests that civic engagement in Monterrey not only endured but blossomed under the context of violence created by Mexico's drug war. Indeed, citizen civic behaviors changed with the arrival of drug war violence in 2009. As I show in the remainder of the dissertation, these are not coincidental trends. In fact, violence played a key role in fomenting this important shift by prompting citizens to pursue civic engagement – often for the first time – as a response to the violence in the city. I asked Guillermo, a human rights activist, "Would you say that there has been an increase in civic participation in Nuevo León?"

> Yes, and I think it increased largely as a response to the violence. It was like, 'We have to do something!' I mean, the times we were living were just so difficult. And what we saw were marches, protests, demonstrations of thousands of people that you never would have imagined marching in Nuevo León![14]

Serena echoed Guillermo's observations:

> It was also during this time [of violence] that many collectives and organizations began and people would come together to start programs that, even if they weren't against violence directly,

[12] Interview with bureaucrat from Nuevo León's Electoral Commission (CEE), April 2017 (Monterrey)

[13] Interview with Joel, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[14] Interview with Guillermo, April 2017 (Monterrey)

> they were really touching the roots of insecurity, like inequality, social development, etc. I think people got involved because insecurity touches everyone, even if it's not in a direct way.[15]

These observations were remarkably consistent across the diverse array of those with whom I spoke, from government officials[16] to bureaucrats,[17] activists,[18] and members of neighborhood improvement committees, most everyone agreed: civic participation had increased in the city and violence was a root cause. As one member of a neighborhood improvement committee explained,

> …people are busy and not everyone participates like we do. But, if you ask them to do something, they will. And this has changed. It hasn't always been that way. There has been an increase in participation.
> **Why do you think that participation has increased?**
> It is to combat the violence…[19]

How do we explain this increase in civic engagement? Why did *Regios* – especially those that are not victims themselves - choose civic engagement during this period of violence? This is especially perplexing when we remember that most citizens were not accustomed to participating in civil society and in fact were embedded in a political context that discouraged it. Explaining this increase in civic engagement and its relationship to violence is the primary contribution of this dissertation. What explains the relationship between violence and civic engagement in Monterrey? Guillermo foretold what my research would later reveal: that *empathy* is a key motivator of civic engagement during violence:

[15] Interview with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[16] Interview with state government official, March 2017 (Monterrey)

[17] Interviews with Joel, February 2017 (Monterrey); Felix, February 2017 (San Pedro)

[18] Interview with Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[19] Interview with Carmela, March 2017 (Monterrey)

> I think it has to do with transcendence, the ability to transcend your own experience and want to work to help others – to see your own experience in others… The point with this transcendence mechanism is that one cares for your own children *and* for the children of others.[20]

I draw on additional qualitative evidence to elaborate my theory of empathy politics in Chapter 3. In the remainder of this chapter, I draw on my qualitative data to describe the range of experiences with violence that *Regios* endured during the most intense period of violence. Next, I ground these observations in existing victimology research to develop the direct and indirect victimization theoretical concepts. The construct I develop portrays a spectrum of victimization on which to overlay these varied experiences. The spectrum ranges from the most direct forms of victimization (violence happening to your person) to the most indirect (hearing about violence from secondary sources). Later in Chapter 3, I leverage these categories to inductively generate my theory of empathy politics.

Variation in experiences with violence

Though violence was omnipresent in the minds of Monterrey citizens, there was variation in how it entered their lives. In this section I use qualitative data to describe variation in how citizens were exposed to violence. As noted in previous chapters, much of the existing literature about the relationship between violence and civic engagement emphasizes direct victimization (cf. Blattman 2009; Ley-Gutierrez 2014). That is, instances in which the individual or a member of her immediate family is targeted for violence. Such scholarship tends to yield a stark, binary distinction between those who are "victims" (again, those who have been targeted for violence or who have lost a family member to violence) and all others. My fine-grained ethnographic data, in contrast, allow me to capture and describe the full range of citizen experiences with violence. The qualitative data reveal an important but under-analyzed spectrum of experiences, ranging

[20] Interview with Guillermo, April 2017 (Monterrey)

from direct, personal attacks (like being kidnapped) to more indirect encounters with violence (like hearing about violence happening to others). Shedding light on the political import of experiences beyond the most direct forms of victimization is a primary contribution of this dissertation.

Personal and familial victimization refers to instances in which the individual or his or her family member is targeted for violence or physically harmed. This category of experiences is what most of the political science literature defines as "victims" (cf. Blattman 2009). In Monterrey, individuals who indicated that they or their family had personally experienced violence typically described serious, fatal or near-fatal cases of assault in which they were the target. For many, this involved the death or disappearance of a loved one.[21] Javier's brother, for example, has been disappeared for some years. Additionally, his teenage cousin was kidnapped and murdered. Like Javier, Maria's cousin was also murdered. Maria explained, "She was my cousin, but she was more like my sister. She lived with us, my mom treated her like her own daughter. We were very very close…" Maria's cousin was young – 23 years old when she was killed – and had a wild streak. Maria and her mother both begged her to behave more modestly, worried that the people she surrounded herself with invited trouble. The night of her death, she went to watch a sporting match at a local bar. In the following days, her body was discovered in a public trash bin. Though Maria has never seen them, pictures of her cousin's body appeared in local newspapers and were posted on youtube.

For others, their victimization involved kidnapping or physical assault.[22] Raúl worked as a low-level clothing merchant when he was kidnapped and extorted for money.

[21] Interviews with Javier, July 2017 (Monterrey); Maria, July 2017 (Monterrey)

[22] Interviews with Jose, December 2016 (Monterrey); Raúl, January 2017 (Monterrey)

> I was kidnapped, held for days, and beaten. They put a gun to my head and told me they were going to kill me if I didn't pay [a certain amount] of pesos every month. You see, what had happened is that these people were misinformed about how much money I had. They thought I was rich... I had a very hard time convincing them that I didn't have all that money.[23]

To escape his kidnappers, Raúl agreed to pay them, knowing that he would not have the money when the time came to pay. Confident they would make good on their promise to kill him, he fled to the US. Many other citizens experienced direct physical threats that did not escalate to serious injury. Many research participants, for example, reported that they or a family member had a gun put to their head at some moment, usually during the course of a robbery.[24]

In the most frequent conception of victimization used in the existing literature, the relevant experiences with violence would end here. Any experiences beyond these would most likely be relegated to a catch-all category of all those who do not share these most direct, personal victimization experiences, sometimes labelled "non-victims" (see Ley-Gutierrez 2014 for example). My qualitative data, however, reveals a broad range of different experiences with violence *within* that catch-all category that merit critical analysis. Indeed, *Regios* encountered violence in a wide variety of ways beyond this narrow conception of "victim" on a daily basis, often with profound impacts. Violence was remarkably visible to the public eye during the peak of the conflict and was carried out in heavily-populated metropolitan spaces. Consequently, some citizens found themselves caught in the crossfire of shootouts between warring groups or were unlucky enough to take the same bus or eat in the same restaurant where an assault would soon take place.[25] Abrahán, for example, recounted one night in which he and his girlfriend got trapped

[23] Interview with Raúl, January 2017 (Monterrey)

[24] Interview with Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro)

[25] Interview with Guillermo, April 2017 (Monterrey); Abrahán, January 2017 (Monterrey); Mayela, June 2017 (Monterrey); Sabrina, June 2017 (Monterrey); Mariana June 2017, (Monterrey)

in a restaurant that was under attack. "…we got caught in a shootout. We were just in a restaurant, eating, and the bullets started and we ducked down and everyone ran to the back of the restaurant."[26] Guillermo found himself in such situations on three different occasions:

> In the first one, well, the first one happened right up the street here. I was in a bus and we were driving down Paseo de los Leónes [a major street]. We were stopped and all of a sudden, we saw someone run across the road. And then we heard gunshots and saw some *delincuentes* [criminals] from organized crime chasing after the person that was running. I think he was running away from them kidnapping him, or something. I don't know. We all stayed inside the bus, thinking that it was better to just stay put, stay inside. The next time, I was also in a bus. The shootout happened, and then when it seemed safe we carried on our way. The third time happened outside of my house. I was inside and I heard the gunshots. I stepped outside for a moment, saw that it was happening about 200 meters away and went back inside.

Several others remember walking their children home from school, only to have gunfire interrupt their path. They would bang on the doors of nearby houses, begging to be let in.[27]

Still others observed dead bodies in the streets, the vestiges of a not-long-passed murder or shootout.[28] Sometimes the bodies of the dead were publicly displayed in grotesque ways to generate spectacle around the act of killing. Marston and I (working paper) define this as "spectacle violence," and it happened with remarkable frequency in Monterrey. For example, it was common for criminal groups to hang the dead from public thoroughfares, accompanied by a sign with a message indicating why the individuals had been killed or communicating some threat to the state or a competing group. Abrahán noted the regularity of such displays. "During this intense period, there were *descabezados* (decapitated corpses), *colgados* (hanging corpses), some left with cardboard signs on their chest. I remember one day in which they found 30 people in one day!"[29] Public officials tried to remove spectacle displays swiftly to prevent citizens from

[26] Interview with Abrahán, January 2017 (Monterrey)

[27] Field Notes from South Monterrey, June 2018

[28] Interview with Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro)

[29] Interview with Abrahán, January 2017 (Monterrey)

seeing them.[30] Despite their efforts, several interviewees report witnessing these in person.[31] Adriana remembers encountering *colgados* as she left her university, ITESM (el Tec), one afternoon. The university is located in the heart of the metropolitan area at the cross-section of several prominent, high-traffic thoroughfares with cars and pedestrians – often students and faculty of the university - zigzagging across, between and under the freeways as they come to and from classes.

> It was during that period that I happened to see how they were hanging people. I left from here [the interview site], nearby here, at 3:00 in the afternoon – the middle of the day! I went to cross under the freeway bridge and I saw them there, with the bodies. I think they had burned them, too.[32]

Still others witnessed assaults as they happened.[33] Saúl remembers witnessing an execution in the early morning hours before he got ready for work:

> Do you know where the stadium is? You can see it from my house. Well, one night, it was 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning, but I get up at 5:00 am to get ready for work. They woke me up with their gunshots and I looked out the window. What I saw was them lining people up in the stadium, and then shooting them, one by one. I watched them fall.[34]

Citizens also witnessed firsthand other, less dramatic assaults, like kidnappings-in-progress[35] and violent robberies.[36]

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[30] Interviews with public official, February 2017 (Escobedo); elected official, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[31] Interviews with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey); Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro); Jesús, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[32] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[33] Interviews with Isidro, March 2017 (San Pedro); Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro)

[34] Interview with Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro)

[35] Interview with Isidro, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[36] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

The vast majority of *Regios*, however, never directly experienced violence nor witnessed it firsthand. Instead, most *Regios* were exposed to violence through secondary channels like word-of-mouth, social media, and the mass media. Exposure to violence through these means was unavoidable. The mangled bodies of the previous night's dead graced the front page of every newspaper. Research participants repeatedly commented on how local newspapers "published anything and everything,"[37] and bemoaned the prevalence of violent images.[38] As one public official observed, "…it was on the front page, every day. You couldn't escape it."[39] Indeed, the main local newspaper, El Norte, regularly featured images of the dead,[40] especially the most sensational cases.[41] And newspapers in metropolitan spaces of Mexico are unavoidable. They are prominently displayed at street newsstands, often opened to the most salacious or shocking photos. In Monterrey, papers are also hawked car to car at traffic lights and sold at the checkout counters of convenience stores like 7-11. Anyone walking their child to school, driving to work, or going to the corner store will thus likely encounter a violent image or headline, regardless of whether they actually purchase or pick up a newspaper. If you did not learn of violence through the newspapers, it was readily available on the television. Television is the primary means

[37] Interview with public official, January 2017 (Monterrey)

[38] Interviews with public official, February 2017 (Escobedo); Samuel, February 2017 (Monterrey); Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[39] Interview with public official, January 2017 (Monterrey)

[40] Interview with Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[41] Interviews with public official, January 2017 (Monterrey); Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey); public official, February 2017 (Escobedo)

through which many learn about violence.[42] It seemed like violence and insecurity was the only thing traditional media outlets covered during Monterrey's wave of violence.[43]

While no one disputed the fact that violence dominated local media outlets, citizens frequently scoffed at the substantive content of that coverage. From their perspective, traditional media were quick to sensationalize violence but failed to provide reliable information.[44] Social media outlets like facebook, Twitter, blogs, and WhatsApp messaging provided alternative sources of information about and thus exposure to violence.[45] Facebook, for example, served as an important way for citizens to notify others about threats-in-progress, like an active shootout, or which spaces around the city to avoid. It is also common for users to post announcements about missing or disappeared family members. Other interviewees noted they received information about incidents of violence through WhatsApp text messaging, a virtual form of word-of-mouth.[46]

In the face of what citizens perceived to be a lack of government transparency about the drug war, along with an increase in threats against journalists, anonymous blogs and Twitter feeds became increasingly common and increasingly utilized as a source of information. One particularly prominent blog, *El Blog del Narco,* was often referenced during my field research,

[42] Interviews with Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey); Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[43] Interviews with public official, January 2017 (Monterrey); public official, February 2017 (Escobedo); Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[44] Interviews with Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro); Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro)

[45] Interviews with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey); José, December 2016 (Monterrey); Nestor, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[46] Interviews with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey); Diana, June 2017 (Monterrey); José, December 2016 (Monterrey)

though the blog is no longer operational. *Blog del Narco* committed to publishing information – in the form of text, images, and videos – about all cases of violence it knew of that were not covered by mainstream media. With a promise to reveal to Mexican citizens the true nature of the drug war, it did not censor the content. I asked Nestor about Blog del Narco:[47]

> **So, since the information in the news wasn't reliable, you went to Blog del Narco for information about crime and security in the city?**
> Yes. And, well, you know the types of things you see on there. Just things you never expected to see in your life. I saw bodies, *descuartizados* [dismembered bodies], *torturados* [tortured bodies], *mutilados* [mutilated bodies], all there to see.

Serena summarized the ways *Regios* encountered violence in these more indirect ways, particularly spectacle violence:

> We see photos. It comes out on TV, in the newspapers, on social media. I mean, it's more than just photos – there are videos. We have so much access to these types of images… I don't think there is one person in the city that hasn't seen images like this.[48]

Lastly, news about instances of violence are transmitted via word-of-mouth.[49] During one visit to one of my research sites, neighbors were quietly but feverishly swapping information about a man who had been found near-death in an adjacent field days before my visit. Those in-the-know shared details about the condition in which he was found – his throat was slit so deeply he was nearly decapitated, – and described how the neighbors called an ambulance to help save him. "Did he live?" a neighbor wants to know. Violence dominated social conversation.[50]

"…during that time, the topic of death – *los decapitados, los colgados, los quemados*[51] – was

[47] Interview with Nestor, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[48] Interview with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[49] Interview with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro)

[50] Interviews with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey); Oscar, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[51] Decapitated bodies, hanging bodies, burned bodies.

part of everyday discourse"[52] and Adriana remembered that, "The insecurity was the only thing we talked about..."[53]

These different channels of exposure to violence overlap, converge, and facilitate one another. A headline from the morning news is re-told to coworkers. News about a shootout posted on facebook is shared among WhatsApp contacts and recounted at the dinner table or the church meeting. And, crucially, these experiences can have a profound impact on citizens despite not being directly targeted by the violence. While speaking with me, one interviewee cried at the thought of an image he had seen years ago involving a victim he did not know and with whom he had no personal connection.[54] I call those who were exposed to violence in these more indirect, secondary ways "indirect victims." I elaborate on this concept in the next section.

I personally felt this impact. One morning I walked a few short blocks to the pharmacy to buy a bottle of water. I passed a newsstand where I read a paper headline out of the corner of my eye: "*Ahora Santa Catarina: Tiran a 2 embolsados"* ["Santa Catarina Now: 2 bodies dumped in bags"].[55] I could see that the headline also included an image: a lumpy mass of shiny black garbage sacks accompanied by a white sign had been dumped alongside some brush. I turned my head away. I did not want to read or see further and I did not need to. I knew enough to recognize this as a typical organized crime-related killing. "What does this mean?" I asked myself. "Are things heating up again?" I could feel anxiety creeping in. I pushed the anxiety

[52] Interview with Oscar, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[53] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[54] Interview with Diego, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[55] *Embolsados* refers to bodies wrapped in black trash bags. *"Tiran"* or "they threw" usually implies they were dropped outside in a public space haphazardly, as if meant to be found.

away and tried to push the headline out of my mind. But I could not escape the news of the two *embolsados*. Later that afternoon I stopped in a 7-11 to buy a snack. As I mundanely perused the aisles, I overheard the attendants talking, "*Did you hear? They found two* embolsados *in Santa Catarina…."* About two months later I would begin field research in Santa Catarina. Every time I got in the car to make the drive, I imagined the *embolsados.*

Non-Exposure

It is theoretically plausible for one to never encounter violence. That is, never commit violence,[56] never be targeted, never witness violence happening to another, and never hear of or see violence through secondary means. However, this does not reflect the realities of citizens living in conflict spaces, where violence pervades quotidian life. As described above, images and descriptions of violence dominated every newspaper in Monterrey, every television news broadcast, and daily conversation. The violence was pervasive and unavoidable. It permeated *Regios'* thoughts, with many describing this period as a season of extreme paranoia.[57] I did not encounter a single person who had not been exposed to drug war violence in Monterrey.

[56] Perpetrating violence is another type of experience with violence. Perpetrators could include those involved in the conflict either in service to the state (i.e., law enforcement) or to criminal organizations (i.e., *sicarios,* or hitmen). This may also include those not directly involved in the conflict but who use violence for other reasons, such as self-defense, as part of a neighborhood security force, or for other personal reasons. Due to the sensitivity of the issue, I never asked research participants about any criminal or violent activity they may have committed and thus the role that perpetrating violence may have in civic engagement remains unexplored in the qualitative data. I do analyze the effect of perpetrating violence in the survey data from Liberia, Uganda and Tajikistan (Chapter 6). The results suggest there is no relationship between perpetrating violence and future civic engagement.

[57] Interviews with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey); Abrahán, January 2017 (Monterrey); elected official, February 2017 (San Pedro); elected official, February 2017 (San Pedro); Jesús, February 2017 (Monterrey); Sara, March 2017 (Monterrey)

Victimization as a Spectrum

This fine-grained, qualitative data reveal the importance of the full range of citizen experiences in violent contexts. In this section, I develop a conceptual framework of victimization that more fully reflects this range of citizen experiences with violence and provides the theoretical base from which we can begin to interrogate the political consequences of experiences beyond direct victimization. I argue that instead of understanding victimization as a binary category – the victimized vs. all others – we should think about victimization as a spectrum along which we can orient the range of citizen experiences with violence.

Currently, the preponderance of existing literature about the individual political consequences of exposure to violence focuses on direct victimization (cf. Blattman 2009; Ley-Gutierrez 2014). In those accounts, "victims" are usually defined as individuals who experienced harm to their person or to a member of their family. Any individual without such experiences is usually considered a "non-victim," if that category is labelled at all. The non-victim category is not theorized in these accounts. It acts merely as a reference category to the "victim" experience in which all other experiences with violence, including *no experiences at all*, fall under the same conceptual category. Yet as the evidence in this dissertation suggests, this conceptualization neglects a wide range of experiences that citizens in violent contexts share, many of them occurring far more frequently and to a greater number of citizens than direct victimization. What is more, existing theories' failure to theorize the "non-victim" category implies that non-victim citizens are not impacted by the experiences they do have in politically meaningful ways. If they are impacted, it is usually through interaction with "victims" (Ley-Gutierrez 2014). Here, too, the evidence provided in this dissertation demonstrates otherwise.

Political scientists' difficulty in conceptualizing victimization is not surprising because victimologists, who we might expect to have the clearest conception of victimization, also offer no clear typology.[58] They have theorized these experiences in diverse ways, ranging from approaches that emphasize reasons for the victim's targeting (Hentig 1948, 404) to a number of approaches that categorize victims based on the degree to which the victim provoked their own assault (Schafer 1968; Lamborn 1968; Mendelsohn 1956).[59] None provides a comprehensive typology and they tend to "promote a very individualistic view of victimization that…ignores crime's social context" (Elias 1986, 60). My theoretical approach, in contrast, embraces context and embeds it into how we think about the psychological, emotional, and political impact of simply living in violent environments – regardless of one's conventional "victim" status.

How do we know that experiences beyond direct victimization impact citizens? Though most victimology research about the individual consequences of exposure to violence focuses on direct victims, there is some evidence that experiences beyond direct victimization have similar (though not equal) social, psychological and emotional effects. In this literature, victimologists have distinguished between (i) witnessing violence to others firsthand; (ii) hearing about violent events via word-of-mouth; and (iii) learning about violence via the mass media. The evidence demonstrates that these experiences matter. Merely hearing about violence can provoke symptoms of hypervigilance, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), aggression, depression, and interpersonal conflict, all known outcomes of direct victimization (Scarpa, et al. 2006; Lynch 2003). The impact of hearing about violence through secondary means should not be understated. A 2002 study carried out in South Africa demonstrated that hearing about violence

[58] Victimology is largely comprised of sociologists and psychologists. The remainder of this section draws on research from these disciplines.

[59] All cited in Elias 1986, 59.

via word-of-mouth "had almost the same effect as actually witnessing it" on individual psychological distress (Shields, Nadasen, and Pierce 2008, 589). Others, meanwhile, have shown that hearing of terrorist acts via the mass media have profound psychological impacts akin to more direct forms of victimization (Keinan, Sadeh, and Rosen 2003).

Though the psychological and emotional impacts of these diverse experiences are similar, they are not equally impactful. Cárdia (2002) suggests that "violence that is done closest to people, either to them directly or to their relatives and friends, has the most impact" (154). And Lynch (2003) observes that, "All forms of exposure appear to have some effect – hearing about violence in the community, witnessing it, and being personally victimized. However, *chronic* exposure to community violence [witnessing and hearing about it] and personal *victimization* by violence in particular may be especially relevant in the development of [PTSD] symptomatology" (267, emphasis original). In other words, violence that *feels socially proximate* (that is it happens to you or someone in your inner circle), inflicts greater psychological or emotional impact than violence that happens to distant others. However, violence that happens to others still shapes individual-level attitudes and behaviors, often in ways that mimic the effects of direct victimization. This is especially true when those experiences are repeated often and over time – precisely the conditions that citizens in violent democracies face.[60]

If we only hear about violence through secondary means or only witness it happening to others, are we truly "victimized"? As the above evidence suggests, there is a clear difference between the emotional and psychological effects of being the direct target of aggression and the effects of merely living in violent contexts, in which we might hear about violence frequently but

[60] I only discuss negative psychological consequences of exposure to violence because I did not find research on positive byproducts. This does not mean there are no positive consequences. The studies I read simply did not address them.

never experience it personally. However, the evidence also demonstrates that these more indirect experiences exact a discernible toll on citizens that mimics symptoms of direct victimization. So, even though the effects may be felt to a lesser degree, these other experiences do provoke processes of victimization among citizens.[61]

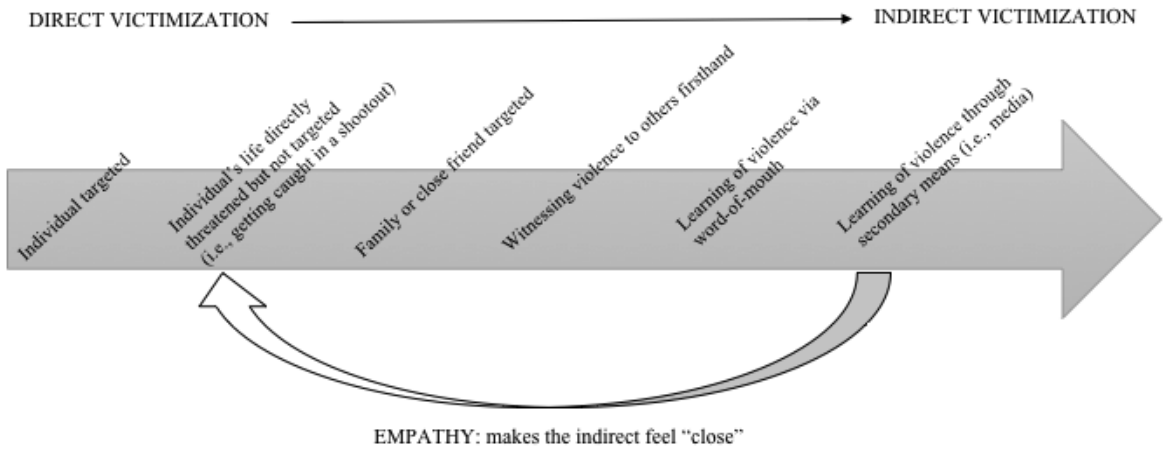
For this reason, my conceptual approach resists tendencies to think of victimization in binary terms and to instead think of it as a spectrum of victimization, in which more direct forms of victimization anchor one end and more indirect forms anchor the other (see Figure 2.1). In line with the literature, I locate those experiences that are more socially proximate, or "close" (Cárdia 2002), (like personal victimization and violence happening to family members) on the "Direct Victimization" end of the spectrum where the impact of victimization will be felt more acutely. From there, the range of experiences implies greater social distance from the event, both in terms of who the violence targets (no longer the individual nor anyone in his social circle), how the individual is exposed to it (hearing about violence through the media is more indirect than witnessing violence firsthand, for example), and the expected psychological impact (Tyler 1978 shows that mass media reports are generally less "emotionally arousing" than learning of violence via word-of-mouth, for example).

If victimization's individual impact decreases the more indirect it is, why would we expect civic engagement responses to violence experienced indirectly? I address this question in the next chapter, where will I argue that empathy makes these more indirect, impersonal experiences feel personal. In short, empathizing with a direct victim makes more indirect

[61] I thank Ana Villareal for first raising this point. In her ethnography of the middle- and upper-classes living amidst violence in Monterrey, she documents how all citizens' lives were transformed due to fear. She portrays what Wolfgang and Singer (1978) call a "victim public."

experiences feel "close" (Cárdia 2002), as if they had happened to you or a loved one. I develop this idea fully in the next chapter.

Figure 2.1 Victimization as a Spectrum



Though I conceive of victimization as a spectrum I will refer to citizens as either direct victims or indirect victims in the remainder of the dissertation for readability. I refer to those who experienced violence in more direct ways (individually targeted, threatened but not targeted, and family or close friend targeted) as "direct victims" or "victims." I refer to those who experience violence only in more indirect ways as "indirect victims." These are stark distinctions on paper with room for variability in practice. The thrust of the argument, however, does not require precision around these categories; it is instead the idea that an individual can have profound psychological and emotional reactions to violence in many forms but that the political foundations of these reactions diverge from the "victimization" thesis and toward the "empathy politics" thesis the more indirect they become. In the next chapter, I present evidence showing that even the most indirect experiences with violence, learning of it via secondary means, motivates individuals to civic engagement. In Chapter 6, meanwhile, I present evidence showing that witnessing violence firsthand, a lesser degree of indirectness, has a similar effect.

3. EMPATHY POLITICS: THE LOGIC OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DURING VIOLENCE

During the 2009 – 2013 wave of violence in Monterrey, many *Regios* retreated from public life. Fearing that they or their family members would fall victim to crime, they stopped leaving their homes after nightfall, built walls around their neighborhoods, and avoided the city center –Monterrey's social, political, and cultural heart. Neighbors were advised to trust no one, talk to no one, and never open the door for anyone. Children learned to look out for themselves and no one else.[1] Yet just as some retreated from public life, other *Regios* advanced into the public sphere - many for the first time in their lives - motivated by the violence around them. Participants' choice to engage in civic action is difficult to explain with existing theories. Those who pursued civic engagement consistently reported that they were not victims of violence, so the PTG thesis is an unlikely explanation. These same participants consistently reported never having participated in civic action prior to the violence, thus eliminating the possibility that participation before the violence explains participation during the violence. Despite neighborhood-level variation that may have shaped patterns of civic engagement and despite variation in individual-level variables theorized to shape participation like socioeconomic status,

[1] Field Notes, June 2018.

education, and critically, victimization status, civic mobilization in Monterrey followed a typical process. In this section, I draw on qualitative data to inductively build a theory that reflects this individual-level process and explains why so many indirect victims chose civic engagement as a response to violence. I argue that this process is fueled not by direct victimization, but rather by empathy with the victimized.

Indirect victims who pursued civic engagement during the wave of violence participated in a wide range of civic activities, from joining protest movements to founding new NGOs. Despite variation in the types of activities they chose, the decision to pursue civic engagement as a response to violence tended to emerge from a particular process. Indirect victims were most often motivated to civic engagement by a single case of violence. Such cases were unique because the indirect victim perceived similarities between themselves and the direct victim of that event, which in turn prompted them to imagine themselves in the shoes of the victim – a foundational element of empathy. Taking the perspective of the victim generated a vicarious sense of vulnerability – another core component of empathy - as the indirect victim realized that the victim "could have been me." This vicarious vulnerability in turn motivated indirect victims to pursue civic activities that address violence as a means to prevent their own victimization. To build this argument, I first describe the many ways citizens responded to the violence in Monterrey. I then focus on one response in particular, nonviolent civic engagement. One of the benefits of rich qualitative data like that leveraged here is that it allows the citizens to explain in their own words the logic of their civic engagement, thus revealing that a significant amount of civic engagement in Monterrey, even that which is not obviously tied to crime and violence, is in fact carried out with the explicit intent to address insecurity.

I describe how empathy was generated by single instances of violence. I then describe the empathic processes set into motion by those events before describing how and why indirect victims then channeled that empathy into civic engagement. I scaffold this qualitative data with supporting evidence from psychology, thereby grounding observations from my field research in theoretical foundations of empathy and illustrating the inductive, theory-building process. Finally, I synthesize this evidence to generate my theory of empathy politics.

Citizen responses to violence

Regios responded to the violence around them in a number of ways:

Displacement

Many citizens from all social classes, including the very rich and the very poor, fled the city. Some moved elsewhere in Mexico, while those with the resources to do so fled to the United States. Some of the displaced later returned to Monterrey, but most did not. Raúl, the clothes merchant who was kidnapped and extorted, for example, fled to the US after his assault. The story of civic engagement amidst violence I recount is primarily a story about the civic lives of those who a) survived the violence and b) stayed behind.

Self-help Prevention

Among those who stayed in Monterrey, most citizens took measures to increase their personal safety and prevent falling victim to crime. Many avoided being outside after dark, purchased home security systems, and stopped frequenting the city center, for example. Others stayed inside their homes unless absolutely necessary, stopped visiting their friends or family in

other areas of the city, and built walls around their homes and neighborhoods.[2] In fact, many self-help prevention tools avoided social engagement altogether. Abrahán, for example, remembers:

> Before the violence, it was very peaceful. But afterward, there was lots of fear. We couldn't go out at night and we couldn't talk to anyone, because you never really knew who you were talking to. And it wasn't safe to file police reports because you put yourself at risk of reprisals from the criminals. My wife and I were dating at that time and my dad told us not to go out at night and if we ever saw anything going on, to just keep on going and never tell anyone about it.

I call these "self-help" prevention strategies because they primarily serve only the individual who uses them. There is no clear motive to use these strategies to improve the condition of others beyond oneself and his/her household, which for the purposes of this dissertation, would be considered civic engagement. Wolfgang and Singer (1978) convey this distinction well:

> the simultaneous openings of umbrellas during a rain do not produce a viable public of umbrella carriers. The situational response implies like but not common interest…Similarly, the nighttime locking of doors in a city is not an act that manifests congealed concern against victimization. Each locking is an individual act, a ritual of family protection (387).

Violent Civic Action

In addition to self-help prevention strategies, some citizens responded to the violence with violent civic engagement. Violent civic engagement refers to actions that citizens take to address issues of common concern (Zukin, et al. 2006) and use violence or the threat of violence to do so. These activities might include armed citizen patrols of the neighborhood, or neighborhood watch committees (*vecinos vigilantes*), for example. While not all *vecinos vigilantes* use violence, many do. It is common for neighborhood watch committees to hang posters in the neighborhood threatening to lynch anyone caught committing a crime.[3] In other

[2] Interviews with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro); Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey); See also Villareal 2015 for a description and analysis of *Regios'* security strategies.

[3] Lynching is often portrayed as the result of spontaneous, uncoordinated collective action driven by mob mentality rather than a premeditated intention to improve the community (i.e., keep the community safe).

instances, communities organize and coordinate armed resistance to the state, criminals, or both. In all cases, such groups and their participants are usually armed, at least with rudimentary weapons like machetes, and their effectiveness is rooted in the threat of violent coercion.

Nonviolent Civic Action

Nonviolent civic engagement was more common than violent civic action in Monterrey. Civic engagement took many forms, ranging from localized charity work with victims, to marching in protests against violence. Some lobbied their mayor for increased security while others launched social movements for justice. Still others initiated local community improvement projects and rehabilitated youth soccer teams, all with the aim of reducing violence and criminality. Why citizens in Monterrey chose this particular response to violence is the motivating question of this project. I describe the underlying factors leading to this choice in the next section.

The different responses to violence I detail here are not mutually exclusive. Various types of responses frequently contributed to a "toolkit" of responses that citizens utilized at various moments. Diana, for example, employed self-help strategies by staying inside her home and tempering her natural outspokenness, which she worried would invite rebuke or reprisal from criminal groups or irritated neighbors.[4] She would later increase her frequency of civic engagement and shift her activities toward initiatives addressing violence in her neighborhood.

Calling these cases of "civic engagement" may not be appropriate. However, many forms of extrajudicial justice are in fact highly coordinated and carried out by organized members of a community that meet regularly to identify and address the community's security needs. Violent civic engagement like that I describe here refers to the former. For more on the ordered logic of vigilante justice, see Bateson 2013.

[4] Interview with Diana, July 2017 (Monterrey).

One final potential response to violence is non-response. That is, to change nothing about one's behavior. While theoretically possible, I did not find evidence of this. At a minimum, most *Regios* and all of my research participants assumed some form of self-help strategy to increase their own security. Only some, however, pursued nonviolent civic engagement.

Individual-level patterns in civic engagement

In the dissertation, I focus on indirect victims who pursued civic engagement during violence despite never having participated in civil society before.[5] Citizens who followed this pathway typically demonstrated a long-standing *interest* in participation but had never acted on that interest by actually participating in any activities beyond voting.[6] Thus, before the violence, these citizens behaved similarly to many other *Regios* and democratic citizens in general. That is, they had opinions on the state of affairs in their community and nation but did not channel those attitudes into political action. Manuel, for example, described his civic and political engagement prior to the wave of violence as, "Limited. I would only get involved and pay attention – know things – when there was an upcoming election, and the extent of my 'involvement' was talking about it..."

So, what changed for these citizens? What motivated them to deviate from their current path of non-engagement and instead pursue civic action? Contrary to the expectation that violence should prompt a retreat from public life, violence was in fact the primary motivation for

[5] I also documented important shifts in civic engagement patterns among individuals who were already involved in civic activities. The evidence points toward a similar, empathically-driven process. However, the focus of this dissertation is whether and how violence makes engaged citizens out of previously disengaged ones. I will address these other cases in future publications.

[6] Interviews with Marichuy , April 2017 (San Pedro); Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro); Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey); Nestor , March 2017 (San Pedro); Bernardo, June 2017 (Monterrey); Valentín, March 2017 (Monterrey)

these citizens' entrance into the public sphere. Yet, not all violence was created equal. After having been exposed to so much violence and in so many different ways, indirect victims were usually provoked to action by particular cases of violence rather than violence in general.

Consider, for example, Manuel's story. As described above, Manuel had always been interested in politics but his participation prior to Monterrey's wave of violence was effectively non-existent. He and his friends would sometimes discuss the current state of affairs in the country or trade predictions about the next election, but he had never been involved in any type of civic or political activity in the public arena. This changed in 2010 when two students at Manuel's university, Jorge Antonio Alonso Mercado and Javier Francisco Arredondo Verdugo, were shot and killed by Mexican soldiers. Seemingly overnight, Manuel transformed from an interested but uninvolved citizen into an active, founding member of the movement for justice for the slain students. He participated in and helped organize protest marches and demonstrations, reinvigorated a long-dead student movement in his university despite university efforts to stifle it, and helped pressure local and federal authorities to follow through on legal procedures to investigate the students' murder and punish those responsible.[7] Many of Manuel's friends were involved in these same activities and, like him, had never participated in anything before:

> I think all of us that got involved already had a certain posture against the policy of the drug war. Maybe the difference is that before, we maintained that posture from the comfort of a coffee shop – just getting a cup of coffee and talking about the problem. But after [Jorge and Javier], our involvement changed.[8]

Jorge and Javier's death impacted many *Regios* in similar ways. In the days following the incident, a march in protest of their killings convened hundreds of citizens - an unprecedented

[7] Interview with Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro)

[8] Ibid.

number for Monterrey. Among these was Adriana. Like Manuel, Adriana had never participated in civic activities prior to the attacks on Jorge and Javier. Even though Adriana had encountered *colgados* [hanging bodies] outside her university, witnessed a man robbed at gunpoint in front of her, and narrowly avoided getting caught in a shootout at a local nightclub, none of these had the impact that the death of Jorge and Javier did. Adriana identified this as the event that motivated her first act of civic engagement:

> I was so affected by that incident that I participated in the march for justice and memory they had. This was the first march I had ever participated in… Even my parents participated in the march… and my parents are not prone to do that!

Like Manuel and Adriana, Valentín and Bernardo similarly cited Jorge and Javier as their motivation for political activism during the time of violence. Valentín explained, "[Jorge and Javier] prompted me to get out of my bubble and see what I could do to change things… I already had the desire [to participate], but Jorge and Javier provoked me into action."[9] He describes the time of violence as "my first encounter with activism." During that time, he attended protest demonstrations, conferences, and activist meetings, all for the first time. Bernardo, meanwhile, gathered his friends together and, reasoning that government corruption and lack of transparency lay at the root of Monterrey's security problems, started a citizen-led initiative to increase state transparency.[10]

The case of Jorge and Javier was an important one that sparked widespread citizen condemnation and, in turn, civic engagement. However, it was not the only case of violence to do so. Throughout my field research, I heard of a number of cases that seemed to have a similar impact on citizen civic participation, like an armed attack on Café Iguana, a beloved bar and

[9] Interview with Valentín, March 2017 (Monterrey)

[10] Interview with Bernardo, June 2017 (Monterrey)

concert venue.[11] An attack on a local casino in which a criminal group set the building on fire, killing at least 52, lingers in the public's memory.[12] Still others pointed toward lesser-known yet similarly impactful cases, like when a woman and her son were killed by stray bullets as they wait for the bus[13] or when a university student was shot in crossfire as she crossed the street.[14]

Generating empathy through social proximity and geographical proximity

What makes events like these so impactful? In a context in which citizens hear of multiple violent events in any given day, what makes these cases stand out among the rest? When making sense of why these cases impacted them in the ways they described, interviewees tended to point toward a number of similarities between themselves and the events' victims. Evidence from psychology research suggests that perceived similarities between oneself and another stimulate cognitive and emotional processes of empathy (Stotland 1969; Krebs 1975), especially imagining yourself in the other person's shoes. Likewise, I argue that recognizing elements of oneself and his/her life experiences in a victim makes it easier to for indirect victims to imagine themselves in their place. Among indirect victims in Monterrey, these similarities manifested in diverse ways and included both social and spatial components. These similarities produced a sense of commonality with the victim, which interviewees called *cercanía,*

[11] Interviews with Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey); see also González-Ramírez 2015; see Chapter four for an analysis of this case

[12] Interviews with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey); Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey); Guillermo, April 2017 (Monterrey); see also González-Ramírez 2015; see Chapter four for an analysis of this case;

[13] Interview with public official, February 2017 (Escobedo)

[14] Interview with Axel, December 2016 (Monterrey).

("closeness," or "nearness").[15] Building on their insight, I call this sense of shared similarities "social proximity."

Socially, citizens described cases as being so impactful because the victims were "like me."[16] That is, they shared certain demographic characteristics like age, gender, or SES, shared an occupation, or were doing something the interviewee frequently does or could imagine herself doing, like going dancing in a nightclub.[17] I asked Valentín why Jorge and Javier's case was so critical – why did it impact him the way it did?

> …I think because they were t*an cerca* [so similar or close] to me. I wasn't close friends of theirs, but I did have some classes with them, they went to my school… but even if I didn't know them, it impacted me so much because they were so much like me – students at el Tec.[18]

Manuel responded similarly. According to him, the political weight of Jorge and Javier's case was, "*La cercanía*. In the beginning, at least. I think it was an event "*tan cercano*" [so close] that it made us want to learn more. And the more we learned, the more outraged we became."[19] Both Adriana and Bernardo also noted that they were first drawn to Jorge and Javier's case due to similarities with the victims – all were students at el Tec, like Jorge and Javier.

The power of similarity also describes citizen reactions to other cases beyond Jorge and Javier. The fire at Casino Royale, for example, was mentioned by several interviewees and in informal conversations. Like the case of Jorge and Javier, Casino Royale also provoked unprecedented citizen outrage. Like in Jorge and Javier, citizens organized a march to protest what had happened, but not all Monterrey citizens participated. Instead, the march was largely

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[15] *Cercanía* can connote geographical proximity, but also connotes social similarities, as it does here.

[16] Interview with Valentín, March 2017 (Monterrey)

[17] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[18] Interview with Valentín, March 2017 (Monterrey)

[19] Interview with Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro)

attended by the middle and upper classes – those most likely to frequent casinos. Manuel explains:

> Casino Royale attracted more people from the middle and upper classes…I think because casinos are particular to that sector. You have to have money to go spend at them, so naturally they are places associated with those classes.[20]

Spatially, indirect victims sometimes perceived similarities between the spaces they frequent and the location of a violent event. Put simply, a violent event occurring in or near a space the interviewee frequents adds an additional layer of similarity with the victim. Consider, for example, the political trajectory of Marichuy.[21] Marichuy is 30-something and from Santa Catarina. Though she had been interested in politics "forever, like, since age 12 maybe," it was not until she saw violence creep closer and closer to her own community that she became involved in civic activities. She explains:

> You know before, I was very happy to live in a city that was safe, peaceful… But all of a sudden, it wasn't anymore. There were robberies, kidnappings, dead in the streets…. We used to think the violence was in Tamaulipas [a neighboring province], and then it was in a different part of Monterrey far from you, but soon it was here, in our own city. Everybody knows a friend of a friend who has been impacted. In other words, the violence became more and more *cercana* [close]. So, my first political act was to go to my Mayor and ask for more security, more police forces, better police forces… I was part of the movement to create la Fuerza Civil.[22]

However, it is not the geographical proximity alone that had this effect, but instead the sense that, based on the event happening in a place the indirect victim frequents, they share spatial similarities with the victim. And, it is these *similarities* rather than geographical proximity per se that matters. Indeed, the spatial component did not seem to wield the same power as the social components of similarities and cases in which spatial proximity alone seem

[20] ibid.

[21] Interview with Marichuy, April 2017 (San Pedro)

[22] Recall from Ch. 2 that *la Fuerza Civil* is a militarized police force unique to Nuevo León. It is the result of a citizen- and corporate business-led initiative to make up for weaknesses in local police capacity.

to be the primary motivation for civic engagement as in the above example were rare. In fact, social *dissimilarities* between the victim and the indirect victims frequently led citizens to dismiss cases of violence that occurred in spaces remarkably close to them. For example, many citizens are quick to disregard cases of spectacle violence like hanging corpses, even those that happen right in front of them or in their neighborhood, because it is widely believed that spectacle violence only targets members of organized crime. These cases are often and easily brushed off by citizens because, in their minds, that type of violence does not happen to people "like me."[23]

Sometimes the spatial and social dynamics of similarities overlap. Many citizens, for example, describe personal, emotional connections to a *space* as if the space were part of their self. An attack on the space or someone in it thus represents a profound parallel between the indirect victim and the direct victim. Referring to Jorge and Javier, Adriana was struck by the notion that violence could happen both nearby her and in a space with which she felt a deep, personal connection:

> …the case of the two students shot outside el Tec really had a great impact on me… I couldn't believe it. How could this happen in a place that I lived, at a school that I attended – the school I had always dreamed of attending? How could THIS possibly happen THERE?...

Imagining oneself in the shoes of a victim: it could have been me

Perceiving similarities or *cercania* between themselves and victims of violence sparked an important shift in how indirect victims interpreted drug-related violence and its impact on their lives. Before, many indirect victims perceived the violence as a distant phenomenon that did not happen to someone "like them." This belief was corroborated by state and media

[23] Interviews with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey); Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro); Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey)

accounts that typically portray the drug war as a fight exclusively between criminals and the state. However, participants who were exposed to events in which they perceived such similarities realized, often for the first time, that if someone "like them," could fall victim to violence that they, too, are at risk. This cognitive shift was marked first by the research participants identifying such similarities, as described above. Participants then regularly concluded their description of an event like those above with the sobering reality these shared similarities implied: "It could have been me." This realization is indicative of empathic processes, which are partly defined by ty the ability to adopt the perspective of another and imagine ourselves in their place (de Waal 2008, 218). "Perspective-taking" refers to a number of cognitive processes, including: assuming the perspective of another; assuming the perspective of the other *and* imagining how the other person must feel; or assuming the perspective of the other and imagining how *you* might feel in that same situation. Among the interview sample, respondents usually described the first variant, simply imagining that they were the victimized. Indeed, the idea that they, too, could be victimized was startling and unexpected for most interviewees.

Taking the perspective of the victim resulted in an important emotional change among indirect victims. Specifically, it activated their sense of personal vulnerability, as if they too had been victimized. Likewise, psychologists suggest that seeing ourselves reflected in another person and imagining ourselves in their shoes allows us to understand and interpret the other's feelings, and, critically, to share their emotions as if they were our own. Psychologists call this emotional response "emotional contagion" (Hatfield et al. 1993). Like perspective-taking, the ability to be affected by the emotional state of another, or "vicarious arousal," is a core element of empathy. de Waal (2008) calls it, "The lowest common denominator of all empathic

processes…" (282). Some individuals, for example, will feel distress at witnessing the suffering of another, as if the suffering were transmitted or shared between them. These vicarious feelings often mimic or approximate those of the sufferer (Hatfield et al. 1993; Batson 1991[24]).

In Monterrey, empathic identification with a victim manifested as feelings of vulnerability for the indirect victim, as if they too had been the target of violence or could be in the future. Adriana, for example, explained why her conservative parents who never participated in protests marched with the movement for justice for Jorge and Javier: "This was meaningful for them because they had a daughter in that same school. It could have been me that was killed, so it impacted them in a big way, too."[25] Manuel had a similar reaction upon learning that two students had been killed. Though he knew of the shooting within the school, it was not immediately clear that the victims were students. In fact, both the local government and the university first identified the victims as cartel hitmen, or *sicarios.* Manuel describes feeling some fear after learning that two "delinquents" had been killed inside the university, so physically close to him: "It made me a little afraid because it happened so close and it could have been me that they killed, but I felt very relieved that it wasn't someone from el Tec." Learning that the victims were instead students like him transformed these feelings as the physical proximity of the event was compounded by the social proximity of the event. He still felt fear, but in a more intense and intimate way: "The fear that I felt before, I felt it even more closely [*aún más cercano*] now! It was only my second semester there and those students could just as easily have been me."[26]Bernardo, too, was prompted to see his own vulnerability to violence through

[24] As qtd. in Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000, 708.

[25] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[26] Interview with Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro)

similarities with Jorge and Javier. He explained why Jorge and Javier's death in particular was so influential in his future involvement in civil society: "That case really impacted me. I was also a student at el Tec at the time and it could have been any one of us.[27]"

Note that vicarious emotions need not perfectly mirror the emotions of the other. Indeed, a bystander is unlikely to feel the same emotional weight of a mother whose child was killed, unless he too lost a child. Instead, emotional contagion is "the adoption – in whole *or in part* – of another's emotional state…" (de Waal 2008, 283, emphasis mine). In the interview sample, indirect victims reported feeling a sense of vulnerability, as if they too had been victimized, but did not claim to fully share in the suffering of victims.

Popular notions of empathy tend to emphasize selfless, emotional generosity toward the Other (i.e., feeling sorry for someone). From these perspectives, the processes I describe here appear oddly egoistic. Indeed, indirect victims rarely described "feeling sorry" for victims after imagining themselves in their shoes. Instead, taking the perspective of the victim made indirect victims feel a sense of vulnerability, which although it reflected emotions similar to what victims might feel, prompted them to worry about *themselves*, not the victim. Though counterintuitive, these seemingly egoistic reactions are corroborated by existing research. Just as I found indirect victims felt vulnerable after imagining themselves in the place of a direct victim, Batson, et al. (1996) find that "the realization that one will confront a similar situation in the future increases empathic responding" (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000, 709).

[27] Interview with Bernardo, June 2017 (Monterrey)

Catalyst Events

Although participants were exposed to violence on a daily basis in Monterrey, the evidence presented up to this point demonstrates that civic engagement usually resulted from particular violent events - those that prompted indirect victims to imagine themselves in the shoes of the victim. I call these events "catalysts" and define them as:

> **Catalyst Events:** Instances of violence that motivate indirect victims to civic engagement by generating feelings of empathy.

Catalysts may be likened to what psychologists call a "proximate cause" of future behavior. That is, the "situation that triggers behavior and the mechanism (psychological, neural, physiological) that enables it" (de Waal 2008, 280). Here, the catalyst event is the triggering situation, civic engagement is the behavior, and empathy is the mechanism. Though the specific catalyst event that sparks empathy among indirect victims varies between individuals, catalysts share a common set of characteristics. Interviewees overwhelmingly described cases of violence in which they perceived similarities between themselves and the event's victim(s). Research participants also described geographical proximity, which usually worked in tandem with social proximity to generate empathy and, consequently, a catalyst event. If social proximity is the root "spark" of a catalyst, we can think of geographical proximity as its accelerant. That is, a force that facilitates and compounds the impact of social proximity but which is rarely sufficient on its own.

Helping during Violence: Transforming empathy into civic engagement

The empathic re-imagining of the Self as victim and the shared sense of vulnerability it provoked via catalyst events formed the nexus from which interviewees' future civic engagement originated. Faced with the sense of their own victimization, indirect victims faced a choice of what *to do* about their feelings of vulnerability. One may choose to do nothing. However, there were few interviewees that, after experiencing the sense that a victim "could have been me," chose this path. The more common response was to try and prevent their victimization and to do so through the distinct channel of civic activities addressing violence in their communities. Some participated in protests or joined social movements, while others started NGOs, organized community cultural events, or lobbied local government for increased security. Some, like Adriana and Valentín, pursued multiple forms of civic engagement, both participating in protest marches and joining or initiating local NGOs or citizens councils. While there was great variation in the form and type of civic action that indirect victims pursued, all the activities shared one thing in common: all aimed to address violence and/or its root causes.

Popular notions of empathy emphasize feeling emotionally generous toward "a distressed or needy other (rather than sharing the emotion of the other)," which can be better understood as sympathy (Eisenberg 2000, 677). However, as noted above, psychology research suggests empathy, unlike sympathy, involves the vicarious sharing of emotions, like vulnerability. As a result, action born of empathy aims not to alleviate the distress of the Other, but instead responds to one's own feelings, "which mimic[s] that of the object" (de Waal 2008, 283). In short, empathy has egoistic components, even if it produces seemingly other-oriented actions, like civic engagement. Likewise, citizens in Monterrey were not motivated to civic action because they "felt

sorry" for victims. On the contrary, they were motivated to civic action out of their feelings of vulnerability and the consequent self-interested desire to prevent their own victimization.

For example, the first civic action that Marichuy ever took was to lobby her mayor for increased security. As noted above, Marichuy first went to her local government to demand "more security, more police forces, better police forces," in response to her sense that the violence was becoming more and more "*cercana."* She then became involved in the citizen movement to create Monterrey's militarized police force, *La Fuerza Civil* and later continued pressuring local security institutions to "change and improve their practices."[28] Like Marichuy, Manuel's first involvement in civil society was in response to a case of violence that felt very *cercano* – physically, but more importantly, socially. After Jorge and Javier were killed, Manuel became involved in the movement for justice, which demanded that the Mexican state acknowledge government wrongdoing in the incident and punish the perpetrators. Manuel helped coordinate protest demonstrations each year on the anniversary of the students' death and founded a radical student movement on the campus of el Tec. While radical student movements are common in other parts of Mexico, they are rare in Monterrey and particularly within el Tec, which boasts strong ties to local government and business elites and has historically looked down upon student organizations with critical views of the state. Indeed, student organizations protesting violence on campus faced social and personal risk. Manuel remembers being called *chayro* and *porro*, derogatory slang names for student rabble-rousers. University administration, meanwhile, seemingly targeted student organizers for intimidation. Manuel describes one instance of this:

[28] Interview with Marichuy, April 2017 (San Pedro)

> …some students were… staging a performance as protest against the violence. They were simulating the act of bodies dropping dead, as if they had been shot or killed. That group was called into the President's [*el Rector*] office. And, again, what does being called into the President's office mean? At the end of the day, maybe it doesn't seem like a big deal, but like before [in other similar cases], no other student group is getting called into the President's office.[29]

Like Manuel, Adriana and Valentín both first became involved in civil society as a response to Jorge and Javier's death. Adriana first participated in a march for justice with her parents and Valentín first participated in protest demonstrations, assemblies, and the like. These activities were their introduction to civic engagement. However, both quickly moved away from these activities and into more and a more diverse array of civic engagement. Even as the quality and quantity of their activities changed, the motivation for their engagement remained the same: addressing insecurity and its root causes. Adriana moved away from the movement for justice because "…I wasn't in agreement with the way they managed the march, their propositions, and some other things, and, well, protest marches just aren't for me.[30] Yet, Adriana's civic engagement did not stop with this one-time protest. It in fact grew exponentially as she channeled her energies into other civic activities:

> … I got involved in some organizations and projects – these are more the type of participation that I get involved in. I worked in a student movement, 'Porque Me Mueve, Mexico,' and we studied the causes and consequences of the situation in Mexico. From there, I got involved in "Alcalde, Cómo Vamos?" and "Consejo Cívico,"[31] because it seemed like a more concrete, measurable program and one that was working with local mayors, which is where the majority of the problems we had have their roots. With that program, I went out into the streets, talking with people, person by person, telling them about what our goals were and trying to impress upon them the importance of civic participation."[32]

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[29] Interview with Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro)

[30] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[31] *Alcalde, Cómo Vamos?* is a local, citizen-led initiative to provide a way for citizens to hold local Monterrey political leadership accountable. *Consejo Cívico* aims to empower and coordinate local civil society on issues that contribute to the collective well-being of Monterrey's residents, specifically peace, justice, and citizen participation.

[32] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

Valentín's experience was similar. In the years of the violence, he attended assemblies, protests, and conferences. But his activities soon shifted:

> …after a while I started to think, This is all really nice, but what happens next? After the protest is over, what do we do? What else can we do to make change in society? We were not *generating* anything from all these activities… So, this prompted me to want to do something different – to do something that would make an impact.[33] [emphasis in original]

Valentín instead focused his efforts on raising public awareness and encouraging discourse about the social and political structures that create conditions for violence. He is now involved with a local civic association that organizes public talks, discussions, film screenings, and other community activities that aim to educate citizens, cultivate political consciousness, and build community. He explains:

> I just want people to be conscious, aware, and critical of what's going on… I want people to recognize that what we experienced during those years [of violence] and continue to experience reflects the consequences of many years. I have many friends that feel what's important right now is activism in the 'immediate' – in other words that the violence is an emergency situation and we have to turn all our attention to that and its immediate effects. But the problem of violence here has been boiling for decades, so emergency activism does not respond to that – to the conditions that made the violence possible. It's about creating long-term change...[34]

It is important to note that whether and how a given civic activity addresses the root cause of violence varies depending on what the individual believes are the primary drivers of insecurity. One citizen may think corruption[35] is the root cause, while someone else believes inequality, or lack of education[36] are the primary drivers. This will, in turn, shape the civic activity the individual pursues to address violence. Sometimes, that civic activity may not appear on its face to be related to insecurity. Adriana's involvement with Consejo Civico and Valentín's

[33] Interview with Valentín, March 2017 (Monterrey)

[34] Interview with Valentín, March 2017 (Monterrey)

[35] Interviews with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro); Bernardo, June 2017 (Monterrey)

[36] Interviews with Felipe, May 2017 (San Pedro); Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey)

work raising political awareness, for example, are not obviously a response to violence. It is only by listening to their personal logic of participation that violence emerges as their primary motivation. As noted earlier, the capacity to unearth these relationships is one of the strengths of the deeply embedded, rich qualitative data collection strategy I employed for this dissertation. It allowed citizens to reveal that many of their civic activities are in fact motivated by their experiences with violence, even though the activity does not reflect that on its surface. A summary of all the civil society organizations in Monterrey, in contrast, would obscure this important relationship simply because not every organizations' mission would so easily reflect this interest in addressing the root causes of violence. Adriana and Valentín are just two cases among many for whom this is true. Throughout the course of my research, I also learned of adult education programs, bicycling groups, government transparency initiatives, boxing clubs, and more that were all generated out of a desire to address violence and insecurity.

Like these, Bernardo and his group of friends were struck by the ease with which government officials were able to lie about the alleged criminal identity of the two students and, from that, reasoned that corruption provided a foundation for crime and violence to flourish. As a response, they founded an NGO to increase government transparency and citizens' ability to monitor government behavior. Bernardo's explanation of how that NGO came to be exemplifies the pathway many indirect victims came to pursue civic engagement as a response to violence. He first identifies similarities between himself and Jorge and Javier, expresses a sense that Jorge and Javier "could have been me," and identifies a clear link between his civic actions and that key case:

> I and some others decided to start this NGO after the case of Jorge and Javier. That incident impacted me a lot. I was also a student at el Tec at that time and that could have been any one of us. Other people participate in marches, or volunteer with victims' movements. But, those things can be dangerous and, frankly, I'm not courageous enough to do things like that. So, I decided to

> do something different – something less risky – so I started this NGO that focuses on one part of the problem [of violence] in our country, corruption.[37]

Like in Monterrey, evidence suggests that empathy has a unique, positive relationship with helping behaviors, like civic engagement. In short, feeling empathy for a suffering Other motivates helping (see for example Krebs, 1975 and Batson, et al. 1981). Though the underlying reasons for this relationship are unclear, evidence points toward some form of merging of the interests of the Self and the Other through imagining yourself in their shoes (perspective-taking) and sharing their emotions (vicarious arousal). Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) write that through these processes, "the self-concept gets activated and applied toward the target" (709; see also Cialdini, et al. 1997; Davis, et al. 1996; Regan and Totten 1975). This convergence prompts the individual to pursue actions that not only relieve the suffering of the Other, but also relieve their own suffering (a sense of vulnerability, in this case) because the interests of the Self and the Other become indistinguishable.

When we consider the convergence of the victim and indirect victims interests through the empathic processes generated by catalyst events, preventative activism emerges as the most logical behavioral outcome of a catalyst event. Why? Because empathy bridges the Self and the Other in a way that is unique to empathy. Relative to other citizen responses to violence, such as self-help prevention strategies, civic engagement is the only pathway that addresses both the vulnerability of the Self *and* of the Other. I highlighted Wolfgang and Singer's (1978) take on this idea earlier in this chapter and it bears highlighting again: where self-help prevention strategies represent "like but not common" interests, the empathically-motivated civic

[37] Interview with Bernardo, June 2017 (Monterrey)

engagement I document in Monterrey represents a "congealed concern about victimization" in which the interests of both victims and indirect victims become one and the same (387).

Summary of the Evidence

The qualitative data presented thus far suggest that *indirect* victimization is a key driver of the association between experiencing violence and future civic engagement. It further suggests that not all experiences with violence are alike, nor do they shape civic engagement in analogous ways. Even as violence surged around them, many *Regios* did not perceive themselves as likely targets in a conflict portrayed as exclusively between the state and criminals. This gave them little reason to pursue anti-violence civic engagement. This view frequently shifted, however, when exposed to a case of violence in which citizens perceived a sense of shared similarities with direct victims, or a "catalyst event." Identification with a victim prompted those individuals to perceive themselves as potential victims for the first time (perspective-taking). This realization provoked feelings of vulnerability as they realized that the victim "…could have been me" (vicarious arousal). This new sense of vulnerability prompted many to pursue preventative action, often in the form of civic activities combatting violence. In this way, empathic identification with victims of drug violence played a crucial role in driving *Regios* to civic engagement as a means to prevent their own future victimization.

Individual-level patterns of inaction in the face of violence

Even though evidence suggests that exposure to violence played a key role in fomenting civic engagement in Monterrey, not all *Regios* chose this pathway. In this section, I describe the civic lives of those individuals who did not respond to violence with civic engagement, that is,

the negative cases.[38] Many indirect victim citizens chose to stay in the safety of their homes, pursuing self-help strategies that protected themselves and their loved ones and often retreating from public life instead of advancing into it. Like their fellow citizens who did pursue civic engagement, these indirect victims typically held opinions and attitudes about the state of affairs in their country but never acted on them beyond voting. Again, these citizens look like many democratic citizens in Mexico and elsewhere who rarely channel their attitudes into action. Yet in the case of these particular citizens, the violence did nothing to provoke these indirect victims into action. In this section, I first describe what the absence of civic engagement looks like, paying particular to attention to indirect victims' reasons for not participating. I then describe their experiences with and responses to violence. Along the way, I compare and contrast their experiences with the experiences of indirect victims who did respond to violence with nonviolent civic action.

What does non-participation look like?[39]

Non-participation is the absence of involvement in any collective activities outside of voting that aim to address issues of common concern. Non-participators are not involved in local service organizations, they do not participate in community improvement projects, and are not a member of any political organization or social movement, for example. However, it is not the case that these indirect victims simply were not interested in civic life. On the contrary, indirect

[38] Interviews with Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey); Teodora, July 2017 (Monterrey); Julian, July 2017 (Monterrey); Felipe, May 2017 (San Pedro); Saúl, February 2017 (San Pedro); Ramón, February 2017 (Monterrey); Isidro, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[39] I also documented evidence of individuals who were already involved in civic activities but who exhibited no change in those activities during the violence. The evidence indicates a similar process. I will analyze those individuals in future iterations of the project.

victims with whom I interacted, including both those who did and did not pursue civic engagement as a response to violence, usually expressed clear opinions and ideas about the problems their community faces. Abrahán, for example, thinks that lack of education is the root cause of the insecurity in Mexico:

> If I were in charge, I would provide free education. Because all of this is related to lack of education. When people aren't educated, they don't have opportunities, and when they don't have opportunities, the get into things they shouldn't get into [crime]. And education is where we learn to be good citizens. But a lot of people can't afford education or can't afford to have their kids in school. Me and my wife both started college but we had to stop because we couldn't afford it.[40]

Cenobia shared passionate views about abortion and marriage equality, both of which she identified as sources of Mexico's insecurity:

> They say that all this [violence] is a punishment from God because the society here and the government have supported abortion and things like gay and lesbian marriages…
> **Do you think that is accurate?**
> I do. Because those things used to just happen in the North, but now the violence has affected the entire country and it didn't happen until the government started passing these laws. Before that, everything was peaceful.[41]

We could expect Cenobia to participate in some sort of anti-abortion civic group or activity, but she does not. Why? What distinguishes citizens like Abrahán and Cenobia from other citizens who, like them, share critical attitudes about the roots of violence, but, unlike them, turn those attitudes into civic action? Indirect victims' reasons for not participating in civic activities tended to center around three common variables that existing literature identifies as associated with low levels of political participation: lack of confidence in state institutions or political leaders (Milbraith 1965; Almond and Verba 1963; Converse 1972; Balch 1974); little faith in the power of collective action (Olson 1965; Gamson 1968; Paige 1971; Hooghe and Marien 2013;); and the

[40] Interview with Abrahán (December 2016, Monterrey)

[41] Interview with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro)

costs associated with civic engagement (Ferejohn and Fiorina 1974; McAdam 1986; Muller and Opp 1986) .

Lack of Confidence in Political Institutions and Leaders

I rarely encountered citizens in Monterrey that expressed confidence in local or federal political institutions and leadership.[42] Indirect victims who did not pursue civic engagement during the period of violence were no exception.[43] While some indicated they had in fact enjoyed a level of trust in the system and leadership during previous political administrations, a new administration and corruption that was now "out of control,"[44] prompted many to lose trust in the traditional political system, its institutions, and their political representatives, discouraging them from civic life:

> If they kill the confidence of those who trusted them, how can we think that we can make change?... Killing a person – their body – is bad, but we are all going to die. It is more troubling to kill someone's trust.[45]

Although we might think lack of confidence in institutions and leaders explains the difference in civic engagement trends between those who participate and those who do not, indirect victims who did pursue civic engagement as a response to violence shared these attitudes. In fact, lack of confidence in institutions and politicians was frequently cited by participators as a reason for choosing the civic activities they did. Several research participants, like Adriana, reported that,

[42] Within the interview sample, Felipe is one exception.

[43] Interviews with Saúl, March 2017 (San Pedro); Ramón, December 2016 (Monterrey); Abrahán December 2016 (Monterrey)

[44] Interview with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro)

[45] ibid.

"We realized that the government wasn't going to help us and that we had to do it ourselves."[46] It is telling, for example, that indirect victims rarely chose engagement with traditional political institutions, like voting, to make change. Instead, they more frequently chose citizen-led initiatives that engaged the state – often critically - but operated outside formal institutions. Serena, while very active in the search for the Disappeared, does not vote, "Because to vote is to show support for a system that I do not believe in."[47]

Little faith in the potential for collective action

In addition to little trust in the political institutions, many *Regios* exhibited skepticism about the potential for collective action.[48] As noted earlier, Monterrey does not have a tradition of large-scale collective action and this pattern is exacerbated by a shared belief that, in Monterrey, "we don't demand change,"[49] and, "In Monterrey, we don't protest..."[50] This leads many citizens to believe that collective action is not plausible. As Cenobia remarked, "…we don't have united communities here. If there is someone – a family in the neighborhood, let's say – that is hungry, there is no uniting with other people in the community to feed that family." Saúl, meanwhile, cited the apathy of his fellow citizens as the reason for his own lack of participation. Consumerism, he claimed, made his fellow citizens conformist, apathetic, and

[46] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

[47] Interview with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[48] Interviews with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro); Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey); Saúl, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[49] Interview with Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[50] Interview with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro)

easily persuaded by the status quo. "This is why I keep telling you we need a revolution," he says. "To shock people out of these habits, these practices." But, he asks me, who would join the revolution? Nobody, he answers.

> I would do it myself, but me, alone, against 10,000 police, I can't. But the thing is, it's not just me. If people realized and came together, we would be 100,000 Mexicans! But what people don't realize is that we don't even need all that. We could do it with much less. All we need is 10 people per police officer.

Citizens with whom I interacted were frequently disturbed that so many *Regios,* including themselves, failed to take action during the peak of violence. As Abrahán remarked, "A few years back there was a period of very bad violence and we did nothing. There were dead in the streets, and we did nothing!" Saúl was similarly frustrated: "…just a few years ago we had a very difficult period of violence, and we did nothing… If that didn't wake us up, why not?"[51]

Again, while skepticism about the possibility of collective action may inhibit some indirect victims from participating, it cannot explain the difference between these citizens and those who chose civic engagement as a response to violence. Indirect victim participators also described Monterrey as a place where citizens do not participate. But given the context of violence, they felt they had no choice but to try collective action despite their skepticism of it. Adriana's words encapsulate a sentiment that many participators expressed: "I now know the consequences of not participating – I lived them. And I don't want to live them again."[52] González-Ramírez (2015) goes so far as to call this generalized lack of collective efficacy a "chip" that *Regios* have, resulting from the city's historical record of suppressing political dissent

[51] Interview with Saúl, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[52] Interview with Adriana, February 2017 (Monterrey)

(175 – 181). *Regios'* generalized cynicism about collective action is in fact what makes the marked uptick in civic engagement during the wave of violence so remarkable.

Costs of Civic Engagement

Some of the more powerful disincentives of participation in Monterrey are the costs of civic engagement, both in terms of time and money, and in personal risk (McAdam 1986). Civic engagement takes time.[53] It also incurs significant economic costs, either in real expenses paid or income lost due to one's time being redirected away from income-generating work. Saúl, for example, is an average middle-class man who works three jobs to make a living. He "volunteered" to work in the polling booths once:

> …but it wasn't like I am such a proud citizen that I wanted to do my civic duty…They paid me – the parties paid me to do it. I wouldn't have done it otherwise.
> **And normally it is a volunteer position?**
> Yes, but nobody's going to spend their whole workday there volunteering – are you kidding me? They're all paid. They paid me 1500 pesos [~$80 US] to stand there all day. There's no way I could make that in one day in a regular job.

In addition to these hard costs of civic engagement, civic action in Monterrey also incurs a certain level of real and perceived personal risk. *Regios* often refer to the infamous Tlatelolco massacre of 1968[54] when expressing their fears about the potential repercussions of civic action. Yet, the repression they fear is not limited to such extreme physical force. There is also fear about more quotidian repercussions, like losing one's job or access to government benefits, or other state reprisals that make day-to-day life harder:

[53] Interviews with Felipe, May 2017 (San Pedro); Marichuy, April 2017 (San Pedro)

[54] The Tlatelolco massacre took place during Mexico's dirty war. Government forces killed at least 52 Mexican citizens after firing on unarmed demonstrators. The victims were killed by government snipers who fired on protestors from nearby buildings.

> People are afraid. Have you heard of Tlatelolco? They were demanding something of the government and, you know, some people say about 50 people died but based on the memories of witnesses, they say they saw hundreds of bodies. And that doesn't even include the people that were imprisoned. The same thing happened with the teachers from Chilpancingo.[55] They took those buses because they were going to protest. They were demanding rights and that didn't serve the government. All of this has the people scared so that when the government comes at them, they come to heel. People here do not have much. Based on what I make, I cannot support my wife and daughter. People are scared that if they are too demanding, the government will take away what little they have.[56]

Yet, again, such risks cannot explain the difference between indirect victims who chose civic engagement as a response to violence from those who did not. Put simply, those who participated face similar risks as those who did not and yet they still participate – why? Perhaps indirect victims of a higher SES can take on more economic risk or have more time to spend on civic engagement activities (Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie 1993). They may also have greater leverage in the political system than citizens from lower SES, making the possibility of personal or political risk more manageable (ibid.). Indeed, there is a class difference in the type and frequency of activities citizens from different social strata pursue. Those of a higher SES within the research sample in Monterrey pursue activities that directly critique the state, involve organizational management (like starting an NGO) or require significant financial resources more often than citizens of a lower SES. Citizens of a lower SES, meanwhile, frequently pursued activities that could be carried out without engaging the state and with human and material resources available within their community, like improving sidewalks, recuperating public spaces, or providing classes or workshops to neighbors. These are still costly endeavors. They take time, personal resources, and require a significant amount of individual and collective effort.

[55] In 2014, more than 43 students went missing from Chilpancingo, Guerrero en route to Mexico City for a protest demonstration. Accounts vary, but it is widely believed that the students were disappeared as a result of collusion between state and criminal forces.

[56] Interview with Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey)

They are also not without risk as being active in the community can make one a target for social or political harassment.

Still, these risks do not seem to keep indirect victims from participating in civic engagement in general. After outlining the great physical and political risks of her involvement in searching for the Disappeared, Serena intimated:

> Being involved in this has also slowed down my professional goals. I want to go to the other side [the US] and get my Master's degree and that's what I was going to do before I got involved in this, but I don't know how I would continue my work on these programs if I went to the US.[57]

José meanwhile regularly receives death threats and Manuel recounted how he and his colleagues felt harassed by his university's administration, with one student nearly being expelled.[58] Upon getting involved in civic activities, Marichuy was astounded by the effort, time, and money participation required:

> …really, they make it very hard to participate as a citizen at all. See this here? [She hands me a signed document] To submit this document, I had to get this form signed, and that form notarized, and this, that and the other – all these bureaucratic processes. I needed to prove I was a citizen by getting a copy of my ID card. And then to get someone to say that my ID card was real and legitimate, they came and talked to my neighbors to ensure that I lived where I said I lived! All this, just to submit this document as a citizen trying to make something good happen for my community. And this doesn't even include the *money*! The money you have to spend in making all this happen is significant...you have to be working persistently, day after day, to achieve anything. It takes your time, your energy, and your money…[59]

Even citizens of lower SES, who we might theorize would be hardest hit by the risks of civic engagement, still participate. In South Monterrey, women participators are often disparaged by their husbands, who think the women should be in their houses caring for their children rather than working in the community. During my field research, I heard of frequent arguments between spouses around this issue. On several occasions, men gave their wives an ultimatum –

[57] Interview with Serena, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[58] Interviews with José, December 2016 (Monterrey); Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro)

[59] Interview with Marichuy, May 2017 (San Pedro)

choose your family, or the community work. They still participate. In one South Monterrey neighborhood, neighbors – many of whom were not legible to the state, some of whom did not regularly pay taxes because of it – confronted their fear of the state (and lost the ability to circumvent tax obligations) in order to register their new civil association. They paid real personal and financial costs to do so. The costs of civic engagement thus cannot explain the differences between indirect victims who participate in civil society and those who do not.

Variation in Exposure to Violence: Absence of a catalyst event

Indirect victims who did not pursue civic engagement as a response to violence were exposed to violence in much the same ways as those who did pursue civic engagement: some witnessed killings in action, some knew of friends or distant family members who were killed or disappeared, while all had been exposed to violence through secondary means, such as the media. Yet, there is one key experience that distinguishes those who pursued civic action from those who did not: those who did not pursue civic action as a response to violence lacked a catalyst event that prompted their participation. Those who did pursue civic engagement were provoked to action through catalyst events that made them think a victim with whom they shared similarities "could have been me;" indirect victims who did not pursue civic action did not report such experiences.

What does the absence of this triggering event look like? Indirect victims who did not pursue civic action did speak about violence and did speak about specific events. But the characteristics of events stood out in their minds for reasons other than a sense that a victim "could have been me." Sometimes, they mentioned an event because it was so shocking, or "spectacular" (Bell-Martin and Marston working paper), such as cases of mutilated bodies left in

public spaces or an event with an unusually high number of dead, like the massacre of 73 migrants in San Fernando.[60] In other instances, they discussed cases that occurred to people they knew, like a friend or neighbor.[61] While such events may hit close to home, they need not imply similarities. Some of these indirect victims highlighted key cases that provoked civic action for many others, such as the disappearance of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, but they did not describe the event's impact for themselves as prompting them to imagine themselves in the shoes of the victim.[62] Others simply could not think of a case of violence that stood out in their memory and still others suggested that, indeed, they found it challenging to imagine themselves in the shoes of a victim.[63] Felipe, for example, was living in Mexico City when Jorge and Javier were killed: "It's terrible what happened to them, and I felt for them, but it was just so far away from me." But, he says, if they had been two students from ITAM (a prominent university in Mexico City), "I would feel very differently, for sure."[64]

These non-participators share much in common with their participator counterparts: both groups tended to share similar attitudes about the state of affairs in the country, like a lack of confidence in the state and politicians. Non-participators were also exposed to violence in the same indirect ways as participators, like first-hand witnessing or through media outlets. Many non-participators and participators were exposed to *the same cases of violence*, especially

[60] Interview with Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey); Interview with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro); Interview with Saul, March 2017 (San Pedro)

[61] Interview with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro); Interview with Roger, May 2017 (Monterrey)

[62] Interview with Abrahán, December 2016 (Monterrey)

[63] Interviews with Cenobia, January 2017 (San Pedro); Teodora, July 2017 (Monterrey); Julian, July 2017 (Monterrey)

[64] Interview with Felipe (San Pedro, May 2017)

prominent cases like Jorge and Javier or the Casino Royale fire. And, like participators, non-participators pursued self-help strategies to increase their personal security. Yet, despite these similarities, non-participators exhibit one important difference: few identified a case of violence in which shared similarities with the victims prompted them to think, "It could have been me." In other words, indirect victims who did not pursue civic engagement as a response to violence lacked exposure to a triggering event that would put them on the pathway to civic action.

Theory of Empathy Politics

Among indirect victims, why did some citizens become active in civic life during the violence, when so much of the society was retreating from civic life? Why did citizens who were not active in civil society prior to the violence choose civic action precisely when the conditions for it became hostile? What explains this variation?

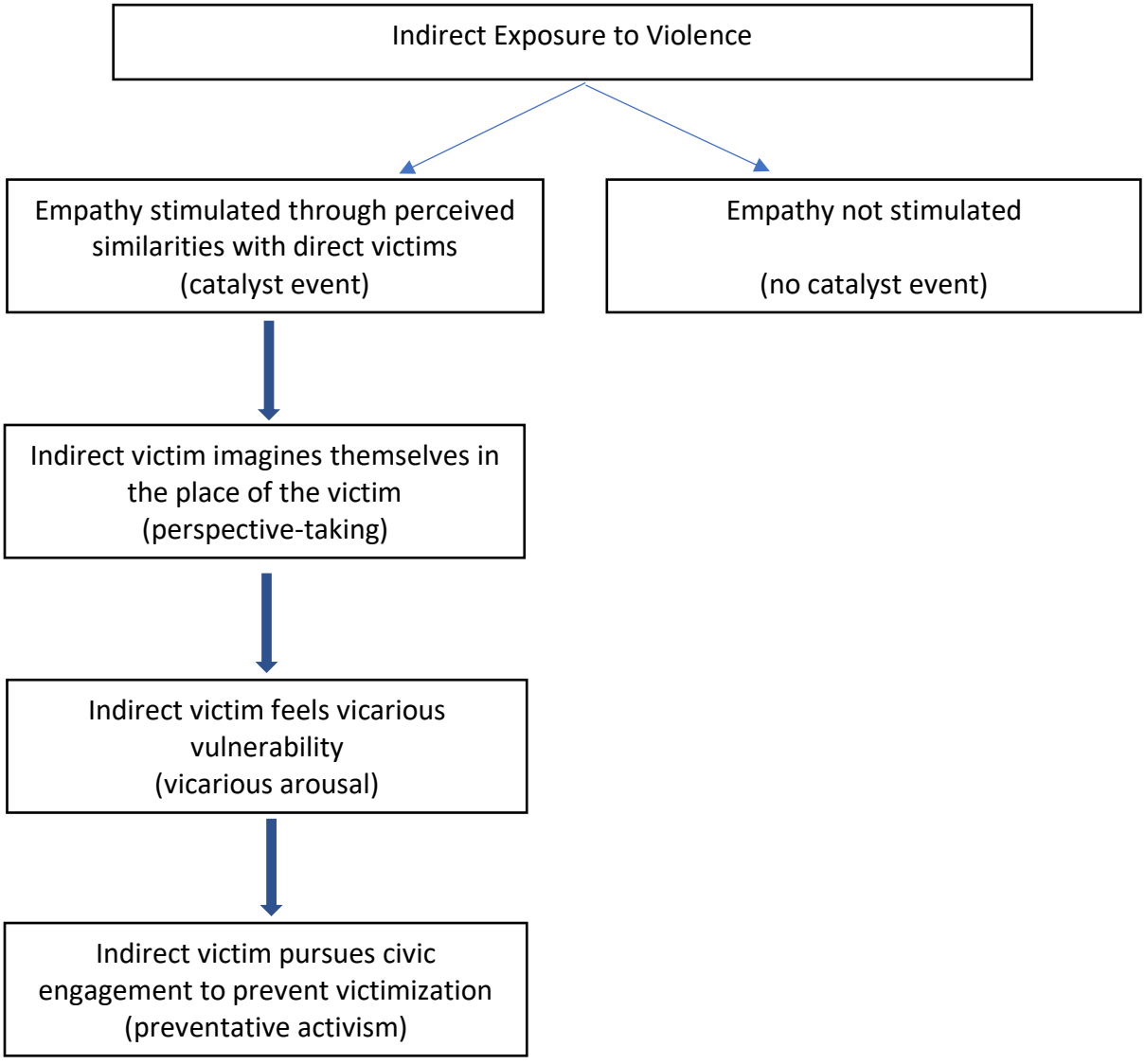
The experiences of citizens living in Monterrey suggest that exposure to violence is an important motivator of civic engagement, especially when experienced indirectly. The data further suggest that empathy is the mechanism linking indirect victims' experience with violence to their civic participation. These theoretical links produce the following theory, which is also illustrated in Figure 3.1:

> Indirect victims are more likely to pursue civic engagement after exposure to a violent event prompts them to imagine themselves in the place of the victim. This re-imagining occurs through perceived similarities with the victim. Taking the perspective of the victim in turn generates a vicarious sense of vulnerability. This vicarious vulnerability links the indirect victims with the plight of the victim, increasing the likelihood that indirect victims pursue preventative action in the form of civic activities addressing violence.

Like most forms of political behavior, civic engagement has many causes. Empathy, I argue, holds a significant place among them. Specifically, I argue that empathy politics explains why so many indirect victims pursue civic engagement amidst violence. However, I do not argue

that empathy explains all civic engagement. Indeed, citizens participate in civic and political life for a number of reasons, like for instrumental reasons such as receiving some benefit (Verba, Schlozman, Brady and Nie 1993). What the current study demonstrates is that empathy is one important pathway to civic action that existing research does not recognize.

Figure 3.1: Theory of Empathy Politics

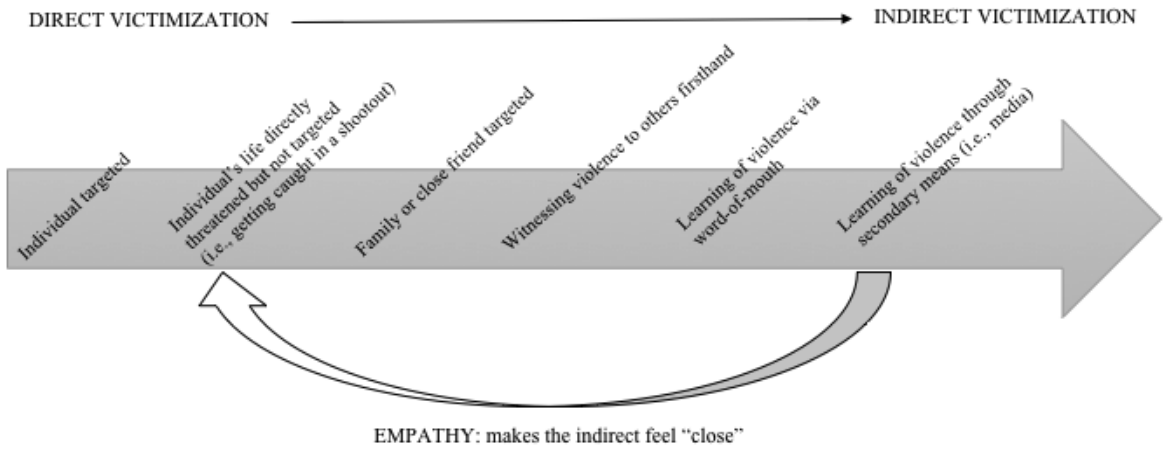


I also do not claim that empathy always leads to civic action. I acknowledge that violence and the empathic processes it can generate take place against the backdrop of other individual-level factors known to shape political behavior, like SES (Verba and Nie 1972; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995), education levels (ibid.), gender (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 1997) and age (Verba and Nie 1972). Violence-induced empathy is thus just one factor among many that will shape whether an indirect victim will participate in civil society. Accordingly, my theory of empathy politics is probabilistic: given exposure to a catalyst event, indirect victims are more likely to participate in civic engagement as a result, holding all other known factors equal. Some indirect victims will not pursue civic engagement even when their sense of empathy is triggered and some indirect victims who have never imagined themselves in the place of a victim will pursue civic action, though the evidence suggests these outcomes are atypical.

Before concluding, let us return to the victimization spectrum (Figure 2.1 below) I developed in the last chapter and the question I posed therein: if victimization's individual impact decreases the more indirect it is as existing victimology research suggests, why would we expect civic engagement responses to violence experienced indirectly? My theory of empathy politics helps us make sense of this unexpected outcome. I argue that empathizing with a direct victim makes more indirect experiences feel "close" (Cárdia 2002), or *cercano* to use the words of my research participants, as if they had happened to you or a loved one. This transforms the impact of these indirect experiences into one more similar to the impact of direct experiences as the individual realizes a victim "could have been me" (see Figure 2 below). Tyler 1984 supports this claim. He explains why hearing about violence via the media tends to be less upsetting than violence that happens within your own social circle: "This may be because neighbors'

experiences have occurred nearby and to someone 'like yourself'" (35). Empathy disrupts that relationship.

Figure 2.1. Victimization as a Spectrum



4. EMPATHY POLITICS AND PROTEST

In the last chapter, I presented qualitative data that described individual-level civic actions that Monterrey citizens took as a response to violence. I theorized that these civic action outcomes were the result of an empathically-motivated process, "empathy politics." That data suggests what we might observe at the individual level if the theory were true: we would expect that individuals who have empathically identified with a drug war victim participate in civic engagement activities to a greater degree than citizens who have not. Does that expectation hold elsewhere and beyond the citizens that participated in my research? If my theory were true, what other outcomes might we observe as evidence of it?

One observable outcome we can expect from the empathy politics process is the presence or absence of large-scale, collective mobilizations, like protest demonstrations, in response to specific violent events. As a theory of individual-level political behavior, the theory of empathy politics cannot fully explain instances of collective action, like protest. Protests are the result of myriad factors, including recruitment (McAdam 1986), framing (Benford and Snow 1988), the ability to mobilize resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977) and potential structural and contextual factors (Eisinger 1973; Kriesi 1995; Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001). That said, public demonstrations rely on a critical mass of individuals willing to take such action. The

theory of empathy politics helps explain why and how individual citizens become more or less amenable to such political mobilization. Protest mobilizations are thus one observable implication of the empathy politics theory, even though the theory cannot explain how a collective manifestation of these individual-level factors coalesces.

In this chapter, I conduct a comparative analysis of protest responses to three prominent cases of drug war violence in Monterrey. The comparative analysis serves as a preliminary assessment of the empathy politics theory by demonstrating how factors related to the empathy politics process help explain variation in citizen protest responses to the three cases. Specifically, I show how the socioeconomic status (SES) and criminal status of the direct victims, along with the locations of the events - all associated with the empathy politics theory – influenced citizen responses to the three cases and, as a likely result, shaped whether or not a protest demonstration emerged.

The chapter proceeds as follows. In the first section, I articulate the parameters of the comparative analysis, including the independent and dependent variables of interest, outlining how they coincide with either the empathy politics theory or the rival hypothesis, the expressive politics theory. Next, I introduce the three cases before systematically analyzing them. In the final section, I discuss the trends emerging from the comparative analysis and elaborate on how the empathy politics theory helps us make sense of them. Lastly, I identify avenues for future research that integrate an empathy-politics framework into research on social movements and protest mobilization.

Logic of the Comparative Analysis

To structure the comparative analysis, I focus on one alternative explanation for individual-level participation in protest and social movements specifically, "moral shock" (Jasper and Poulsen 1995). Theories of moral shock fall under the "expressive politics" explanations I identified as alternatives to the empathy politics theory in the introduction of the dissertation and have been linked to social movement and protest participation as a response to violence specifically. Like Wood's (2003) conception of "moral indignation," moral shock is typically understood as an emotional response to perceived abuse by state authorities that transgresses shared norms about appropriate state behavior. As points of comparison, I identify characteristics of violent events that are indicative first of the moral shock hypothesis and then of the empathy politics hypothesis. These are factors we would expect to see in violent events if either mechanism - moral shock or empathy politics – influenced whether or not individual citizens were provoked to civic engagement (in this case a protest demonstration) as a response to that event. To be clear, we cannot infer the motivating factors of individual participants from any characteristics of the collective protest. However, looking at the characteristics of violent events that result in protests versus the characteristics of events that do not result in protests paints a picture of which characteristics seem to resonate with a critical mass of the citizenry. Individual-level theories like the empathy politics theory, meanwhile, help us understand *why* those characteristics resonate, even if the theory does not explain the behavior of all protest participants.

The outcome of interest is public demonstrations that are a direct response to a violent event. This is appropriate because such demonstrations are highly visible outcomes that can be clearly observed and easily traced back to the motivating event. As independent variables, I identify nine attributes of violent events that may shape whether a given violent event a) captures

public attention in the first place and b) provide motivation for political mobilization at the individual level according to the two rival theories. Half of these attributes are indicative of the moral shock explanation and half represent what we would expect if empathy politics were a primary impetus (see Table 4.1). Since these events all took place in the same city, Monterrey, and within a limited time frame (within a period of four months), factors that may shape civic mobilization patterns but are external to the violent event are held constant.

Table 4.1. Independent variables for comparative analysis of protest demonstrations

Event Characteristics Associated with MORAL SHOCK	Event Characteristics Associated with EMPATHY
Quantity of victims	Class status of victims (SES)
Spectacle Violence	Local origin of victim
Perpetrator of the crime	Location of violent event
Perceived state malfeasance	
Media attention	
Victim's perceived criminal status	

Factors related to moral shock

Quantity of victims: Events with greater numbers of victims may capture the attention of citizens and movements because they are more shocking and/or represent extreme abuse.

Spectacle Violence: Acts of spectacle violence (Bell-Martin and Marston, working paper) may capture and mobilize political interest because they are visible, shocking and/or disturbing to citizens and transgress shared norms about the treatment of bodies (Fujii 2013).

Perpetrator of the crime: Movements may be more or less likely to mobilize around an event depending on who perpetrated the violent act. Moral shock expects citizens to respond to state abuse as particularly unjust since the state is supposed to protect its citizens, unlike criminal groups for whom crime is expected.

Perceived state malfeasance: Relatedly, violent events in which there is evidence of state malfeasance (regardless of who perpetrated the violence) may generate mass mobilization since the state has an explicit mandate to ensure the security of its citizens, unlike criminal groups.

Factors related to empathy politics

Class status of victims (SES): Since empathy is generated by similarities, citizens are more likely mobilized by a case of violence in which the SES level of the victim reflects their own SES. This would produce differences in *who* mobilizes for *which* victims. Though this may be true based on class alone, it is particularly salient in the case of the poor, who are often assumed to be involved in crime since violence is localized in lower SES neighborhoods. With little other information, low SES is often used as a proxy for criminal status.

Local origin of victim: Citizens may be more or less likely mobilized by a given case of violence depending on whether the victim is from Monterrey or from another state (*"un foráneo"*). This distinction highlights *differences* rather than similarities between individuals and may therefore depress empathy. These differences are further accentuated by drug war violence. The state, media, and citizens often portray much of the violence as involving *foráneos*, but not *Regios*. For example, three men were shot outside a bar in San Pedro during my fieldwork. My participants, the media, and the mayor of San Pedro went to great lengths to note that the men were not from there and the incident had no links to San Pedro. Rather, the Mayor explained,

> it was just an execution, they could have killed them in San Pedro, or in some other place… it was an isolated incident…These people, who I understand one was from Sinaloa and the other from Mexico state, came to hang out in this public space in San Pedro and they followed them and killed them here, but it doesn't have anything to do with the daily life of the city.[1]

[1] Mauricio Fernandez, Mayor of San Pedro, 4 May 2017 as qtd. in Hernández, Emmanuel and Jonathán Tapia. 2017.

In sum, the distinction between *foráneos* and *Regios* is one way that *differences* rather than similarities between direct victims and indirect victims in Monterrey are accentuated.

Location of violent event: An event's location may matter in several ways, all of which are related to the empathy politics thesis. At the individual level, locations that are culturally or socially emblematic for citizens may be more likely to activate a large group of citizens' empathy because their emotional connection to the locale produces a sense of personal victimization when the location becomes a site of violence, as I outlined in Chapter 3. At the same time, locations have character much like people do. This means that certain places can imply "similarities" and "differences" to any given citizen, based on the location's character. An attack in a location associated with the wealthy, for example, is unlikely to generate a sense of similarity or "it could have been me" among the poor.

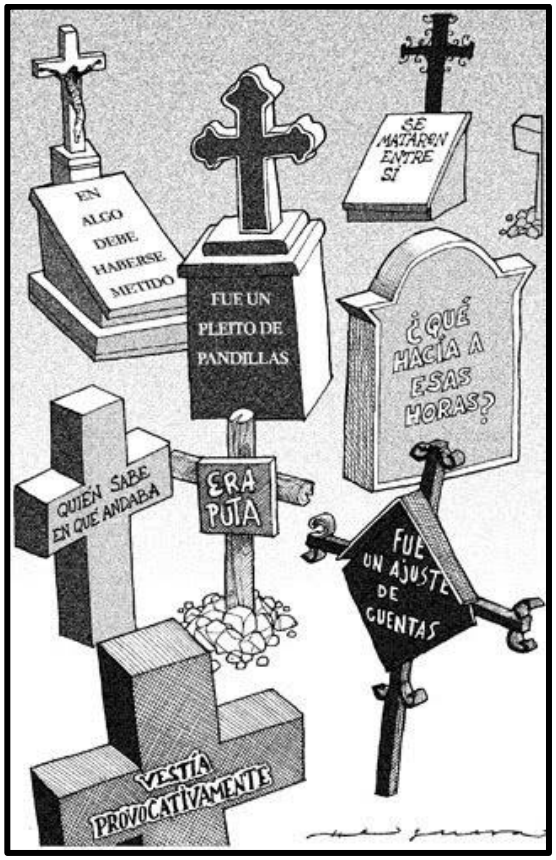
Factors related to both moral shock and empathy politics

Media attention: Citizens have to know about a violent event in order to respond to it, regardless of whether that response is motivated by moral shock or empathy. Mass media attention is indicative of likely citizen awareness of a case of violence.

Perceived criminal status of victims: The victims' criminal status may factor into both moral shock explanations and the empathy politics theory. Moral shock, remember, is generated by unjust actions, usually by the state. So, violent events in which the victim is portrayed as being involved in crime are unlikely to generate protest mobilization because there is no perceived injustice. In the empathy politics theory, meanwhile, criminalizing the victim may be a way to depress empathy and stifle protest, consciously or otherwise. Why? Recall that empathy is invoked through the perception of shared similarities with victims. In Mexico, the *differences*

between drug war victims and all others are heightened through the criminalization of victims. "Criminalization" refers to the presumption that all victims of violence are involved in organized crime or drug trafficking. The state and media propagate this narrative by telling citizens that all violence is between gangs or that only those that are "involved" in something become targets of violence (see Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. ***"Morir en México" ("To die in Mexico")*** [2]
Political cartoon by Antonio Helguera;
15 March, 2010. *La Jornada*



[2] My translation, clockwise from top left: "S/he must have been involved in something;" "It was a conflict between gangs;" "They were just killing amonst themselves;" "What was s/he doing at these hours?" "It was a settling of accounts;" 'S/he dressed provocatively;" "Who knows what s/he was involved in;" "She was a slut."

When citizens see victims as criminals, the differences between them are clear: "I am not a criminal, so I am not like them." This also means that citizens are less likely to feel personally vulnerable by exposure to violent events in which the victims are portrayed as criminals because violence does not happen to innocent people "like me." Criminalizing victims thus provides a powerful check on empathy (see also Schedler 2015, 221-222). I call this widespread victim-blaming "the criminalization narrative" and discuss it further later in the chapter.

Case Analysis: The massacres at Cafe Iguana, Sabino Gordo, and Casino Royale

I use these nine factors to analyze three cases of drug war violence in Monterrey: the massacres at Cafe Iguana, Sabino Gordo, and Casino Royale. All three cases received substantial media attention, making them potential focal points of civic mobilization. Yet, only two of the three actualized this potential. In this section, I evaluate the presence vs. absence of each of the nine factors to evaluate the role that empathy, rather than moral shock, plays in provoking citizens to civic engagement. These three cases each involve violence against businesses where citizens go for diversion or entertainment – one casino, and two nightclubs. It is suspected that each business was targeted for not paying criminal extortion fees, so intent of the perpetrator is held constant. For this reason, we can also reasonably assume that the violence is not related to the victims' identities since the motive was directed toward the business, not the individuals inside. All three cases involve a large quantity of victims, between four and 53. Each of the incidents occurred in Monterrey municipality within a period of four months. This period is between election cycles so local government and political context is held constant. Policing and military institutions and the criminal context are also held constant by this timeframe. Each of the three cases received significant mainstream media attention, making them potential catalysts

of mass civic mobilization since a wide population of citizens would have been exposed to the event. Lastly, the cases vary on the dependent variable. That is, two of the cases sparked public demonstrations while one of the cases did not. In this section I first describe each event and the consequent civic mobilization response. Later, I analyze the events along the previously defined independent variable factors.

The Café Iguana Massacre: 22 May 2011

Café Iguana is a popular nightclub and music venue in Monterrey's historic and trendy *Barrio Antiguo* [Old Town], just steps away from municipal and state government offices. Up until violence and extortion closed the venue and many like it in Barrio Antiguo, this club was internationally known for hosting up-and-coming rock alternative musicians from Mexico and beyond. Frequented by the younger stratum of the middle and middle-upper classes, Café Iguana was a focal point of Monterrey nightlife and had been since its opening in 1991.

The venue was not characterized by illegality but it was an open secret that a local, low-level dealer sold marijuana and cocaine to club patrons out of Café Iguana's bathroom. The club was not otherwise linked to major crime. In fact, Café Iguana is believed to have been targeted by crime groups for resisting extortion. In the early morning hours of May 22, 2011, as the club celebrated its 20-year anniversary, armed men drove by and fired upon the Café Iguana building. Dozens of patrons were lingering in the street outside the club and four people died from gunshot wounds. An unknown number of people were wounded. Local police were just blocks from the incident yet did not respond to the scene for 15 minutes. During the time between the shooting and law enforcement's arrival, the armed men returned to Iguana and stole the bodies of three of

the four victims. Two of the dead were Café Iguana security guards who were beloved by Iguana regulars. Little is known about the other two victims whose bodies were stolen.

The delayed arrival of the police officers became a point of contention. According to many, the officers on duty intentionally delayed responding to the shooting because they had received explicit instructions from the criminal group to allow them enough time to steal the bodies. The eight officers on duty that night would soon be suspended from work while local authorities investigated potential collusion between the officers and organized crime.

Almost immediately the following day, Café Iguana was bombarded by citizens with posters, flowers, candles, and messages in support of Café Iguana and the victims. Others called for an end to the violence and criticized the state for not being able to protect its citizens from insecurity. A protest was organized for later that same day (see Figure 4.2). Though the demonstration was peaceful, media and government demonized the demonstrators, accused them of inciting violence, and sent local police to monitor the event. In addition to these physical demonstration activities, there was also enough substantive reaction on social media to attract international attention to the incident.

The government and media treatment of the Café Iguana massacre was measured and restrained. Headlines announcing the event were terse: *"Four Executed in Barrio Antiguo"* (El Norte 2011a); *"A Violent Day"* (Reforma 2011); "*Three bodies stolen in front of police"* (El Norte 2011b). The state's rendition of events and the media's coverage of it was similarly measured:

> A spokesperson for the State Security Council told EFE that armed men driving along Diego de Montemayor street fired long-range weapons at those who were standing in the entrance of the busy locale. After the attack, three men were left dead in front of the bar and one more was left fallen between some cars. Of the dead, three of them were removed from the site by a group of unknown individuals who, after the event, arrived to the area and left without being stopped by the police, who were already there (EFE 2011).

Television news reports were similarly concise, sticking to the basic facts of the event and avoiding speculation about the victims, the space, or the reason for the attack.[3] I did not find any mass media reports linking Café Iguana or the victims with organized crime, drugs or other illicit activities in any way. This includes omitting reference to the low-level drug sales that were known to take place there. In fact, like the headlines displayed above, most media portrayals do not even include the words "crime," "criminal" or "drugs".

Figure 4.2. Demonstrators convene outside Café Iguana
Photographer: Unknown[4]

The Sabino Gordo Massacre: 8 July 2011

Just over six weeks later, a strikingly similar incident occurred at another popular nightclub, Sabino Gordo. Sabino Gordo is located in Monterrey's Red-Light district and is "a place with a many-years tradition in this capital, where Monterrey's citizens come to enjoy a

[3] See for example the following broadcast: Milenio. "Ejecutan a 4 en Barrio Antiguo." May 22, 2011. Television. Accessible at: https://youtu.be/zRNw2ZQqUyw

[4] Accessed on 12 February 2018 at http://www.labandaelastica.com/fotos/caf%C3%A9-iguana-fotos#sthash.KEAR9jvg.dpbs

drink and to dance."[5] Though a local favorite of the lower SES (*gente de bajos recursos*), the club's sordid reputation is notorious amongst *Regios* of all social strata. The club was known to be enmeshed in the illegal. One could buy sex, drugs, and alcohol openly there, even during midday outside of legal hours. Public authorities sanctioned the business for illegal practices as far back as 2008 and the site had already been host to several murders come 2011. All this, in conjunction with its location in a disreputable zone known for human trafficking and other exploitations, gave Sabino Gordo a reputation for being an especially dangerous, ill-reputed place.

In the evening of July 8, 2011, armed men entered Sabino Gordo and began to shoot. An estimated 21 people were killed. Six others were wounded and eight more are thought to have been kidnapped. Of the dead, 18 were Sabino Gordo employees who some believe were *narcomenudistas*, or low-level drug vendors. The dead also included three female waitresses. One additional woman and one man who sold hot dogs outside the club were also killed. The event was perpetrated by a local crime group, either as retaliation for not paying extortion fees, or as part of a conflict between crime groups. Like in the Café Iguana incident, the police were the last to arrive.

Unlike the measured state and media portrayals of the Café Iguana massacre, Sabino Gordo's links to illicit activities were a focal point of the coverage surrounding Sabino Gordo. In its public responses to the event, the state emphasized Sabino Gordo's illicit elements, paying particular attention to its purported low-level drug sales. In a press conference, the public security spokesman for Nuevo León described basic facts about the victims – their age, gender, and relation to the bar – and noted that most were Sabino Gordo employees. He did not explicitly

[5] Spokesperson for the state public security bureau Zambrano Domene, as reported by Notimex 2011.

say the victims were involved in crime, but he effectively linked the victims with the bar's criminal reputation by underscoring that the event was due to a conflict between crime groups, was singly "directed against employees of the bar," and detailing the bar's alleged involvement in drug sales before linking the incident to the drug war writ large:

> It is very clear that this is a place where drugs were sold, cocaine specifically, through a person named Alonso and nicknamed *El Botellero*, who is wanted by authorities…Again, these very unfortunate events occurred as part of a recurring issue with a common denominator - the dealing, consumption, and purchasing of drugs. [6]

The official goes on to note that authorities investigating inside the bar "found dosages of cocaine, empty bags with traces of crack cocaine and there is clear evidence that this was a point of sale for drugs" (ibid.).

The media picked up on these details and followed the state's lead, often favoring the criminal aspects of the story over information about the victims. Typical headlines read, *"Massacre in Nuevo León Bar, fight between gangs*" (Notimex. 2011b); "*For drug sales, 20 people killed in Monterrey bar*" (Redaccion, Notimex, y Monica Luna. 2011); and "*Cocaine found in Monterrey bar where 19 massacred*" (Redaccion 2011). Others recounted the sordid and violent history of Sabino Gordo, noted its past infractions, murders, and the violent reputation of the neighborhood. In one television segment, Telediario summarizes the public security department's press conference in just two sentences: "Multiple homicide was among rival groups. During press conference, Nuevo León security spokesperson indicated the site was a point of sale for drugs" (Gonzalez 2011).

Citizen response to the Sabino Gordo massacre was notably absent. Although the incident sparked dismay from international audiences the day it happened, the response from citizens in

[6] Jorge Domene Zambrano, Spokesperson for Nuevo León Public Security, as qtd. in Redaccion, Notimex, y Monica Luna. 2011.

Monterrey was relegated to social media outlets. There was no public demonstration in support of the victims of Sabino Gordo from *Regios* more broadly. One local activist observed,

> Comparing the two shootings [Café Iguana and Sabino Gordo], Sabino Gordo clearly being the more scandalous, we detected an elusive but constant feature of the management of priorities and information in Monterrey's drug war – the zoning of the city and classes in the order of victims… (Rizzo 2011)

The Casino Royale Massacre: 25 August 2011

Just over an additional six weeks later, another massacre would befall one of Monterrey's pillars of social life: Casino Royale. Casinos are largely associated with the middle classes because frequenting them is a common pastime of this socioeconomic sector. There is no evidence suggesting Casino Royale participated in or supported illegal activities, though many organized crime groups do use casinos to launder money and/or exploit drug and alcohol sales. Most accounts suggest that Casino Royale was attacked for failing to pay criminal group extortion fees.

By body count, the Casino Royale massacre is the worst attack against civilians in the drug war in Nuevo León and, up until that time, in contemporary Mexico. At 3:45 PM, an armed command set fire to the casino. Hundreds of patrons were inside the casino when the fire began and soon found themselves trapped inside the burning building. The majority of casino patrons and employees at that time of day were women and senior citizens. Though the final death toll is disputed, officials report that 52 people died in the fire: 10 men and 42 women, two of whom were pregnant.

Who was to blame for this substantial loss of life? No one disputes that criminals started the fire and may have even locked exits in order to trap patrons inside. However, the preponderance of blame and the consequent shaming from citizens was directed primarily at the

state. According to most accounts, the extraordinary number of dead in Casino Royale was a result of the casino owners' failure to maintain proper emergency exits and the state's failure to properly oversee and sanction the Casino for such negligence. Still others criticize the state for calling off fire and police rescue efforts early and others, including the then-Mayor of Monterrey, allege that if the casino had been shut down when it was supposed to be by other government officials, the massacre would never have occurred. These multiple elements of negligence led the preponderance of blame to fall on government authorities, even though the act was initiated by criminal elements.

State and media responses were impassioned. Reports clearly indicated that the Zetas criminal group was behind the fire. However, reports did not link either the Casino or the victims to organized crime other than to note the extortion payments the Casino likely paid the Zetas prior to the fire. In addition to blaming the Zetas, media and local government officials underscored the failures of other local and national government officials to prevent the crime. Then-mayor Fernando Larrazábal attested that he closed the casino the previous year for "irregularities," which would have prevented the fire, but a judge later reversed the order (Camarena 2011; Vega 2011). Nuevo León's then-Governor, Rodrigo Medina, made a similar argument when he blamed President Felipe Calderón and his federal government for allowing casinos in the country at all (Camarena 2011). For his part, Calderón reminded public audiences that United States drug consumption habits were at the root of violence and insecurity in Mexico (ibid.).

With so much blame swirling, it is remarkable that there was no attempt to link the victims with crime or to otherwise blame them. On the contrary, both local and national leaders called for national unity in support of the victims (Camarena 2011; Carrizales 2011). President

Calderón called for three days of national mourning and declared that the Casino Royale incident demonstrated that the country was being attacked by "real terrorists" in the form of organized crime (ibid.). The media reflected this emphasis on the criminality of the Zetas vs. the innocence of the victims, paired with allegations of government negligence. Typical headlines addressing the event read: "*Terror in Casino Royale of Monterrey; the Zetas behind the attack*" (Vega 2011); "*53 dead in attack on casino of Monterrey*" (Casas, Blancas Madrigal, Tellez Cortes 2011); *"The attack on Casino Royale, a criminal challenge against society and government*" (Torres 2011). Like in the Café Iguana case, there were few if any attempts to link Casino Royale or the victims of the event to drugs or other illicit activities. On the contrary, accounts of Casino Royale appeared to heighten the distinctions between the Zeta perpetrators, who were labeled "barbaric" and "terrorists"[7] and the innocent victims.

The public outcry provoked by the Casino Royale massacre was immediate and "enormous" (González – Ramírez 2015, 56). A protest demonstration was organized for three days later. Unlike other protests in response to violence, however, the Casino Royale case received national and international notoriety that generated financial support. Some of these funds paid for newspaper publicity advertising the protest, which helps explain the remarkable size of the event. The protest took place on August 28 and more than 4,000 people participated. State negligence was a primary grievance in this demonstration. Appropriately, the protest was localized in the state capital, ultimately convening in front of the Governor's palace (see Figure 4.3).

[7] Then-president Felipe Calderón, as qtd. in Camarena 2011.

Figure 4.3. Protestors descend on Monterrey's capitol plaza during the Casino Royale demonstration
Photo: Arnulfo Franco (Associated Press)

Comparative Analysis and Discussion

The massacres at Café Iguana, Sabino Gordo, and Casino Royale were remarkably similar. In all three cases, criminal elements attacked prominent sites of Monterrey social life, killing large numbers of citizens. Yet, the Café Iguana and Casino Royale incidents sparked mass civic mobilization in the form of public demonstrations while the Sabino Gordo massacre was met with relative ambivalence. Why? To shed light on this puzzle, I systematically compare the cases along the nine attributes outlined previously. The comparative analysis suggests that event characteristics hypothesized to influence citizens' feelings of empathy are common between those events that resulted in protest demonstrations (Casino Royale and Café Iguana) and different in the case of violence that did not result in protest demonstrations (Sabino Gordo). Characteristics indicative of moral shock, meanwhile are not consistent with theoretical expectations. In this section, I first guide the reader through the comparison of each of the nine factors (see Table 4.2). I then elaborate how the attributes identified as important by the

comparative analysis may have worked together to depress citizen empathy for Sabino Gordo victims and amplify empathy for victims of Casino Royale and Café Iguana.

Several event attributes were similar across the three cases and thus are not likely key factors in understanding the varying civic mobilization outcomes. This includes spectacle violence (moral shock thesis), identity of the perpetrator (moral shock thesis), and whether or not the victims were *foráneos* (empathy politics factor).[8] In all three cases, there were no characteristics of spectacle violence, the victims were not identified as *foráneos*, and the perpetrators were criminal organizations. Since these variables were held constant and thus cannot factor into the observed variation, I removed them from Table 4.2 for ease of readability.

Table 4.2. Comparative analysis of violent event characteristics

Case	Date	Location	# Victims	Victim SES	Victim Criminal?	State Wrongdoing	Protest?
Sabino Gordo	07/2011	Symbolic for lower SES	27	Lower	1	0	0
Casino Royale	08/2011	Symbolic for middle classes	53	Middle Class	0	1	1
Café Iguana	05/2011	Symbolic for middle-upper classes	4	Middle-to-Upper Class	0	1	1

There is variation among the cases along the remaining variables, which include variables indicative of both moral shock and factors potentially related to processes of empathy.

Factors related to moral shock

Number of Victims: There were about twice as many victims in the Casino Royale fire than in the Sabino Gordo massacre, which might suggest why there was such a dramatic public reaction to Casino Royale vs. Sabino Gordo. However, if greater numbers of dead explained civic

[8] *Foráneo* status is hypothesized to be one attribute - not the only attribute - that can shape empathy for drug war victims among *Regios*. Since none of these victims were *foráneos*, I cannot assess this factor here.

mobilization, then the response to the Café Iguana shooting should not have provoked the reaction it did since it resulted in just four victims. The dramatic citizen responses to the Casino Royale fire and the Café Iguana shooting are more similar to each other than to the nearly absent public response to Sabino Gordo, despite the fact that Sabino Gordo had nearly seven times more victims than Café Iguana. Number of victims does not appear relevant in shaping protest mobilization.

Perceived government malfeasance: Perceived government malfeasance existed in all three cases, but it was more similar in the case of Café Iguana and Sabino Gordo, where police were late to arrive on the scene to both incidents and perceived inept at best and corrupt at worst. In the case of Casino Royale, in contrast, the allegations were more removed. Many allege the loss of life could have been avoided if the government had properly regulated the casino and if the government had adequately searched for survivors after the fire. Government malfeasance thus does not help us understand why protests emerged in response to Café Iguana but not Sabino Gordo, despite the similarities of the malfeasance.

Factors related to empathy politics

There are two remaining attributes that are similar in both positive cases of public demonstrations, Café Iguana and Casino Royale, but different in the one negative case, Sabino Gordo: victim's perceived criminal status and victim's SES, both of which may be related to empathic processes. In this section, I describe how these two attributes factor into producing or suppressing empathy for drug war victims at the individual level. Next, I explore how these events' location at emblematic sites in Monterrey may have shaped civic mobilization patterns in the way the empathy politics thesis would expect.

Perceived criminal status of victim: As noted in prior sections, there is a potent criminalization narrative surrounding drug violence that often links victims of violence with criminality or otherwise blames them for their own death. The empathy politics thesis hypothesizes that the criminalization of victims will *depress* empathy for victims and thus proscribe civic mobilization as a response to violence. This narrative was clearly articulated in the Sabino Gordo massacre, in which the state and media unambiguously linked the incident and the bar itself to local crime and to the drug war more broadly. On top of this, the bar's reputation as a disreputable site of vice likely aligned with citizens' pre-existing ideas about the bar and about drug violence. The state and media's attention to Sabino Gordo's illicit activities supports and advances that view by connoting blame on the bar: if the bar were not involved in drug sales, the attack would not have happened. In doing so, the bar and its employees become responsible for their own deaths rather than the criminal group that perpetrated the act. As Rizzo (2011) observed,

> The waiters of Sabino Gordo have been blamed for the attack, without addressing for one moment the owner of the bar who introduced or tolerated the [drug] business. The faces of the most needy and the most 'shameless' are being conveniently used as escape mechanisms from the responsibility of the social, political, and economic actors [at work] in this climate of complex violence.

The criminalization of Sabino Gordo victims stands in contrast to the treatment of Café Iguana and Casino Royale victims. Neither the state nor the media attempted to link the victims of either incident with crime, even though they could have. Drugs were sold at Café Iguana and casinos are often portrayed as centers of vice, though this one seemingly escaped that demonization. The fact that the criminalization of victims was present only in the one case that did not provoke civic mobilization, Sabino Gordo, suggests that the criminalization of victims may have helped shape whether or not citizens were prompted to "do something" in response to this event.

Class standing of victim (SES): The empathy politics thesis hypothesizes that citizens may be more likely to mobilize in favor of victims from their same SES and less likely to mobilize for those from a different SES. The SES of victims is common to the two positive cases of civic mobilization, Café Iguana and Casino Royale, and different in Sabino Gordo. The victims of Sabino Gordo were *gente de bajos recursos*, or the poor. The victims of Café Iguana and Casino Royale were middle and middle-to-upper class. This suggests that political responses to violence are mediated by class status of the victims, which again, the empathy politics thesis would expect. SES is an easily identifiable similarity (or difference) that is applicable across broad subsets of a population. Empathy politics would expect that indirect victims are more likely to feel empathy for victims from their same socioeconomic class and, in turn, are more likely to mobilize in response to those cases of violence. In the case of Sabino Gordo, the remarkably low SES of the victims likely made it difficult for citizens across a wide strata of other SES levels to empathize with the victims. Sex work, bartending, or waitressing in a dangerous part of town is not an experience that most citizens would have in common with the employees of Sabino Gordo. In fact, most citizens of Monterrey would never have visited that part of town.

One local journalist admonished the city's residents for treating the Sabino Gordo victims as "second-class victims" simply being for poor.[9] And, one contingent of activists was so appalled by the lack of regard for Sabino Gordo victims that it initiated an awareness campaign – *They are not statistics, they have names* – in order to spark empathy among *Regios*:

> There are no wrong places or wrong times. We call for a critical review of the facts, for the dignity of life and work, however humble it may be, there are no first-order or second-order *Regios*, the life of a student, a sex-worker or a waiter is worth the same as the lives of public officials. The same. Every death matters to us, each one of those people had a name, a story, family, mother, father, children, spouse, friends, a home where people are waiting for them, **just like every one of us** (emphasis mine; as qtd. in González-Ramírez 2015, 27).

[9] Diego Enrique Osorno, as cited in González-Ramírez 2015, 27.

Café Iguana and Casino Royale, meanwhile, were both mainstays of the middle classes. Empathy politics would accordingly expect these two events to facilitate feelings of empathy among indirect victims from the middle classes. Why? In the case of Casino Royale, class affiliation and the location's symbolic ties to the middle classes would facilitate indirect victims' imagining themselves or their loved ones in the shoes of the Casino's victims in a way that they could not for the victims of Sabino Gordo. This is partly due to their SES alone, but also because many of them would have been to a casino before or, at the very least, knew people among their social circle that frequented casinos. This ability to identify with Casino Royale and its victims created a sense of personal vulnerability among the middle classes that, again, was likely not produced by the Sabino Gordo massacre. I observed this sense of vulnerability among many of my research participants. Guillermo, for example, intimated that he thinks of Casino Royale as one of his biggest fears: "My family, for example, likes to go to the casinos, so I think of Casino Royale and worry about something like that happening to them."[10] Manuel, meanwhile, noted that the participants in protests against the Casino Royal fire were largely from the middle and upper classes: "Casino Royale attracted more people from the middle and upper classes…I think because casinos are particular to that sector. You have to have money to go spend at them, so naturally they are places associated with those classes."[11]

Empathy for Whom? When criminalization of victims and victim SES interact

It is not surprising that both criminalization of victims and victim SES come to the fore in this comparative analysis. This is, in fact, what the empathy politics thesis would expect in the Mexico context, where it is common for citizens of higher SES to view the poor in general as

[10] Interview with Guillermo, April 2017 (Monterrey)

[11] Interview with Manuel, May 2017 (San Pedro)

"criminal," and "dangerous" so that *poor* and *criminal* become one-and-the-same. I argue that both work together to suppress feelings of empathy for poor victims and, as a consequence, civic action on behalf of the poor. When paired, these two attributes are particularly powerful suppressants of empathy because they accentuate and merge two of the most widely-encompassing differences between direct victims and indirect victims in Monterrey: the poor vs. the non-poor, and the criminal vs. the innocent. This makes violence involving poor victims, (which is most drug war violence), particularly distant from the experiences and imaginations of many indirect victims, particularly those from the middle and upper classes who, coincidentally, also have the greatest resources to channel into political engagement and the most sociopolitical and economic power to effect change. As a result, empathy for poor victims among these indirect victims is unlikely and civic mobilization on their behalf improbable, implying a *political economy of empathy.* This lack of empathy and tendency to criminalize the poor was a common source of frustration among the lower SES with whom I worked. One informant's comments epitomize this grievance:

> Our neighborhood has a bad reputation. They think of [the neighborhood] and they think that we're all violent and that we're all criminals. I'm not saying there are no bad people here, but the majority of us are good people, good people that are hard workers and who want to do good in our community, just like everyone else. I wish I could make them see that.[12]

The empathic nature of emblematic spaces

Recall that the empathy politics thesis hypothesizes that a) locations that are culturally or socially emblematic for citizens may be more likely to activate citizens' empathy because their emotional connection to the locale produces a sense of personal victimization when the location becomes a site of violence; and b) certain places can shape empathic emotions by implying "similarities"

[12] Interview with Susana, June 2017 (Monterrey)

and "differences" to any given citizen based on the location's character (i.e., a place characteristics of the rich vs. the poor). In the current comparative analysis, all three cases of violence occurred in sites that were symbolic for many *Regios.* At first glance, this similarity between all the cases would lead one to eliminate "location" as an explanatory variable. However, this would be unwise because individual-level evidence suggests that many citizens did indeed respond to these cases because the location was personally meaningful to them. However, not all locations have significance for all people. As I outlined at the start of this chapter, it is important to recognize that empathy is an individual-level, cognitive mechanism that varies from person to person. The comparative analysis revealed that, as an individual-level theory would suggest, it is not enough to ask, "Is the location symbolic?" We must instead ask, "Is the location symbolic and *for whom*?"

Sabino Gordo, for example, was symbolic among all *Regios.* However, while the popular classes viewed it as a "traditional" site of entertainment, for middle and upper classes it was emblematic of Monterrey's seedy underbelly – a form of criminalization of *place* rather than of victims. This would have made the site less meaningful to the middle and upper classes. Casinos, meanwhile, are particularly symbolic of and meaningful for the middle classes. Cafe Iguana is similarly associated with the middle and middle-to-upper classes. Café Iguana is located in the Barrio Antiguo neighborhood, the center of Monterrey culture and history and what many call "the heart of the city." For this reason, many observers and research participants noted that attacking Café Iguana was like attacking the whole of Monterrey. One local singer, for example, remarked, "They gunned down the heart of Monterrey. For me, this was the end of the world" (La Banda Elastica, nd).

These varying conceptions of emblematic spaces shed light on why some individuals reacted so strongly to some events and not others. Moreover, the evidence suggests that they reacted in the way that the empathy politics thesis would expect. That is, they felt personally victimized when that place in particular became a site of violence. Consider, for example, the following examples of responses to the Café Iguana massacre. A local songwriter lamented, "It's an emblematic place for all the musicians and for our generation. It's impossible not to take it personally" (ibid.). A local blogger, "Alberto," expressed similar sentiments that highlight how this particular event impacted him in ways that so many other cases of violence in the city had not because of his personal identification with the location:

> I know, it's not even the first shootout in the city, nor the first to befall people that I know, but many people will agree with me that this one hurts because, for 20 years, this place has been a point of reference for many of us, in different times, but many of us have lived unforgettable moments that mark our youth, we've met people and good friends, attended countless shows and concerts there, and – why not say it? – enjoyed their famous pizza. And the occurrence of something happening like what happened here in this place, it sincerely hurts all of us who felt or came to feel this place as part of our life, as part of our routine (Alberto 2011).

Summary of the Evidence

In sum, the comparative case evidence suggests that three key attributes indicative of the empathy politics theory, SES of the victims, criminalization of the victims, and location of the event, worked together to suppress empathy for Sabino Gordo victims and activate it for Café Iguana and Casino Royale victims. This resulted in large public demonstrations in response to the latter and relative ambivalence in response to the former. I argue this is so because these attributes contribute to the shifting of citizen empathy either toward (in the case of Café Iguana and Casino Royale) or away (in the case of Sabino Gordo) from the events' victims. When evaluated relative to the rival explanation, moral shock, empathy politics rises to the fore.

Empathy politics and social movements: hypotheses for future research

The comparative analysis suggests that empathy politics may play a role in shaping the occurrence of protest mobilization by making a critical mass of citizens politically available for participation in such protests. At the same time, the evidence points toward a number of additional ways that empathy may matter, particularly as it relates to protest mobilization. There are a number of explanations for how, why, and when movements come to mobilize. Some explanations focus on the overarching political context that creates the conditions for (or against) political mobilization (Eisinger 1973; Kriesi, 1995; Tarrow 1998; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) while others focus on the mobilizing tactics of the movements themselves (Mayer and Zald 1977). Still others (like this dissertation) emphasize the individual-level factors that make one more or less likely to participate in a social movement (see Klandermans 2015 for a summary of individual-level motives for participation), along with other accounts that emphasize the broader social network in which those individuals are embedded (McAdam 1986; Jasper and Poulsen 1995). In this section, I explore movement-level factors that may pull those individuals into participation (like empathy-based narratives), to draw hypothetical links between individuals and the larger political organizations and structures that give shape to broader collective action. In doing so, I outline a number of compelling research questions that investigate a plausible relationship between empathy and processes of social movement mobilization beyond individual-level factors.

Empathy and Social Movement Narratives

Here, I focus on the role that empathy-based narratives may play in both provoking and depressing political mobilization. Narratives are an account of an event or phenomena in which

the account is told in such a way so as to advance a particular claim. They are usually story-like, involving characters and plot woven together in order to explain complex outcomes simply. They often draw on the existing social and political context so that the stories motivating the narrative (in this case instances of violence) are familiar and easy-to-understand for broad audiences (Polletta and Gardner 2015, 535 – 536). Narratives play an important role in movements' political mobilization strategies because they help audiences understand one-off events, such as the three cases I describe in this chapter, as part of a larger pattern or story about societal ills. In the United States, for example, Schmidt (2013) shows how the Mothers against Drunk Driving (MADD) organization portrays driving under the influence as a social problem worthy of collective grievance through weaving their personal stories into a larger, societal one (as cited in Flam 2015). Social movements are also known to craft narratives so as to generate moral shock and, in doing so, to gain support for their cause and recruit participants (Jasper and Poulsen 1995). So, just as social movements are known to construct narratives of moral shock, so too can we imagine narratives centered around generating empathy for direct victims of violence. Theorists have outlined a number of important components for effective narratives, from drawing on existing ideological beliefs (Haltom and McCann 2009) to stories based on threat of cataclysm (Stewart 2012), but the role that empathy plays has not been interrogated.[13]

To what degree do social movements draw on empathy to construct movement narratives and mobilize supporters? When we contrast the protest mobilizations that emerged in response to the Casino Royale and Café Iguana massacres with the absence of such mobilization in response to the Sabino Gordo case, the role of empathy among supporters appears important. This was made particularly clear in the case of Sabino Gordo, whose few allies cited lack of empathy as

[13] As cited in Polletta and Gardner 2015.

the cause of citizen apathy toward this case. They even attempted to invoke empathy by reminding citizens that Sabino Gordo's victims were mothers, fathers, workers, etc. "just like you and me." This suggests that social movements may leverage empathic processes to garner support for their cause, a hypothesis that warrants future research.

What is more, the comparative case analysis suggests that states, like social movements, wield empathy-based narratives as political tools. The patterns revealed in this chapter suggest that the Mexican state's criminalization narrative plays an important role in stifling citizen responses to violence, like protest mobilizations, and may do so through the mechanism of empathy. This prompts a second and similar question for future research: to what degree do states leverage processes of empathy in constructing political narratives? While this question is particularly relevant in contexts of violence like those studied in this dissertation, its pertinence is much broader. Kwon (2017) observed that politicians in general draw on processes of empathy to drum up political support:

> Even stories, which are powerful methods to induce empathy for oppressed or mistreated groups, are not always used for good. This is evident in political rhetoric, where politicians like Donald Trump use empathy to manipulate. Trump harnesses the strong emotional responses evoked by drawing attention to victims of terrorist attacks in Western countries to encourage people to support anti-immigration policies and turn away refugees (30).

Protest for Whom?

Like the empathy politics thesis would expect, the comparative analysis suggested that protest mobilizations are more or less likely depending on the profiles of the victims and which members among society are more likely to sense an empathic link with those profiles. In what I called a "political economy of empathy," the evidence in this chapter suggested that victims who are more similar to the middle and upper classes are more likely to result in a protest mobilization since these classes have greater social, economic, and political resources to do so.

The question of *which profiles of victim* generate empathy among those with political power carries weighty implications for how we think about the role of empathy in social movements and protest mobilization. In the last section, I hypothesized that movements (and states) leverage empathy to construct a movement narrative. However, not all narratives – nor the stories that undergird them – are equally compelling or effective in mobilizing support. More importantly, not all narratives are equally compelling to those with the power and resources to take political action. Polletta and Gardner (2015) write

> Activists use stories to mobilize participants, enlist supporters, and influence decision makers. Stories, in this sense, are strategic. But stories also figure as cultural backdrop against which activists' stories (as well as the claims they advance by way of stories) are heard. These background stories help determine whether activists' claims are treated as plausible, exaggerated, as morally compelling or as trivial, as coherent or nonsensical. These stories are important also because, insofar as they undergird policy making, they generate advantages for some groups rather than others (535).

This prompts a prescient and intriguing research question for our understanding of the relationship between victimization and protest mobilization: whose stories are politically compelling? And, what role does empathy play in their persuasiveness?

Based on the analysis in this dissertation and in this chapter in particular, we can hypothesize that stories and narratives that feature not only empathy but empathy for a victim with whom the middle and upper classes (those with the power and resources to enact political change) can identify serves as a more powerful story than those featuring alternative stories, namely the stories of poor, criminalized victims. If true, we would likely find these victims' stories sidelined in movement narratives in favor of the rarer but more politically evocative stories of the middle and upper classes. The preliminary evidence I presented here supports that hypothesis, though additional research is necessary.

Violence and Political Opportunity Structures: Why don't the poor mobilize on behalf of the poor?

The relationship between SES, the criminalization of victims and empathy revealed by the comparative analysis suggests processes of empathy may be relevant in processes of protest mobilization. Specifically, it suggests why – at the individual level - middle classes would mobilize in response to violent events involving middle-class victims (like Casino Royale and Café Iguana) and would not be similarly provoked by events involving victims of other classes, particularly the poor (like Sabino Gordo). It also prompts us to question the degree to which social movements, recognizing the political import of empathy, capitalize on those cases of violence that are more likely to attract citizens with greater political, social, and economic power (the middle and upper classes) to their side.

However, this leaves one important question unanswered: why don't the poor mobilize on behalf of the poor? If my theory of empathy politics were true and indirect victims are expected to mobilize on behalf of individuals "like" themselves, at the individual level we should have seen citizens of lower SES mobilize on behalf of the victims of Sabino Gordo, but we did not. There are at least two potential explanations for this outcome. First, it is possible that the criminalization narrative supersedes class identification. If this were true, victims of lower SES that are criminalized are not likely to elicit civic mobilization even among other poor citizens. It may also be true that citizens of lower SES do feel empathy for other poor victims but face distinct barriers to political mobilization that other classes do not, a hypothesis that is supported by existing scholarship revealing a positive correlation between SES and political participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995).

This question also holds implications for theories of social movements. Structural theories suggest that variation in how open or closed overarching political structures are to citizen political dissent shapes whether and how protest mobilizations manifest (Eisinger 1973; Tarrow 1998). In more constrained political contexts where civil society participation in political processes is discouraged, it is expected that social mobilization will be less frequent but more radical (Kriesi 1995).[14] The converse – that is, more frequent but less radical social mobilization – is expected in more open political contexts. Marxists approaches further suggest that the poor have the least power and resources through which to exercise political voice, particularly when the political opportunity structure is limited (Piven and Cloward 1977).[15] Yet, it is also suggested that times of crisis open up opportunities for the poor to participate because crises conditions disrupt the normal order of things (ibid.). Thus, we might expect Monterrey's poor to have *more political voice* and that collective mobilization among the lower SES is *more likely* during political crises caused by the violence. Again, this question cannot be answered with the evidence collected for this dissertation, but the question is compelling and merits future investigation about the relationship between violence and protest mobilization, particularly in violent democracies: does violence affect existing structures of political opportunity? If so, how?

Conclusion

As I outlined at the start of this chapter, empathy is an individual-level mechanism. I do not claim that the event characteristics outlined here gained the same traction with all Monterrey citizens at the individual level, that the events sparked empathy among everyone, nor that the

[14] As cited in Císar 2015, 55.

[15] Ibid.

factors I laid out were interpreted similarly among all Monterrey citizens. This potential variation in individual-level responses shows why an individual-level theory of empathy politics is necessary and why the fine-grained, individual-level evidence I leverage in the remainder of the dissertation is so critical to fully understanding the individual-level relationship between violence, empathy, and civic life.

What I have outlined in this chapter is instead evidence of what we would expect at the event-level if my theory of empathy politics were true. The comparative case analysis, while preliminary, provides supportive evidence for the theory. The second contribution of this chapter is to generate a number of relevant research questions and hypotheses for future exploration about the relationship between empathy, violence, and social movement mobilization. The comparative case analysis highlighted three avenues in particular that merit future research:

1. To what degree do social movements draw on processes of empathy to construct movement narratives? To what degree do states draw on processes of empathy to stifle or foment political mobilization?

2. Within the "storytelling" associated with social movement narratives, *whose* stories are most compelling to those with the social, economic, and political resources to make political change?

3. Does sustained violence change the political opportunity structure? If so, how?

5. EMPATHY POLITICS: EXPERIMENTAL EVIDENCE

In this dissertation, I draw on qualitative evidence from Monterrey to describe how feelings of empathy with drug war victims roused indirect victims of Monterrey to civic action. These citizens pursued civic engagement after a case of violence moved them to imagine themselves in the place of the victim and, consequently, to sense their own vulnerability, despite not actually being victimized. Critically, this vicarious sense of vulnerability motivated citizens to pursue civic engagement not because they "felt sorry," for drug war victims but instead out of a desire to prevent their own victimization. The process I observed in this qualitative research led to the inductively-generated theory of empathy politics, summarized here:

> Indirect victims are more likely to pursue civic engagement after exposure to a violent event prompts them to imagine themselves in the place of the victim. This re-imagining occurs through perceived similarities with the victim. Taking the perspective of the victim in turn generates a vicarious sense of vulnerability. This vicarious vulnerability links the indirect victims with the plight of the victim, increasing the likelihood that indirect victims pursue preventative action in the form of civic activities addressing violence.

How well does my theory of empathy politics explain civic engagement outside the qualitative research sample that generated the theory? I test the theory in a number of ways. In the current chapter, I test the theory within the Mexican context but outside the context of Monterrey via an original survey experiment carried out with a nationally-representative sample

of voting-age Mexican residents. This section describes that survey experiment and analyses the results. Surprisingly, the experimental results do not confirm the theory. These results are particularly puzzling since other out-of-sample tests confirm the theory. In the last chapter (Chapter 4), I assessed one observable implication of the empathy politics theory, variation in protest demonstrations, which provided support for the theory. In the next chapter, I conduct statistical analysis of large-n survey data from three post-conflict societies: Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan. The findings from this out-of-sample test are also consistent with the empathy politics hypothesis (see Chapter 6). Appreciating that these other analyses provide evidence in support of the theory, this chapter explores reasons why the particular design of the nationally-representative survey experiment yielded results that contradict these other forms of evidence. I identify a mismatch between the theory and the experimental treatments as a likely cause of these outcomes and outline ways forward for a revised experiment that addresses this mismatch. The chapter proceeds as follows. I first describe the survey experiment design and implementation. I then analyze the results. After that, I identify reasons for the unexpected outcomes. In the final section, I outline a revised survey experiment to be carried out in Mexico.

Nationally-representative survey experiment

The purpose of the survey experiment is to assess the degree to which my theory of empathy politics explains a relationship between exposure to violence and future civic engagement outside the context in which the theory was developed, Monterrey. I developed a nationally-representative survey experiment in which individuals' sense of empathy toward victims of violence is first primed to varying degrees. Their interest in participating in a range of civic activities is then measured. I employ one main outcome variable, civic engagement, which

I define as individual and collective actions that aim to address issues of public concern. Since civic engagement may include more or less explicitly political actions or may engage political institutions to varying degrees, I disaggregate this concept into three categories of civic life: political participation (referring to activities with an explicit political mandate or that engage political institutions) and civic engagement (referring to activities of community engagement that may not have an explicit political mandate nor engage political institutions). A third category, anti-violence civic engagement, refers to activities with an explicit objective to address violence. The outcome is measured as the respondent's reported level of interest in these three categories of civic engagement. I derived the following hypotheses from my theory of empathy politics, which expects that individuals who feel empathy for victims of violence will express greater interest in participating in all three categories of civic engagement than individuals who do not feel empathy for victims.

> **H_1:** Respondents primed to feel empathy for victims of violence will express greater interest in civic engagement than those for whom empathy is depressed.

The Treatment and Survey Instrument[1]

The experimental instrument includes two treatment groups and one control, to which respondents were randomly assigned. All respondents read a brief news-style report about a hypothetical case of violence. Prior to reading that report, one treatment group heard a "low-empathy" prime (Stotland 1969; Toi and Batson 1982), which instructs them to read the report as objectively as possible. The purpose of this treatment is to *depress* empathy among survey respondents and make them less likely to feel empathy for victims by asking them to remain objective:

[1] The complete instrument is available in the Appendix to this chapter.

> *The report you will read does not describe a real case of violence, but it is similar to events that have happened in Mexico. As you read the report, please try to remain objective. Do not think so much about the people in the report, just focus on the facts.*

The second treatment group heard a "high-empathy" prime, which asks them to imagine themselves in the place of the victim. The purpose of this treatment is to *stimulate* empathy among survey respondents by asking them to imagine themselves in the shoes of the victim:

> *The report you will read does not describe a real case of violence, but it is similar to things that people like you have experienced. While you read the report, try to imagine that this event happened in your neighborhood to someone like you and that it could have happened to you.*

The control group receives no special instruction:

> *The report you will read does not describe a real case of violence, but it is similar to events that have happened in Mexico.*

All groups then read the same news vignette. This hypothetical case mimics news reports that Mexicans might hear, read, or watch on a daily basis:

> *Six people were killed Saturday night while they were waiting for public transportation in front of the grocery store on the main street. Witnesses report that the men arrived in vehicles and opened fire on the six individuals. The dead include three men and three women. The incident was reported at 8 pm.*

The experimental treatments are visualized in Figure 5.1. After reading the report, respondents are asked to respond to two questions that aim to measure whether the treatment had the intended effect. Question 1 measures the degree to which the respondent shares the vulnerability emotion of the victims (the "emotional contagion" factor of empathy). Question 2 aims to assess the degree to which the respondent shares a sense of identification with the victim.

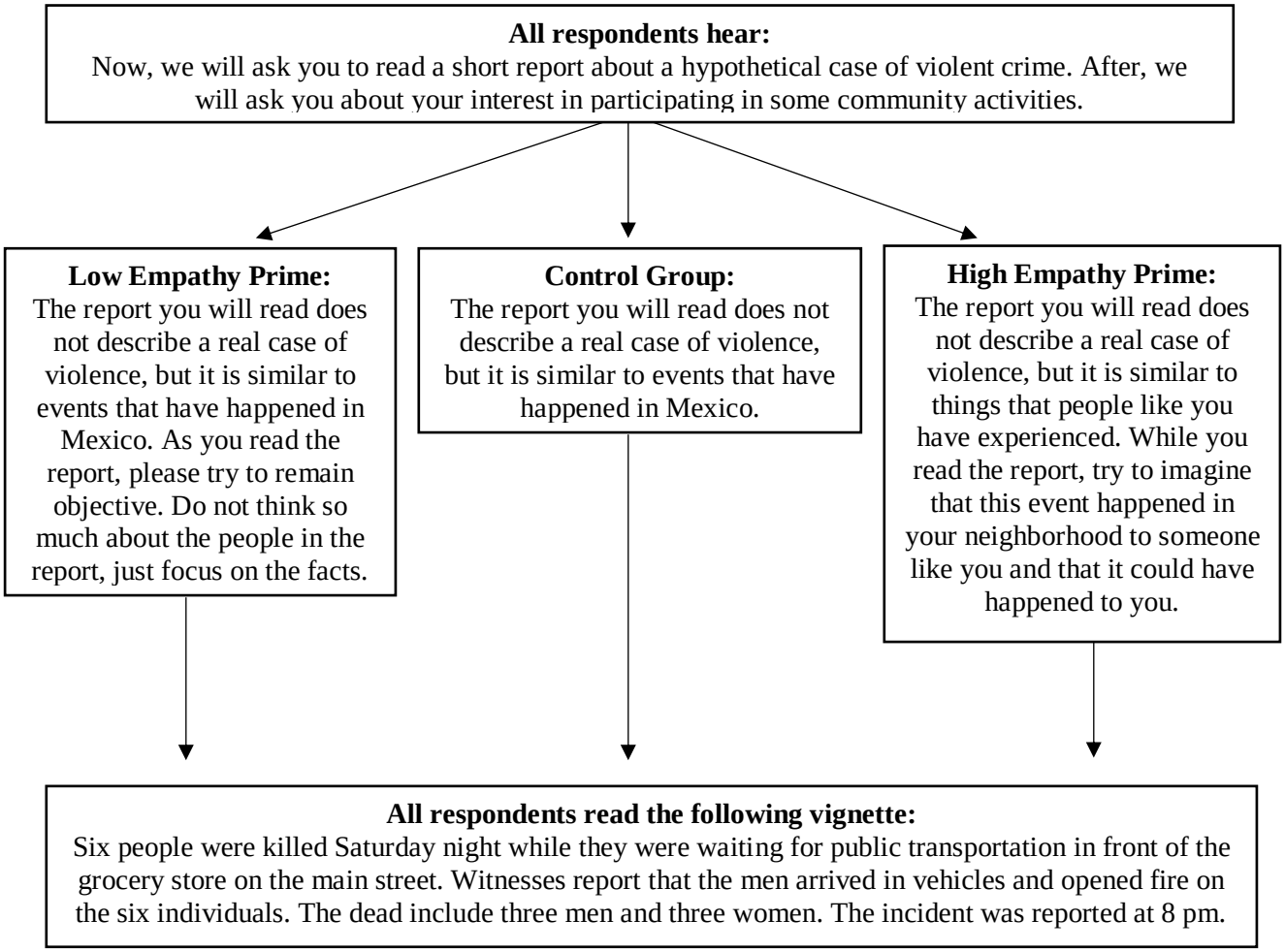
1. ***At this moment, how worried are you about falling victim to a violent crime?***
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

2. ***How likely is it that something like this happens to someone like you?***
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

Respondents then expressed their interest in a number of civic activities using a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 indicates not at all interested and 7 equals extremely interested. These civic activities

include a victims' support organization, an NGO that addresses violence, protest demonstrations against violence, a community improvement project, neighborhood watch group, local or federal elections, an activist group, political group or social movement, a charitable organization, a parents' association, a religious organization, and some other activity not listed. The civic engagement questions are followed by demographic questions that are not likely to change with treatment: age, gender, SES, and victimization status.

Figure 5.1. Experimental Design



Sampling Strategy and Implementation

The survey experiment was carried out with a representative sample of 1206 voting age adults.[2] Respondents were sampled via a multistage sampling strategy. The primary sampling units (PSU) were electoral districts as defined by Mexico's National Electoral Institute. In the first-stage selection, PSUs were ordered and, depending on the number of registered voters in them, were randomly selected as beginning seeds. In the second-stage sampling, two wards in each district were randomly selected as the secondary sampling unit. In each ward, households were selected based on the household density of each ward and randomly selected blocks. In each household, survey participants were selected randomly. Adjustments were made for representativeness along age and gender. Only adjustments to be representative along age and gender were made. Due to the security context in Mexico, survey teams can normally expect to confront security risks that require re-sampling of the PSUs in 5 – 7% of the sampling points. However, in this survey, it was necessary to re-sample 27 electoral districts (20%) due to direct security threats to enumerators, including threats of death and kidnapping.

The experimental module was included as part of a larger social science survey carried out by a local survey company, Data OPM. Survey interviews took place in person with assistance of local enumerators. The data was collected on electronic tablets via the SurveyToGo software. The survey was carried out between August 27 and October 17, 2018.

Empirical Strategy

The main analyses are difference-in-means tests between levels of interest in participating in each civic engagement activity between the high-empathy group, the low-empathy group, and

[2] The margin of error for the survey sample is $\pm$ 2.8.

the control group. Since the dependent variable is a scale I also conducted difference-in-medians tests as a robustness check. As much survey data is, the data for the dependent variables are not normally distributed. More often they are bimodal or multimodal as survey responses cluster around extreme responses, usually 1 "not interested at all," and 7, "Extremely interested." So, in addition to the difference-in-means tests and the difference-in-medians tests, I conducted additional non-parametric tests for difference as additional tests of robustness. The results for all tests are summarized in Table 5.1.

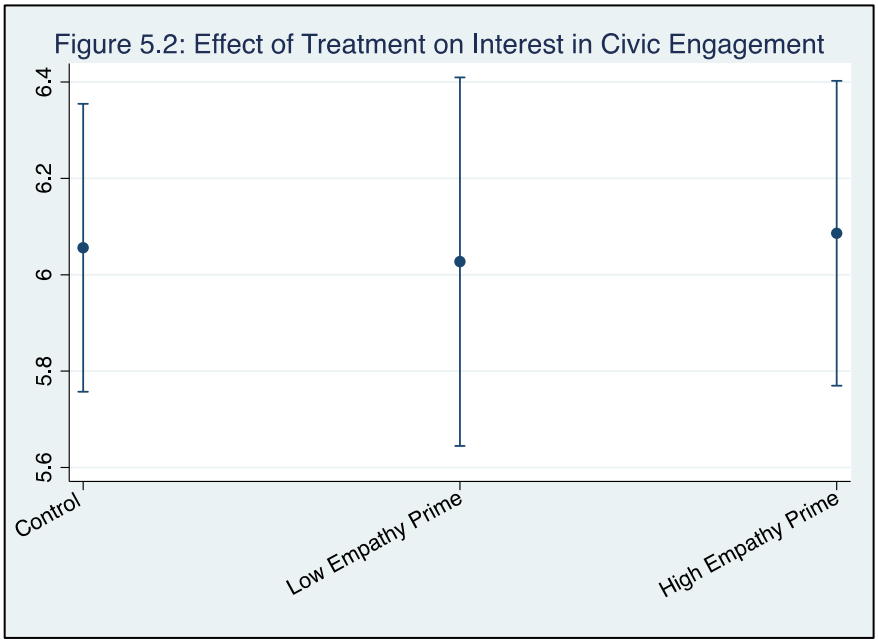
I first tested for differences between treatment groups in average reported interest in each individual civic activity. These results are displayed in Table 5.1. I then constructed an index of the dependent variable (interest in civic engagement), which captures average interest in civic engagement *in general* for each treatment group by combining the measures for each civic activity into one composite measure. Specifically, I tested for the average treatment effect of empathy on civic engagement with a civic engagement index composed of dummy variables (reflected in Figure 5.2). For each civic activity, interest reported as "4" or higher was considered positive interest in civic engagement and coded as 1. Interest reported as less than 4 was considered no interest in civic engagement and coded as 0.[3]

Results

As Figure 5.2 demonstrates, there is no difference in civic engagement between the treatment groups. This runs counter to expectations, which were that respondents in the high-empathy treatment group would exhibit greater interest in civic activities than respondents in the low-

[3] Constructing an index based off of the Likert scale does not change the substantive meaning of the results.

empathy group. The substantive meaning of these results do not change with alternative tests (see Table 5.1).



One reason for these unexpected outcomes may be that the low- and high-empathy treatments did not have the intended effect. I included two questions in the survey instrument to assess whether or not the treatments worked:

1. *How worried are you right now about falling victim to violence?*
2. *How likely is it that something like the event described happens to someone like you?*

These questions aimed to capture multiple dimensions of my theory. The first tried to reflect the theoretical premise that empathizing with victims generates a personal sense of vulnerability for the research participant. The second question aimed to assess the degree to which respondents could imagine themselves in the place of the victims described in the vignette.

The analysis of these two assessments suggests the treatments did have some effect.

Respondents in both the low- and high-empathy treatment groups reported higher levels of vulnerability (Question 1) than those in the control group, as illustrated in Figure 5.3. But, these groups' levels of vulnerability were not different from each other. In other words, the low-empathy treatment, which was meant to stifle empathy, and the high-empathy treatment, which was designed to generate empathy, had similar effects on feelings of vulnerability. Indeed, their average treatment effects (ATEs) are .46 and .41 respectively. While this is what we would expect if empathy were primed, this is contrary to expectations for the low-empathy prime. If effectively induced, the low-empathy prime should *distance* respondents from the violent event described in the vignette and reduce the likelihood that they feel vulnerable to violence through the act of reading the vignette. The fact that these groups shared similar levels of vulnerability suggests that the treatments neither primed nor stifled the potential for vicarious vulnerability in the intended way.

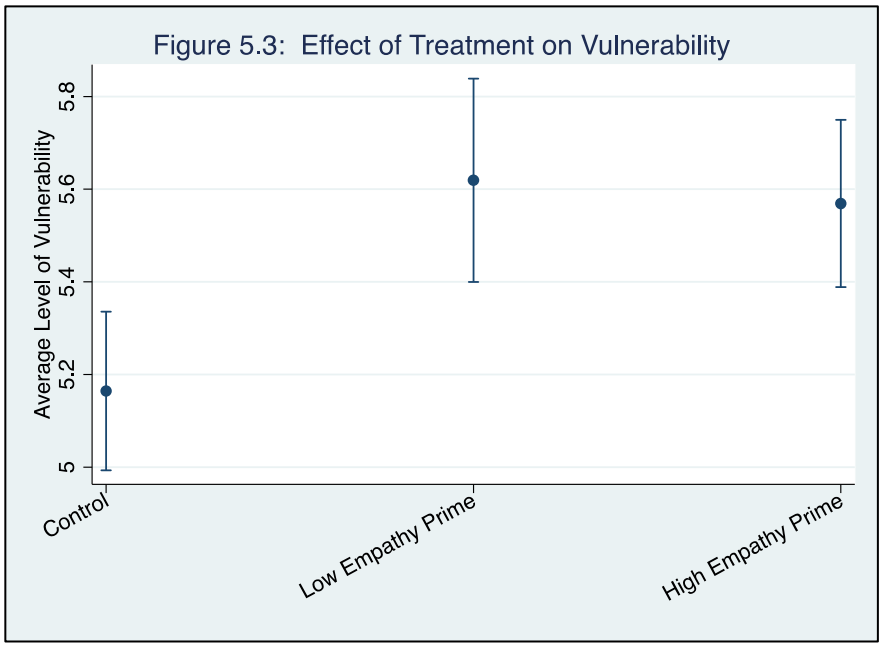


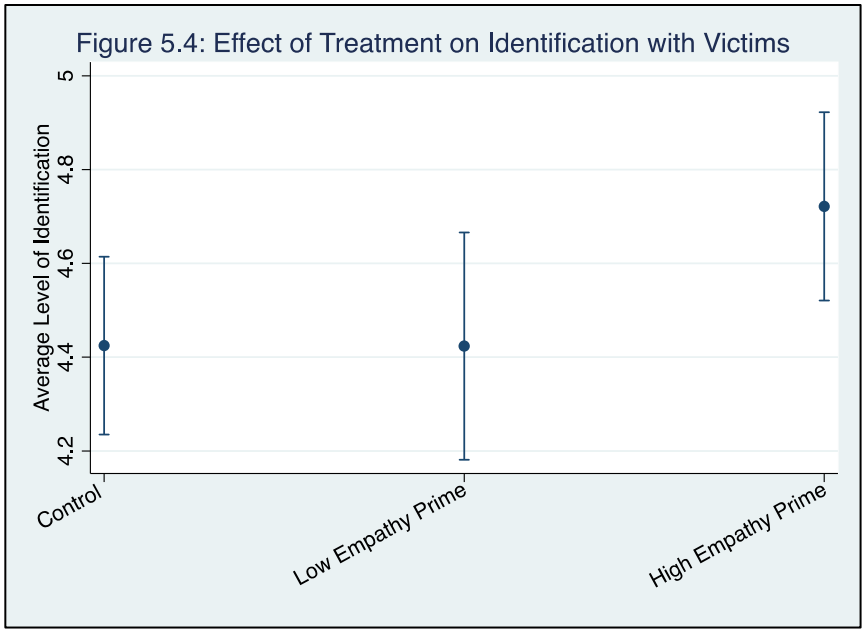
TABLE 5.1. TESTS OF STATISTICAL DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TREATMENT GROUPS

VARIABLE	**Difference in Medians** (because Likert Scale data)	**One-way ANOVA**	**Rank-Sum** Empathy vs. Depressed Prime	**Rank-Sum** Empathy vs. Control	**Rank-Sum** between Empathy and all others	**Diff. in Means** Empathy vs. Depressed	**Diff. in Means** Empathy vs. Control	**Rank-Sum** Depressed Prime vs. Control	**Diff. in Means** Depressed vs. Control	**Rank-Sum** between Depressed and all others
Checks on the treatment										
How worried are you right now about falling victim to violence?	p = .02	p = .0008	X	p= .0016	p= .0445	X	p= .0017 (ATE = .41)	p= .0016	p= .0013 (ATE = .46)	p= .0415
How likely is it that something like the event described happens to someone like you?	X	p= .0665	p= .11	p = .03	p= .0244	p= .0695* (ATE = .3)	p= .0319 * (ATE = .48)	X	X*	X
Interest in participating in…										
Victims Assistance Organization	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Antiviolence initiatives	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Protest against Violence	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Improvement Org	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Neighborhood Watch Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Federal or local elections	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Activist Group	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Political Group or Social Movement	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Charitable Organization	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Parents Association	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Religious Organization	X	X	p= .08	X	X	p= .0874	X	p= .0761	p= .0589	p= .0494

* = with unequal variances. Not accounting for unequal variances does not change the substantive results.

Only statistically significant differences reported (X = all others). Average treatment effects (ATE) in parentheses

Similarly, responses to the second assessment question - *How likely is it that something like the event described happens to someone like you?* – also had an effect. The high-empathy prime asked respondents to imagine that the event described happened in their neighborhood to someone like them. Those in this treatment group reported that what happened in the vignette could happen to them at higher levels than both the control group and the low-empathy group. Depending on the statistical technique used, the difference between those in the high-empathy and low-empathy group as regards this assessment question are statistically significant at p-values between ~.07 - .11 with an ATE of .30, as shown in Figure 5.4.



This alone would suggest that the treatments worked but had no effect on civic engagement. However, it must also be noted that the differences between the high-empathy group and the control group are even greater and more robust: consistent p-values of .03 and an ATE of .48 (see Table 5.1). This is not as expected and suggests a flaw in the treatment. If the treatments

effectively generated empathy among the high-empathy group and suppressed empathy among the low-empathy group, the differences between these two groups should be greater than the differences between the high-empathy group and the control group. Instead, this suggests that the high-empathy and low-empathy groups are more similar to one another than to the control – the opposite of expectations.

It should also be noted that while the results to Question 1 are robust to alternative statistical tests, the results to Question 2 are sensitive to such robustness tests, which produce variation in levels of statistical significance, sometimes pushing the results beyond conventional levels of significance. As Table 5.1 shows, different statistical techniques also generate variation in whether or not there are significant differences between the treatment groups.

Discussion

The results point toward at least two possible conclusions. First, one can interpret these results as disconfirming evidence. At first glance, the results suggest the empathy prime successfully prompted respondents to a) imagine themselves in the place of a victim and b) feel vulnerable, possibly through this reimagining. But contrary to theoretical expectations, the empathy prime did not shape interest in civic engagement. It is also likely that the findings resulted from shortcomings in the experimental design and there is compelling evidence to suggest the latter. First, recall that other tests of the theory provide confirming evidence. The experimental results are thus the outlier among many other sources of evidence. Second, time and resource constraints produced two critical limitations in the experimental design. First, the operationalization of the independent variable prime (empathy) did not fully reflect the theoretical processes of empathy politics. Second, the dependent variable (participation in civic

engagement) was measured incorrectly. It was operationalized as *interest* in participating in civic engagement but the empathy politics theory is about actual behavior. In short, the current experimental design does not effectively capture the processes of empathically-induced civic engagement I observed during my qualitative research.

Flaws in the Treatment: Inducing empathy

The treatment I used to depress and provoke empathy is a minimal treatment that, critically, does not provoke an adequate sense of shared similarities. Shared similarities with victims are an essential element of my theory and in the psychology literature. A common psychology experiment priming empathy would involve a matching scheme in which the characteristics of the research participant (i.e., female student who lives alone and likes to exercise) are transposed onto an experimental vignette so the research participant experiences the cognitive process of seeing and interpreting their own characteristics described in the other person. Since my experimental module was added onto a survey that involved multiple other stakeholders, along with time and financial constraints, I did not use this technique. Instead, I tried to artificially impose this sense of shared similarities by asking the respondent to imagine the vignette as happening to "someone like them." This bypasses the cognitive process of perceiving similarities and, critically, does not include any personalization of the victim. Indeed, little is known about the victims in my vignette other than a) what they were doing at the time of their death; and b) their gender. If shared similarities are key to empathy as I and others suggest, this vignette gave research participants scant information through which to perceive such similarities.

This lack of shared similarities in the high-empathy prime would explain why survey respondents in both the low- and high-empathy treatment groups exhibited similar levels of

vulnerability. I argue that the mere act of paying special attention to the vignette - that is, meditating on the topic of violence - made both groups feel more vulnerable to violence. Recall that both treatment groups were given special instructions to pay attention to the details of the event described in the vignette. While they received different instruction about *how* to think about the event, the fact that they were both asked to pay attention to the details distinguishes these groups from the control group, which received no such special instructions.

If shared similarities were not appropriately primed, why did survey respondents in the high-empathy group report a greater sense that the event described in the vignette could happen to someone like them ("How likely is it that something like the event described happens to someone like you?")? Recall that the difference between those in the high-empathy group and those in the low-empathy group as regards personal identification are statistically significant at p-values between ~.07 - .11 with an ATE of .30 (although not robustly). Remember, too, that the differences between the high-empathy group and the control group are counterintuitively greater and more robust: consistent p-values of .03 and an ATE of .48. If the high-empathy prime were truly priming empathy as conceived of in the theory and the low-empathy empathy prime were truly depressing empathy, the differences between the high-empathy and low-empathy groups should be greater than between either group and the control group. This is not what we observe. Instead, we see that, like with the vulnerability assessment (Question 1), the high-empathy and low-empathy groups are more similar to each other than the high-empathy group is to the control group. Recognizing that the fundamental piece missing from the empathy prime was shared similarities, I conclude that the high-empathy prime *did* prompt individuals to imagine themselves as a victim, but not in a way that linked their experience or identity with the victim, the cornerstone of empathy as I conceive it. Indeed, the individual had no information about the

victim through which to do so. Instead, I argue that the empathy prime made these respondents feel vulnerability more acutely but not empathically. This sense that something like the vignette could happen to them more likely approximates what the respondents in the low-empathy prime experienced, again, merely by paying close attention to the details of the vignette. This hypothesis is supported by the abovementioned findings showing no difference in levels of vulnerability between the low- and high-empathy prime groups.

Flaws in Operationalizing the Dependent Variable: Interests vs. Action

An additional shortcoming of the survey is its operationalization of the dependent variable, civic engagement. The empathy politics theory predicts a behavioral outcome - civic *action* – but the survey experiment captures attitudinal outcomes – *interest* in civic activities rather than actual participation. Again, I elected this strategy due to time and resource limitations. While necessary, this choice introduced an important weakness into the study, namely that the operationalization of the dependent variable (as *attitudes* toward civic engagement) does not reflect the behavioral outcomes hypothesized by the theory. One might reason that interest in a civic activity foretells actual participation and we may thus use these attitudes as a proxy for civic participation. While interest may very well be necessary for participation, it is far from sufficient and the mechanisms that transform *interest* in civic and political participation into action, particularly in violent contexts where the participation costs may be disproportionately high, require explanation. I argue that empathy can be one such explanation. Accurately capturing the difference between actual participation and mere interest in it is thus particularly important for testing the empathy politics theory.

This is especially true when we compare the risks and costs of expressing interest in civic participation to the risks and costs of actual participation. As outlined in earlier chapters, the civic activities in which citizens engage incur both *risks* and *costs* (McAdam 1986). The activities citizens pursue under contexts of violence range from relatively low risk, such as starting a youth sports league, to high risk activities, like searching for the disappeared or participating in protest activities. Yet even those that do not invite great levels of personal or political risk incur significant *costs* in time, money, and effort. Javier, for example, started a youth soccer league in his neighborhood to prevent young boys from joining the local gang. He first had to mobilize volunteers to help him revitalize the soccer field, which had been taken over by criminal elements and later abandoned. He also raised funds and sought out donations for equipment and uniforms since none of the families in the area could afford to pay. All this, before coordinating the teams, practices, games, etc.[4]

Expressing interest in an activity in a confidential survey, in contrast, is comparatively risk- and cost-free. There is no expectation or commitment to follow through on that interest, which makes it easy for survey participants to indicate they are interested in an activity without having to pay the risks or costs of carrying it out. Survey respondents may in fact have felt pressure to express interest since they responded to these questions in the presence of a survey enumerator so that their responses were known to him/her (the enumerator verbally asked the question and the respondent verbally expressed their level of interest). Together, these shortcomings may explain why respondents from each of the three experimental groups expressed high levels of interest in civic engagement. In many instances, the modal responses are clustered around the most extreme response, "Very Interested."

[4] Interview with Javier, July 2017 (Monterrey).

The ease with which respondents to a survey can signal interest in civic engagement does not reflect the real-world context in which citizens in violent contexts make choices about actual participation. In reality, civic engagement is costly and can be risky. Interest alone is not sufficient to provoke someone to assume those costs and risks. Instead, I argue that empathy for drug war victims plays an important role in transforming *interest* in political or civic engagement into *action.* The current experimental design did not allow me to test this claim.

Some Confirmation of the Theory

Counterintuitively, the shortcomings of the survey experiment provide some evidence that the relationship between exposure to violence, empathy, and civic engagement operates via the microprocesses hypothesized in the theory and described via the qualitative evidence in Chapters 2 and 3. In short, the absence of two key elements of the theory – shared similarities and the distinction between political attitudes and action – suggest that these elements are, indeed, critical. As I outline in my theory, shared similarities are the catalyst of the empathy politics process. If the minimal treatment used in the experiment, which featured little personal information about the victims, successfully provoked interest in civic engagement, this would suggest that shared similarities are not as important as I claim. While I cannot confirm that the null results are due to the absence of such shared similarities, the results are suggestive of this conclusion.

Additionally and as outlined above, the null results point toward the theoretical and conceptual difference between *interest* and *participation* in civic and political activities. This was evidenced in the qualitative data, in which research participants cited exposure to a key case of violence as sparking their transformation from an interested but inactive citizen into an active

member of civil society. These observations led me to identify empathy as one mechanism through which political interest can be transformed into political action - a key contribution of the theory. If true, the null results of the experiment are not surprising because exposure to violence is theorized to generate civic action, not an interest in civic engagement that did not previously exist. So, if the experimental results indicated a relationship between empathy and interest in civic engagement activities, we would still have to explain how citizens take the leap into actual participation. Thus, while not wholly confirming the relationship I theorize, the absence of an effect on interest in civic engagement does suggest that the relationship between exposure to violence, empathy, and civic engagement is not a story about political attitudes. If a relationship between exposure to violence, empathy, and civic engagement exists, (as the remaining evidence in the dissertation suggests), it is instead a crucial mechanism that transforms attitudes into action when such action is costly and often high-risk.

Ways Forward: Future experimental tests of the empathy politics theory

The shortcomings of the current survey experiment highlight clear ways forward for future tests of the theory via an improved experimental design. Such a design must address the key drawbacks of the current one, namely the mismatch between the empathy politics theory, the experimental treatments, and the operationalization of the dependent variable. Below, I outline plans for new experimental tests of theory. In the proposed study, shared similarities with victims of violence are explicitly incorporated into the research design and the dependent variable is measured as a behavioral response rather than an attitudinal one.

Overview

Like the above study, the revised study aims to test hypotheses about how indirect victimization shapes individuals' likelihood of future civic engagement. In particular, the study will analyze how priming respondents to feel empathy for victims of violence shapes their propensity to engage in civic action that implies both personal risks and personal costs. The study draws on a convenience sample of Mexican university students who are remunerated minimally for their participation. The experimental conditions involve the randomized treatment of two vignettes describing (i) an act of violence involving a similar student, which is expected to prime empathy based on these similarities; and (ii) the same act of violence involving a dissimilar worker, which is expected to *not* prime empathy. A third, control group will feature a vignette that does not describe violence at all. Recall that in the current experiment, just paying special attention to a news article about violence *in general* made respondents in both the high-empathy and low-empathy groups feel vulnerable. So, including a control group of survey respondents who do not read about violence at all allows me to assess the degree to which any observed effect is due to exposure to violence in general rather than violence with an empathy prime. To measure participation in costly and risky civic engagement, all respondents are then invited to (i) donate a portion of their remuneration to a community improvement project to reduce insecurity; and (ii) sign a petition calling for justice reforms. For simplicity, the current discussion focuses on analyzing differences between the two treatment groups: I call the group in which empathy is primed via similarities with victims the "similar/high-empathy group." I call the group in which empathy is not primed due to dissimilarities with victims the "dissimilar/low-empathy group." The experiment will be carried out electronically in the form of a survey along with the two behavioral measures listed above.

Hypotheses

I employ one main outcome variable, civic engagement. Since civic engagement may include elements of both costs (time, money, and effort) and personal risk, I measure this outcome in two ways. First, I invite participants to donate a portion of their remuneration to a community improvement project that aims to reduce insecurity. The choice to sacrifice a percentage of what they earn for their participation in the research is a proxy for their willingness to incur personal costs for the good of a collective aim, in this case community improvement. The outcome is measured as the amount of their contribution, ranging from $0 (no contribution) to the full amount of their compensation.[5] After the study is complete, the donations will be given to a local community improvement organization selected in consultation with local stakeholders.

Second, I invite participants to sign a petition calling for reforms to the justice system. Signing the petition is a proxy for the individual's willingness to incur a level of personal risk for the good of a collective group. Signing a petition isolates the risk factors from the cost factors because signing does not incur any time, effort, or financial costs. I expect participants to perceive a level of personal risk due to a generalized fear of the state and reprisals for critiques of it. Petitions may be particularly effective at conveying such risk because they are not anonymous – citizens reveal their identity through their signature. If research participants find the experimental petition credible, it is expected that signing it will not be an obvious action to take nor one that will be easily swayed by social desirability bias. Instead, I expect that participants will weigh the personal risk of signing their name onto a critique of the state compared to the relative ease of declining the invitation to sign. To maintain the participants' confidentiality,

[5] I will determine the ethically appropriate compensation in consultation with local contacts.

their signature will not actually be collected. Instead, the signature will be measured as a binary variable in which 1 indicates a signature was collected and 0 indicates no signature was collected. After their participation is complete, the study participants will be debriefed and notified that they did not sign a real petition. They will also be directed toward existing local petitions (not sponsored by the researcher) about which they can learn if they choose to do so.

The hypotheses expect that individuals who feel empathy for victims of violence will incur the costs of civic engagement (measured as donating money to a community improvement organization addressing violence) at a higher frequency and in greater amounts than those whose sense of empathy is not stimulated. I further hypothesize that individuals who feel empathy for victims of violence will incur the personal risks of civic engagement (measured as signing a petition related to insecurity) at greater rates than those for whom empathy is not generated.

> H_1: Respondents primed to feel empathy for victims of violence will donate to a community improvement organization at higher rates than those for whom empathy is not primed.
>
> H_2: Respondents primed to feel empathy for victims of violence will donate greater amounts to a community improvement organization than those for whom empathy is not primed.
>
> H_3: Respondents primed to feel empathy for victims of violence will sign a petition related to insecurity at higher rates than those for whom empathy is not primed.

Empirical Strategy

As previewed above, the experiment includes two treatment groups and one control, to which participants are randomly assigned. All respondents read the fictional personal story of one victim of violence. Since all participants will be students, participants in the "similar/high-empathy group" will read the account of a male or female student (depending on their own gender) in their early 20's (around the age of most students) who attends their same university

and who was hit by a stray bullet while on his/her way to classes at that university. Participants in the "dissimilar/low-empathy group" will read the account of a female/male (the opposite of the respondent's gender) in her early 40's who sells snacks outside the bus depot. She, too, was hit by a stray bullet while on her way to work. While the age, and occupation of this victim are obviously different than the average student, placing her at a snack stand also implies she is of a lower socioeconomic status than the average Mexican university student.

After reading the victim's account, respondents are then asked to describe in detail the similarities (in the high-empathy prime) and the dissimilarities (in the low-empathy group) between themselves and the victim. This is to reinforce and further prime the intended emotion. After that, respondents are asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 7 how similar they are to the victim. This is a test of the prime's effectiveness. Next, respondents are asked to indicate how worried they are about falling victim to crime. This assesses the degree to which the vulnerability of the victim was transferred to the research participant (vicarious arousal). Immediately after, respondents have the opportunity first to donate to the community improvement project and then to sign the petition.

Data about individual-level demographic characteristics (age, gender, education level, SES, and victimization status), and individual-level correlates of political participation, such as interest in politics, perceived individual and collective political efficacy, and prior political participation, will be collected either pre- or post-treatment. Characteristics unlikely to change with treatment (such as age, SES, and victimization status) will appear post-treatment. Other characteristics that may change with treatment and those that may influence other post-treatment questions or the treatment itself will be randomized to appear either before or after the treatment.

I will analyze any differences between responses in which these questions appeared pre- or post-treatment to assess any effect. Figure 5.5 depicts this new experimental design.

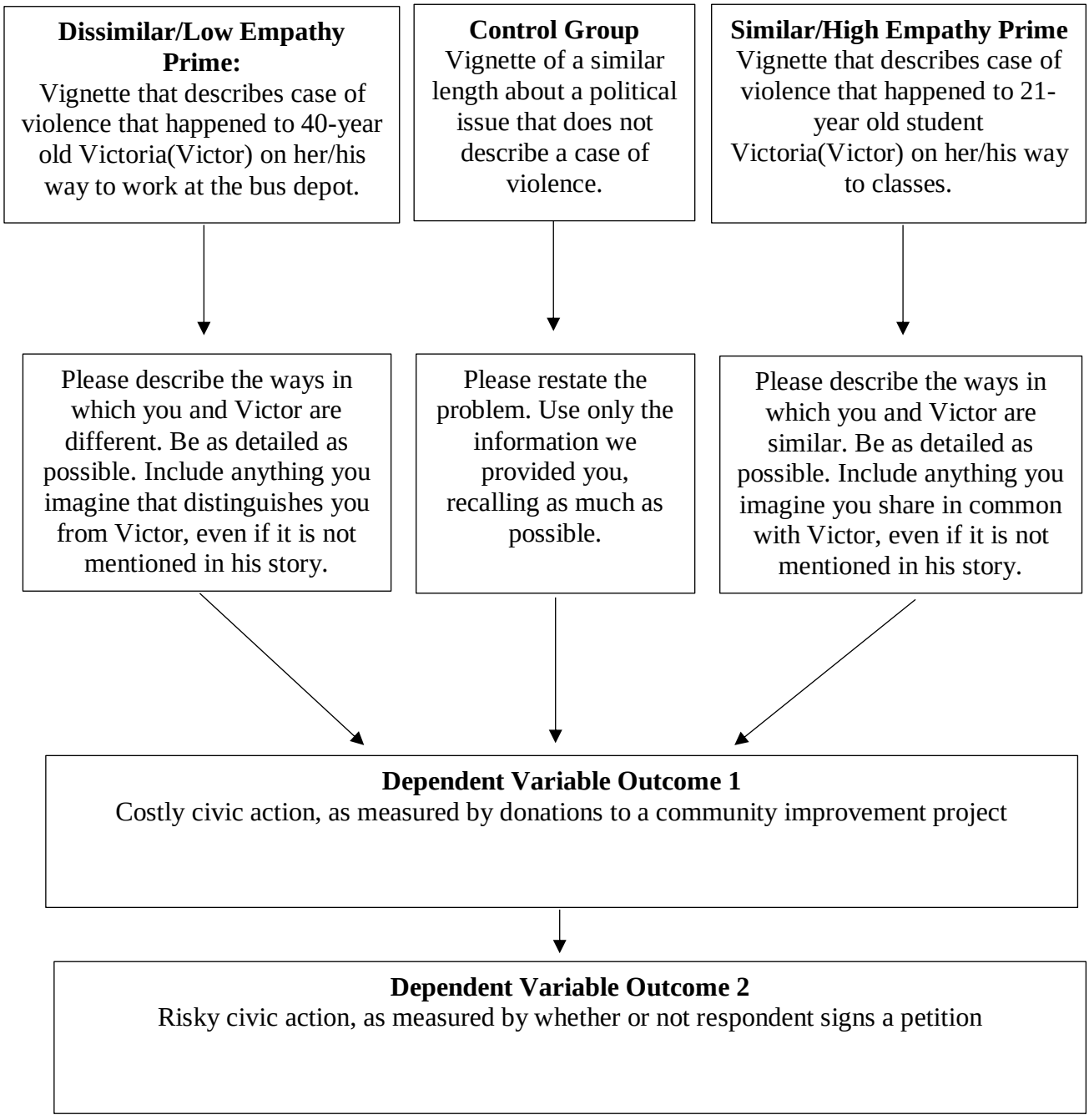
The main analyses will involve statistical tests for difference, including difference-in-means tests for analyzing donations to the community improvement group[6] and X^2 Goodness of Fit tests plus two-sample proportion tests for analyzing the proportion of respondents who signed the petition. I will also use OLS and logit regression to analyze the conditional average treatment effects for participants who (a) report being victims of a violent crime; (b) are of lower vs. higher SES; and (c) report higher vs. lower levels of interest in politics.[7]

Testing for heterogenous treatment effects will allow me to assess the degree to which victimization plays an independent role in the observed outcomes. This is important because the predominant alternative explanation to the role of empathy is the role of trauma among direct victims (post-traumatic growth theory). If the analysis indicates that direct victims account for the large share of any observed differences between those who are interested in civic engagement and those who are not – regardless of treatment – then it is more likely that direct victimization rather than indirect exposure to violence is responsible for the observed outcomes. However, if the analysis of conditional average treatment effects indicates that the treatments have unique effects on this subgroup, this would indicate that empathy works through victims in a different way than indirect victims. I will also test for the unique effect of SES as this may shape whether and in what amounts respondents contribute monetarily.

[6] Depending on the responses, I will supplement these with tests for non-continuous data. I suspect that donations will cluster around a handful of common donation amounts, such as $1, $3, and $5.

[7] Here, too, I will supplement these analyses with other estimation techniques where appropriate.

Figure 5.5 Future Experimental Design



By including measures of other known correlates of political and civic engagement, the experimental design allows me to assess the plausibility of alternative explanations. These correlates include: post-traumatic growth theory (as proxied by victimization status); individual and collective political efficacy; trust in political institutions; political knowledge; prior political participation; SES; age; gender; and education level. It is expected that the correlates indicative of these alternative explanations will be randomly distributed across the treatment groups and thus do not explain any observable differences between the groups.

Sample and Randomization

The sample will consist of a convenience sample of university students from multiple campuses of the Instituto Tecnologico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (ITESM). One of the challenges of designing a treatment that reflects similarities with study participants is that participants are not all alike. Thus, a treatment that reflects the similarities of one individual will not reflect the characteristics of another and may in fact be quite dissimilar. In order to design a parsimonious treatment that reflects similarities across a large sample of individuals, this study holds some of these characteristics constant by sampling participants from a subgroup of the population: university students in one particular university. This means that age (18 – 22 years old), occupation (student), the spaces they frequent (the university), activities they engage in (classes), and at least some elements of socioeconomic status (middle-to-upper classes) will likely reflect the experiences of all participants and can be assumed as "similar" in a single treatment. While I will sample from both male and female students, the data for each group will be collected and analyzed separately because the treatments will be different for males (will reflect a similar male victim) and females (will reflect a similar female victim). Later, I will test

for significant differences between these groups to assess whether gender influences the empathy politics process.

I will conduct the same study with students from the Guadalajara campus, the Ciudad Juarez campus, and the Veracruz campus of ITESM. Carrying out the experiment in these cities allow me to test the theory outside the research context in which the theory was generated, Monterrey, but within the context of Mexico. All three cities have experienced violence similar to that experienced in Monterrey. More importantly, all three cities *continue* to experience such violence so that current university students will live in these violent contexts during the time of their participation in the experiment. This is important since university students tend to be 18 – 22 years old and thus may not have experienced the contexts of violence of interest to my theory if the survey were carried out in a place like Monterrey, where the intensity of the violence has diminished.

Beyond commonality in the independent variable (exposure to violence), the research sites exhibit both similarities and differences. Guadalajara is comparable to Monterrey. Both are large capital cities and industrial hubs with high levels of wealth and human development relative to other Mexican metropoles. For the experiment, this would be a test of the theory in a context intended to replicate the context in Monterrey. Ciudad Juarez and Veraruz, meanwhile, are different from Monterrey and Guadalajara. Though they are prominent cities, only Veracruz is a capital city and neither enjoy the high rates of human development that Guadalajara and Monterrey do. Veracruz is a bustling port city while Ciudad Juarez is a border city known for its manufacturing industry. Veracruz, meanwhile, is in the south of the country. There is a popular belief that citizen politics are different in the north than in the south, particularly as regards the politics of protest. Carrying out the experiment in these two additional cities allows me to test the

theory within Mexico and within the context of criminal war, but outside the context of Monterrey and Guadalajara. I will analyze fixed effects to explore factors that vary between each research site. However, the emphasis of the analysis will remain on individual-level processes, namely whether or not the individual's sense of empathy is provoked by the experimental treatment and its consequences on their civic behaviors.

I will recruit students via email to participate in an online survey, which will produce a convenience sample. Upon agreeing to participate, students will be divided into men and women and, from there, randomly selected into one of the three treatment groups. Within the convenience sample, I will use balance tests to check for effective randomization of covariates. Students will receive an ethically appropriate monetary compensation for their participation.

One potential drawback of this design is its external validity. University students tend to be more economically and politically privileged than other members of society, better educated, and may be more prone to take risks, including participation in political or civic action. Thus, any conclusions I make based on the results may not hold true outside this population. To assess the external validity of the results, future iterations of the study may include other subgroups of the population who are relatively similar to one another, such as lower SES stay-at-home mothers.

Alternative treatment

An alternative treatment would embed shared similarities even more deeply and reflect more salient characteristics of each study participant. Early foundational psychology experiments about empathy asked participants to fill out a pre-treatment "personal values" questionnaire in which they indicated personal opinions, worldviews, and challenges they face

(Batson, et al. 1981). Part of the experimental manipulation involved deceiving the participant into thinking they were partnering in the study with another student who was completing the study in a separate room. They were then given their "partner's" questionnaire to learn about what their partner was like. However, the fictitious partner's questionnaire was filled out ahead of time to reflect similarities with the actual participant's questionnaire responses so that, upon reviewing her partner's questionnaire, the participant literally saw her own responses reflected in her "partner." Versions of Batson, et al.'s (1981) model have been repeated across a number of empathy experiments.

One can imagine a modernized version of this treatment in which a participant fills out a similar pre-treatment questionnaire electronically. Her answers are then programmed to be inserted into the appropriate fields of the treatment vignette, in this case the story of a victim of violence. The same process would be carried out for individuals in the dissimilar/low-empathy group, except that the fields in their treatment vignette would be filled with characteristics dissimilar to their questionnaire responses. This design is possible and one of its key benefits is that similarities do not need to be held constant for all participants, as they are in the proposed study with university students. With this alternative treatment, the study could be carried out with anyone, regardless of how dissimilar they are to other research participants, because the similarities in the treatment are based on their individual characteristics rather than characteristics of the group. This design thus lends itself to a representative study that can be carried out beyond the confines of a university setting and a single subgroup. However, one potential drawback is that every single participant will receive a slightly different treatment. While the most important, overarching difference is the distinction between those who receive a vignette about someone (i) similar to them versus (ii) different from them, the vignettes that

result from filling in the story with individual characteristics of each participant will produce a high degree of variation within those treatment groups. This in turn runs the risk of producing statistical noise. This risk can only be assessed through piloting. The study I propose to carry out with university students is a more conservative treatment of empathy and is less likely to face the analytical challenges of variation within the treatment.

Assuming the revised study yields the expected results, it provides an opportunity to highlight the pivotal role that shared similarities plays in provoking empathy. Recall that the nationally-representative survey experiment I carried out featured a minimal treatment in which respondents were directed to imagine themselves in the shoes of the victim rather than experience the cognitive process of perceiving similarities to provoke empathy. So, in addition to testing my theory of empathy politics, the revised experimental design will support the assessment of the importance of shared similarities to political processes born of empathy. To do so, I will split the sample of study participants and randomly assign one half to the original experiment and one half to the revised experiment. This systematic, empirical comparison of the results from the original treatment versus the revised treatment would provide compelling evidence that these shared similarities are in fact the foundation of empathically-motivated action – a theory that is still debated in the psychology literature and a finding that would help explain a number of unreconciled questions in the political science literature.[8] Most prominently, existing political science research on the relationship between exposure to violence and pro-social

[8] A comparison of results yielded by the original design and the revised design could similarly highlight the pitfalls of using political attitudes as a proxy for political behavior, both in the context of my argument and in political science research in general. This would require a different comparison, in which the form of the treatment (i.e., from the original survey design vs. the revised survey design) remains the same, but the operationalization of the dependent variable (as attitudes vs. behavior) is split between the sample. Both the comparison between the different treatment designs and the different dependent variable measurements could be done with one sample and one study. However, the sample would have to be split four ways and then divided into three treatment/control groups each (total 8 treatment groups and four control groups). This would require a prohibitively large sample size.

behaviors reveals an in-group/out-group effect that is not explained by current theories (Bauer, et al. 2016) A theory of empathically-driven behavior grounded in similarities (i.e., members of your group) provides a compelling answer to these questions.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: INSTRUMENT for ORIGINAL, NATIONALLY-REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY EXPERIMENT WITH MEXICAN ADULTS.

All participants hear:
Now, we will ask you to read a short report about a hypothetical case of violent crime. After, we will ask you about your interest in participating in some community activities. Remember, you do not have to answer any question you do not wish to.

- **DEPRESS Empathy Treatment Group hears:**
  The report you will read does not describe a real case of violence, but it is similar to events that have happened in Mexico. As you read the report, please try to remain objective. Do not think so much about the people in the report, just focus on the facts.

- **Control Group hears:**
  The report you will read does not describe a real case of violence, but it is similar to events that have happened in Mexico.

- **PRIMED Empathy Treatment Group hears:**
  The report you will read does not describe a real case of violence, but it is similar to events that have happened to people like you. While you read the report, try to imagine that this event happened in your neighborhood to someone like you and could have happened to you.

All participants then read:

Six people were killed Saturday night while they were waiting for public transportation in front of the grocery store on the main street. Witnesses report that the men arrived in vehicles and opened fire on the six individuals. The dead include three men and three women. The incident was reported at 8 pm.

1. ***At this moment, how worried are you about falling victim to a violent crime?***
   (1)Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

2. ***How likely is it that something like this happens to someone like you?***
   Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

3. ***Now, I would like to know how interested you feel in participating in the below activities at this moment. Do not worry about whether you are usually interested in this activity. Just tell me how you feel right now. How interested are you in participating in the following (participants were given a card showing the 1 – 7 scale):***

   a. ***An organization to support victims of violence?***
      (1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

b. An NGO that prevents violence or addresses its root causes?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

c. A protest demonstration against violence?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

d. A community improvement project?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

e. A neighborhood watch group?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

f. Local or federal elections?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

g. An activist group?

(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

h. The meeting of a political group or social movement?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

i. A charitable organization?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

j. An organization for parents?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

k. A religious organization?
(1) Not at all (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) Extremely

l. Some other activity I did not mention? [write in _____]

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

Age: *"In what year were you born?"* _____ *(write in)*

Gender: (not a question – enumerator will mark down without asking)

Socioeconomic Status (SES): "*In which of the following ranges would you place your monthly household income?"* *in Mexican pesos
(00) No income (01) Less than $700 pesos (02) Between $700 - $1,050 pesos (03) Between $1,051 - $1,500 (04) Between $1,501 - $1,850 (05) Between $1,851 - $2,200 (06) Between $2,201 - $2,750 (07) Between $2,751 - $3,250 (08) Between $3,251 - $3,700 (09) Between $3,701 - $4,100 (10) Between $4,101 - $4,450 (11) Between $4,451 - $5,400 (12) Between $5,401 - $6,450 (13) Between $6,451 - $7,250 (14) Between

$7,251 - $8,750 (15) Between $8,751 - $11,150 (16) More than $11,150

I don't know

I prefer not to respond

Victimization Status: *"Have you or an immediate family member experienced a violent crime?"*
Yes No Prefer not to answer

6. EMPATHY POLITICS: QUANTITATIVE EVIDENCE

The qualitative evidence provided in Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrates a relationship between some of the most indirect experiences with violence and future civic engagement in Monterrey, Mexico. Does civic engagement in other contexts of violence follow a pattern consistent with the theory of empathy politics that emerged from that case? Can my theory of empathy politics explain civic engagement outside my sample of research participants and outside the context of Mexico? The theory of empathy politics describes a complex, cognitive process that is difficult to test through large-n quantitative analysis. Even so, we can identify observable implications of the theory that we would expect to see if the theory were true. At the individual level, quantitative analysis should demonstrate that more indirect forms of victimization are associated with future civic engagement activities. In this chapter, I test this hypothesis via quantitative analysis of large-n survey data from three post-conflict societies: Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan.

The evidence is thus not only a test of the theory but also an assessment of its generalizability outside Latin America and outside the context of criminal violence. The criminal conflict in Mexico is frequently compared to a civil war. Its 200,000+ death toll has exceeded many instances of civil war. Like many insurgencies, organized crime groups are heavily armed and often have better intelligence and weapons than state forces. Yet, criminal wars are not civil

wars and how violence is leveraged in them may operate under distinct logics (Kalyvas 2015; Lessing 2015).[1] Despite these potential differences, the findings from this final test are consistent with my empathy politics thesis and suggest that the theory is generalizable across contexts, including outside Latin America and outside the context of criminal war.

This quantitative analysis also serves as a compelling assessment of the explanatory power of my theory relative to the predominant alternative explanation, post-traumatic growth theory. The analysis using data from Uganda is in fact a replication of Blattman's (2009) study of civic engagement and political participation among former child soldiers. This study, along with Shewfelt (2009), was one of the first to identify an individual-level relationship between exposure to violence and political participation and to propose post-traumatic growth as its driving mechanism. Using the same data, I replicate Blattman (2009) and re-analyze the results, this time evaluating the evidence through the lens of empathy politics. In this way, my use of a replication strategy is particularly compelling: using the same data in the same research context, I show that empathy politics is a better explanation for the trends observed in Uganda than the alternative, PTG. I thus build on and advance Blattman (2009) by interrogating the mechanism of the relationship he unearthed and testing that theory in two additional contexts, Liberia and Tajikistan.

Data and Measurement

The out-of-sample test utilizes secondary survey data to test my theory of empathy politics against the predominant explanation, PTG. The data facilitates this by disaggregating experiences with violence into four categories that reflect the victimization spectrum outlined in

[1] Compare for example the logic of civil war violence outlined by Kalyvas 2006 with the logic of criminal – state violence outlined by Lessing 2017.

Chapter 2. Here, I list them in order from more direct to more indirect: (i) direct victimization to the individual; (ii) direct victimization of a family member; and (iii) witnessing violence happen to others. I also analyze the role of (iv) perpetrating violence. However, as noted in Chapter 2, I do not theorize the role of perpetrating violence because I did not collect qualitative data on perpetrators. Nevertheless, perpetrating violence is one form of experience with violence and the quantitative data allow me to test the plausibility of a relationship between this particular experience and future civic engagement. I do not find evidence of that relationship and no other research to my knowledge suggests a relationship between committing violence and future civic engagement.

Recall that PTG suggests the most traumatic, life-altering experiences are the impetus for post-traumatic growth. If post-traumatic growth were the main driver of the relationship, we would thus expect to see that the more direct experiences with violence, personal victimization or having a family member victimized, are the dominant influences on civic engagement (H_2). If empathy politics, rather than post-traumatic growth, were the main driver of civic engagement amidst violence, we would expect the data to show that the most indirect form of victimization in the data, *witnessing violence happen to others,* is a more powerful channel of civic engagement than these other experiences (H_1).

I use data from three post-conflict societies. The data from Uganda (Blattman 2009) reflect citizen's experiences from a 20-year civil war (1987 - 2006). The data from Liberia (Blattman, Hartman, and Blair 2014) reflect citizen's experiences from the First and Second Liberian Civil Wars (1989 – 2003) and data from Tajikistan (Cassar, Grosjean, and Whitt 2013) reflect citizen experiences from the Tajik Civil War (1992 – 1997). The data from these three cases share important commonalities. First, all three cases are outside Latin America. Second, all

three are cases of political war and the data reflect experiences with similar types of wartime violence rather than criminal violence. Both elements allow me to assess the validity of my theory outside Latin America and outside the context of criminal war.

However, the data also present some limitations. First, all three cases are post-conflict. This means the observed civic engagement takes place after violence has subsided and the potential risks likely diminished. Consequently, these cases may exhibit more civic engagement than one might find in an ongoing conflict and it is possible that the microprocesses of participation observed in post-conflict settings follow different patterns than those amidst ongoing conflicts. Even so, the analysis reveals a remarkably consistent association between experiences with violence and civic engagement in ways that mimic the qualitative findings from Mexico's ongoing conflict. Second, the operationalization of indirect victimization experiences in the datasets does not fully capture the range of ways citizens can experience violence indirectly and as theorized in the victimization spectrum outlined in Chapter 2. The most indirect victimization experience measured by the datasets is violence witnessed firsthand by the respondent. It does not capture victimization experienced through more indirect channels, such as word-of-mouth or the news media, which were often critical to empathy-based civic action in Monterrey. Even so, the data analysis suggests patterns of civic action congruent with my theory of empathy politics and with the patterns I observed in my field research, despite an imperfect approximation of the full spectrum of victimization experiences.

In all three cases, citizens who lived amidst violence during the conflict were asked about their past experience with violence and about the civic activities in which they participate currently. The sample in Tajikistan is nationally representative of the adult population, though females are slightly overrepresented due to the time period in which the survey was conducted.

In Liberia, meanwhile, the sample was drawn from communities expected to be at greater risk for conflict. The sample is thus only representative of the communities from which it was drawn. However, comparisons with other nationally-representative surveys suggest that most observable characteristics of the sampled communities do not differ greatly from a nationally-representative sample.[2] In Uganda, only men who would have been a teen at the time of the conflict were included in the study. This is important because studies show the impact of victimization may be more durable if experienced during adolescence (Bauer, et. al 2014; Bauer, Fiala and Levely 2018). If true, we would expect the relationship between violence and civic engagement to be especially salient in Uganda and less so in Liberia and Tajikistan.

The Dependent Variable: Civic Engagement

Civic engagement is measured as participation in a number of local civil society organizations and activities (see Table 6.1), including: peace committees, water committees, cultural groups, sports groups, cooperatives, parent-teacher associations (PTA), churches or mosques, volunteer organizations, town councils, youth groups, fraternal societies, development committees, neighborhood associations, labor unions, or a non-governmental organization (NGO). In Uganda, the measure is a binary (1,0) variable that indicates whether or not the respondent participates in any of the activities. In Liberia and Tajikistan, the measure indicates the total number of associations in which the respondent participates.

[2] Author correspondence, April 18, 2019.

Table 6.1. Quantitative Evidence: Summary Statistics

VARIABLES	UGANDA			LIBERIA			TAJIKISTAN		
Exposure to Violence:	***Measured as:*** *total # of acts experienced among 25 possible, including 6 acts witnessed, 6 received, 5 occurring to family members, and 8 perpetrated*			***Measured as:*** *total # of acts experienced among 17 possible, including 5 acts witnessed, 5 received, 4 occurring to family members, and 3 perpetrated*			***Measured as:*** *binary variables indicating whether respondent (1) witnessed violence, (2) perpetrated violence, or (3) whether they or their family member were injured or killed*		
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD
Violence Witnessed	739	3.34	1.7	4801	1.95	1.69	420	0.15	0.36
Violence Received	739	2.1	1.8	4801	0.97	1.25	420	0.22	0.41
Violence to Family	739	2.1	1.4	4801	2.16	1.36			
Violence Perpetrated	738	0.7	1.4	4801	0.45	0.79	420	0.02	0.14
Civic Engagement:	***Measured as:*** *binary variable indicating respondent participates in civil society activities, or not*			***Measured as:*** *total # of civil society groups in which respondent participates*			***Measured as:*** *total # of civil society groups in which respondent participates*		
	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD	N	MEAN	SD
	741	0.46	0.5	4801	3.69	1.86	410	0.79	0.92
Note: Sample means weighted according to each dataset's pre-established sampling probabilities.									

The Independent Variable: Victimization Experience

Four different modes of victimization are measured: (i) witnessing violence, (ii) receiving violence (experiencing violence to one's person), (iii) experiencing violence to a family member (a family member is killed or injured), and (iv) perpetrating violence (see Table 1). In Uganda and Liberia, each form of exposure is measured as a tallied index of the different ways respondents can experience it. For example, the "violence on family" index includes (i) abducted parent; (ii) other abducted family member; (iii) family member with war injury; (iv) violent death of a parent; and (v) violent death of other family. Someone who experienced all five types of "violence on family" would receive a score of 5. In Tajikistan, exposure is measured as a binary variable indicating whether the respondent ever experienced each type. While the data from Uganda and Liberia treat receiving violence to oneself vs. a family member as distinct, these are measured together in the Tajikistan data.[3]

[3] The question reads, "Were you or a household member injured or killed during the conflict?"

Empirical Strategy and Challenges to Inference

I use OLS and logistic regression to estimate the relationship between each type of exposure to violence and future civic engagement. Since each case represents a distinct wartime context, I assume the original data specifications outlined by the authors of each dataset, including selection weights accounting for the probability of selection and attrition where necessary.[4] Like all research on outcomes of violence, the out-of-sample tests face multiple threats to inference. The first is that the relationship between violence and civic engagement may be due to some omitted variable other than exposure to violence. I take several steps to mitigate the most probable confounders in each of the three cases. In nearly every instance, this involved assuming the original specifications outlined by the datasets' authors, which reflect the most important confounders particular to each context. I also include local fixed effects to control for local-level confounders.

I also mitigate against potential selection into violence. For example, perhaps individuals already involved in civil society were more likely to be targeted for violence. To account for this, I control for individual and household characteristics that may make a respondent a target of violence. I also mitigate against the possibility that standard control variables, like education, may be affected by violence. Instead, I use a set of controls for pre-war characteristics that include both (i) individual characteristics not likely impacted by violence, such as age, gender, and ethnicity; and (ii) additional controls measured prior to the war. While these strategies cannot completely eliminate these challenges, the results I show are consistent across the three different wartime settings and measurement strategies, which suggests the relationship is robust, even in the face of inferential limitations.

[4] Since Blattman's (2009) study includes an analysis of this same relationship, I replicate that analysis.

Results

Table 6.2 displays the results. All estimates are robust to alternative specifications, including omitting controls and selection weights (not displayed). The results suggest witnessing violence is positively and significantly related to civic engagement across the cases. In Uganda, a respondent is 5.7 percentage points more likely to participate in a community organization with every additional act of violence witnessed. In Liberia, witnessing violence is associated with an average .11 point increase in civic participation, all else equal. In Tajikistan, witnessing violence is associated with an average .34 point increase in civic engagement, all else equal.

What is more, the impact of witnessing violence on civic engagement overwhelms any positive impact of other types of victimization experience. Perpetrating violence is never associated with civic engagement. The remaining forms of victimization – either as the direct target of violence, or violence happening to a family member – are inconsistently associated with civic engagement. In Uganda, a respondent is 4.7 percentage points *less likely* to participate in a community organization with every additional act of violence he experiences. Though this same relationship is positive in Liberia, the coefficient is small and barely statistically significant. Results are similarly inconsistent as regards violence experienced by a family member. Though having a family member killed or injured does not change one's likelihood of participating in civil society in Uganda, the impact of this same experience is positive and statistically significant in Liberia. There, experiencing violence to one's family member is associated with an average .13 point increase in civic participation, all else equal. This effect is on par with the effect of witnessing violence for Liberian citizens but does not appear at all in the Ugandan context.

Table 6.2. The Impact of Exposure to Violence on Civic Engagement

UGANDA		LIBERIA		TAJIKISTAN	
VARIABLES		VARIABLES		VARIABLES	
	(LOGIT)		(OLS)		(OLS)
Violence Witnessed	0.057**	Violence Witnessed	0.113***	Violence Witnessed	0.344***
	[0.025]		[0.025]		[0.064]
Violence Received	-0.047**	Violence Received	0.047*	Viol Received	0.454***
	[0.018]		[0.029]	(to person or family)	[0.110]
Violence to Family	0.009	Violence to Family	0.128***		
	[0.021]		[0.025]		
Violence Perpetrated	0.011	Violence Perpetrated	0.08	Violence Perpetrated	0.066
	[0.021]		[0.052]		[0.117]
Control Variables		***Control Variables***		***Control Variables***	
Age	0.191	Age	-0.030***	Age	-0.002
	[0.162]		[0.002]		[0.003]
Gender	n/a	Gender	0.347***	Gender	0.151
			[0.073]		[0.104]
Abducted?	0.026	Ethnicity: Minority Group	-0.218	Ethnicity: Pamiri	0.245
	[0.062]		[0.155]		[0.577]
Length of Abduction	-0.005**			Ethnicity: Uzbek	-0.321
	[0.002]				[0.200]
HH Head is Farmer	0.074			Ethnicity: Kyrgyz	-1.134**
	[0.063]				[0.495]
Household Land Size	0.001			Basic Education	0.011
	[0.001]				[0.931]
# Cattle in Household	-0.001			Secondary Education	0.041
	[0.001]				[0.806]
# Other Animal Stock	0.001			Higher Education	0.068
	[0.001]				[0.709]
# Plows in HH	0				
	[0.064]				
Pre-War Characteristics		***Pre-War Characteristics***		***Pre-War Characteristics***	
Father's Education	0.005	Former Community Leader	0.422***	Former Communist Family	-0.143
	[0.009]		[0.081]		[0.207]
Father No Schooling	0.031	Pre-war HH Land Size	0	Lived in Dushanbe in 1992	0.217
	[0.077]		[0.000]		[0.582]
Mother's Education	-0.005	Pre-war HH Income from Job	-0.11	Lived in Gharm in 1992	0.07
	[0.017]		[0.139]		[0.591]
Mother No Schooling	0.039	Prewar HH Income from Agric.	0.183**	Lived in Khatlon in 1992	-0.06
	[0.113]		[0.088]		[0.616]
Father Died prior 1997	-0.038	Prewar HH Unemployment	-0.288***	Lived in Pamir in 1992	(reference)
	[0.034]		[0.099]		
Mother Died prior 1997	-0.001				
	[0.069]				
HH Size prior 1997	-0.003				
	[0.007]				
Constant		Constant	3.379***	Constant	0.345
			[0.228]		[0.612]
Observations	737	Observations	4,469	Observations	399
R-squared		R-squared	0.177	R-squared	0.304

Standard errors in brackets

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

For readability, the following are not listed in the table:

local fixed effects,reference categories for binary variables in the Tajikistan model, and alternative measurements of age in the Uganda model.

In Tajikistan, being the target of violence and having a family member injured or killed are measured together. Combined, these two forms of exposure are associated with an average .45 point increase in civic engagement. This represents a .11 greater average increase in civic engagement than that produced by witnessing violence. However, an F-test suggests that these coefficients are not significantly different from one another and that, in fact, witnessing violence and experiencing violence directly (either as the target or via a family member) have similar effects on civic engagement among Tajik citizens. This mimics the results from Liberia.[5] However, the results from Uganda and Liberia suggest that personally receiving violence and having a family member targeted for violence represent distinct phenomena, have different impacts on civic engagement and should be analyzed separately. If the results from Liberia are any indication of what to expect in Tajikistan, it is likely that the large coefficient we observe in Tajikistan is partly due to the combination of these two distinct experiences and that disentangling one from the other would reveal a more moderate impact on the dependent variable. The data do not allow me to test this proposition.

It is worth noting that witnessing is measured differently in Tajikistan than in Liberia and Uganda, in substantively important ways. In the latter cases, respondents were asked whether they witnessed any of a series of violent acts, such as beatings, torture, and rape, in addition to skirmishes between competing forces. In Tajikistan, respondents were only asked if they had witnessed "fighting in your village." The form of violence respondents potentially witnessed was thus more extreme and possibly more proximate to the witnesses in Liberia and Uganda. In Tajikistan, in contrast, "fighting in your village" implies a comparatively mundane and perhaps more indirect experience. The effect of witnessing violence on civic engagement in Tajikistan

[5] Tests for multicollinearity between witnessing violence and receiving violence suggest multicollinearity does not explain this overlap in explanatory power.

thus should not be understated. Even with these potentially more moderated experiences with violence, the effect of witnessing violence is akin to the effect of experiencing it intimately. In sum, the results show that witnessing violence is the most robust, consistent driver of civic engagement across the cases. Across three different wartime contexts and various measurement specifications, witnessing is the only type of wartime exposure that is consistently and robustly associated with increases in future civic engagement. The role played by other types of exposure, including personal victimization, is either nonexistent, weak, or inconsistent across contexts.

Discussion

The analysis suggests that indirect victimization is the primary driver of the association between experiencing violence and future civic engagement. Across three different wartime contexts, witnessing violence is consistently and robustly associated with increases in civic engagement in a way that other types of exposure to violence are not. This finding supports H_1 and suggests that the empathy politics thesis is a more compelling explanation of civic engagement amidst violence than PTG. The overwhelming robustness of the effect of witnessing violence in particular supports one of this dissertation's chief claims: that not all experiences with violence are alike, nor do they shape civic engagement in analogous ways. If they did, the relationship between these other types of exposure and future civic engagement would trend in the same direction and share similar coefficients, neither of which is evidenced consistently in the data. Only witnessing violence is regularly robust across the three cases. What drives the unique power of witnessing? Any compelling explanation must be a) theoretically linked with civic engagement; and b) related to witnessing in a way that would not be true for other types of

exposure. In this section, I show that the empathy politics theory provides a more compelling explanation that fulfills these criteria than the predominant alternative theory, PTG.

PTG cannot explain the distinct and persuasive influence of witnessing violence we observe in the data. First and most obviously, the analysis does not suggest that the most direct violent experiences are driving the results. As noted earlier, PTG posits that only the most traumatic events spark post-traumatic growth processes. The victimology literature, meanwhile, suggests that events that happen "closest" to one's inner circle have the greatest emotional and cognitive impact. Taken together, we should expect that more direct experiences are more closely aligned with the severe trauma thought to spark post-traumatic growth. Thus, if post-traumatic growth were motivating this relationship, we would see aggression against respondents or their families driving the results, not witnessing violence happen to others, which is a more indirect form of victimization. Even in cases in which more direct experiences do shape civic engagement, like in Liberia and Tajikistan, the effect of witnessing violence matches their impact 1:1. This result belies the PTG expectation that more traumatic events yield greater impact on personal development.

Indeed, witnessing violence shared a strong, positive association with future civic engagement even in Tajikistan, where *witnessing* was measured as whether or not respondents had "seen fighting" in their village. Among the types of violence measured in all three surveys, this measure likely captures the most indirect form of victimization. It is difficult to imagine skirmishes between rival groups provoking a major life crisis or severe trauma for individuals already accustomed to living in a war zone. Shootouts between groups more often become part of daily life and are quickly normalized by citizens living in such spaces (Villareal 2015). Thus, with its emphasis on severe trauma that constitutes major life crises, PTG cannot explain the

relationship that witnessing these other, comparatively unremarkable and more indirect acts of violence has with future civic engagement.[6]

Even if there were reason to believe that violence experienced in these more indirect ways did exact some form of trauma on survey respondents in these three case countries, PTG still does not offer a theoretical logic for the unambiguous link between witnessing violence and civic engagement specifically that we observe in the data. As noted earlier in the dissertation, PTG does not explain why we see gains in post-traumatic personal development channeled through civic engagement so regularly when such growth could manifest in a multitude of ways, like learning a new skill or pursuing a lifestyle change. Even if there were a plausible reason to expect post-traumatic personal development born of violence to lead to politics specifically, the explicit link between one particular experience with violence, witnessing violence happen to others, and civic engagement remains unexplained.

In sum, the quantitative analysis supports H_1, the empathy politics thesis, which helps explain aspects of the observed trends in the data that PTG cannot. Most importantly, it explains why witnessing violence happen to others is the prevailing means through which exposure to violence is channeled into civic engagement. It also explains why witnessing violence exhibits a positive association with future civic engagement that is as or more influential than other, more direct experiences with violence, like direct, personal victimization within the survey data from Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan. In short, witnessing violence befall others stimulates processes of empathy among indirect victims who witness violence happening to others "like" them. These processes culminate in a sense of personal vulnerability that approximates the feelings the direct victim(s) of the event may feel which, in turn, prompts the indirect victims to pursue civic

[6] Bateson (2014) similarly finds a positive association between nonviolent, petty crime and victims' political engagement.

engagement to prevent their own victimization. As such, empathy politics also explains the unique link between witnessing in particular and future civic engagement that PTG cannot. As outlined in previous chapters, civic engagement is a logical outcome of empathic processes because it links the plight of the victim with the preventative interests of the indirect victim in a way that PTG does not.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I leveraged quantitative analysis of large-n data from three cases outside the theory-generating context, Monterrey, Mexico, in order to analyze the relationship between indirect victimization and future civic engagement. The analysis revealed that witnessing violence was more consistently and robustly associated with future civic engagement than other forms of victimization, including direct victimization. These findings are consistent with the observable implications of the empathy politics theory and reflect the processes of civic engagement I documented in Monterrey: experiencing violence in indirect ways increases the likelihood of an individual's future civic engagement. In fact, the results of the quantitative analysis suggest that these indirect experiences may in fact be more important to civic engagement than more direct forms of violence, like personal and familial victimization. Indeed, across three different wartime contexts, violence experienced more indirectly was consistently and robustly associated with increases in civic engagement in a way that more direct experiences with violence were not. The results of this analysis are congruent with the empathy politics theory and suggest that empathy is a more compelling explanation of civic engagement amidst violence than the prevailing theory, PTG.

7. CONCLUSION

This dissertation investigated the micro-level processes of civic engagement during violence. Specifically, it explores the link between exposure to violence and future civic engagement among citizens in one important case of contemporary conflict, Mexico's drug war, and within it, the key city of Monterrey. The project brings important light to the political consequences of violence in emerging, violent democracies, the increasingly common but poorly understood face of the post-Cold War political landscape. Addressing a critical gap in existing scholarship, the study theoretically distinguished between different forms of victimization in these violent contexts, particularly those experiences that go beyond direct, personal victimization. Recognizing that the majority of citizens will not become direct victims, the project sheds light on how citizens living in contexts of sustained violence encounter and interact with violence simply through living in violence's shadow. The project paid special attention to whether and to what degree experiencing violence *indirectly*, the experience of the political majority, shapes individual civic engagement and the mechanisms through which it has that effect. The research revealed that the relationship between individual experiences with violence and future civic engagement is not exclusive to the relatively rare experience of direct, personal victimization. When we account for the many ways citizens will encounter violence, we instead find that even the most indirect forms of violence, like hearing about violence through the mass

media, can provoke citizens to civic engagement when those instances of violence stimulate the individual's sense of empathy for victims.

Summary of Argument and Main Findings

Existing research identifies a relationship between individual experiences with violence and future civic engagement and political participation. However, the direction of this relationship is unclear and the mechanism driving it poorly understood. Additionally, much of the literature ignores the experiences of citizens who are not directly victimized, thus telling us little about how violence impacts the civic lives of the political majority. We are left asking, What is the relationship between violence and civic engagement? To explore this question, I conducted ethnographic qualitative research in one city, Monterrey, Mexico. Monterrey was the site of intense drug war violence between the years of 2009 – 2013. During that same time, rates of civic engagement increased. These city-level trends suggest Monterrey is an appropriate context in which to investigate the relationship between violence and civic engagement.

Citizens there were exposed to violence in a number of ways ranging from personal, direct victimization in which they were the targets of violence to more indirect ways, like hearing about violence on the news, and a range of more or less direct/indirect experiences between those two extremes. Drawing on my qualitative data, I documented this range of experiences and developed a conceptual framework - a spectrum of victimization - which provides the foundation for the dissertation's theory and empirical analyses.

Based on the qualitative data collected in Monterrey, I inductively generated a theory of civic engagement during violence. I argue that violence mobilizes citizens to civic engagement, particularly when experienced indirectly, and that it does so through the mechanism of empathy.

Empathy refers to the cognitive and affective process through which one comes to imagine themselves in the place of another and, in doing so, to feel emotions that reflect or approximate the feelings of the other. In violent contexts, empathy is stimulated through indirect exposure to a violent event in which a citizen perceives shared similarities between themselves and the event's direct victim(s). This sense of shared similarities facilitates perspective-taking, or imagining oneself in the other's place, which in turn sparks vicarious arousal. That is, an emotional shift in the individual that is provoked by the experience of another and approximates the other's emotions. In violent contexts, imagining oneself as the victim generates a vicarious sense of vulnerability as the individual realizes that the direct victim "could have been me." This shared sense of vulnerability prompts the individual to purse civic engagement activities that address violence as a way to prevent their own victimization. These civic engagement activities are a logical consequence of this empathic process because civic engagement is uniquely positioned to bridge the interests of the individual with the interests of another. I call this process of empathy-induced civic engagement "empathy politics."

In Chapter 4, I explored implications of my empathy politics theory for our knowledge of social movements. Though my individual-level theory cannot predict instances of collective action, it does shed light on one important aspect of collective responses to violence: what makes individuals politically available to participate in collective action? It also suggests why only some cases of violence become focal points of collective action while other instances of violence are dismissed by broad subsets of the population. I explored these implications through a comparative analysis of three key cases of violence in Monterrey and showed how empathy may have factored into the presence or absence of ensuing protest mobilizations. Such collective responses are one observable implication of my theory of empathy politics.

I then tested my theory within the Mexican context but outside the context of Monterrey through a nationally-representative survey experiment (Chapter 5). The experimental results did not confirm the theory. This is likely due to a mismatch between the core foundations of the theory and the experimental treatment in conjunction with mismeasurement of the dependent variable, which measured attitudes toward participation in civic activities rather than actual civic behaviors. Future iterations of the study will address these shortcomings, as outlined in Chapter 5.

Although the experimental results do not support the theory, additional tests of the theory do. In Chapter 6, I analyzed large-n survey data from three post-conflict societies: Uganda, Liberia, and Tajikistan. The quantitative analyses serve as both a test of the theory and of the theory's generalizability outside Latin America and outside the context of criminal war. Consistent with the empathy politics theory, I find that the most indirect experience with violence analyzed – witnessing violence happen to others – is a more reliable correlate of future civic engagement than either personal victimization or familial victimization. These findings suggest not only that these indirect experiences do share a relationship with civic engagement as expected, but that indirect victimization may be more important to explaining civic engagement than more direct experiences.

Alternative Explanations

The evidence I presented in this dissertation suggests that the empathy politics theory is a more compelling explanation for the relationship between exposure to violence and civic engagement than existing, alternative explanations. The most predominant alternative, PTG, does not explain the processes documented in this dissertation well. First, the data does not suggest

that the most traumatic violent experiences are driving the results. As noted previously, post-traumatic growth arises only from "major life crises," that is, events that are so traumatic they "shatter an individual's assumptions about the world" (Bateson 2012, 571). Among the types of exposure I documented on the spectrum of victimization, being the target of violence or losing a family member are more closely aligned with the "major life crises" referenced in PTG. Thus, if post-traumatic growth were motivating this relationship, individuals experiencing violence in more indirect ways are the least likely to be affected.

Perhaps we are wrong to assume that these indirect experiences are less traumatic than experiencing it directly. Some research participants saw horrific acts of violence, like burned bodies hanging from bridges or assassinations. Surely such acts would leave an indelible mark on those who experience them. Yet, research participants rarely pointed toward these experiences as motivation for their civic engagement. Instead, they were provoked to action by events that happened to other people but which made them feel like the victim "could have been me."

One might still argue that all acts of violence, regardless of how they are experienced, exact some level of trauma. If this were true, the outcomes observed in the qualitative data could be explained by a trauma mechanism. Yet, one would still have to explain the unambiguous link between exposure to violence and civic engagement specifically. PTG does not explain why we see gains in personal development channeled through civic engagement so regularly, relative to alternative outlets of post-traumatic growth, like improving one's familial relationships, health, or spiritual wellbeing. To explain this relationship, we would at least need to concede that experiences with violence exact some *special form of trauma* that is more likely to lead to civic engagement than other outlets. Even if there were a reason to think that post-traumatic personal development born of violence should lead to politics specifically, the explicit link between one

particular experience with violence – indirect experiences - and civic engagement remains unexplained.

The expressive politics and mobilizing networks explanations are similarly unsatisfying. Expressive politics suggests that political action provides an outlet through which to channel the negative emotional consequences wrought by experiences with violence (direct victimization or otherwise). Yet, the evidence I presented reveals important variation at the individual level in *who* takes on political action as a response to violence and *which* acts of violence spark civic mobilization processes. This suggests that not all citizens are emotionally impacted by all cases of violence. Thus, even if we were to concede that the civic engagement I observed in the data were driven by expressive factors, like channeling anger, hatred, or outrage caused by a violent act, we still have to explain why *only particular cases of violence* sparked that anger for any given person. Why would one specific case, like the Casino Royale massacre or the murders of Jorge and Javier, spark outrage for a citizen but not the numerous other cases of violence of which they are aware? Expressive politics cannot explain this critical variation. By revealing how empathic processes shape whether and how an individual citizen is emotionally stimulated by certain events versus others (what I call catalyst events), empathy politics explains this puzzle.

The mobilizing networks explanation, meanwhile, leaves the mechanism that brings all citizens along the spectrum of victimization to civic engagement undertheorized. It suggests that being enmeshed in civil society helps citizens overcome the hazards of high-risk mobilization. It thus cannot explain how or why citizens with no previous civic engagement experience (like most of the research participants in this dissertation) are transformed into new, political actors through experiences with violence, despite not being enmeshed in civil society networks already.

That theory further suggests that gaining a heightened awareness of violence through interacting with direct victims can make others more inclined to participate. However, it cannot explain why such awareness should be channeled into civic engagement activities like protest mobilization rather than other responses, like self-help prevention strategies. Empathy politics, meanwhile, suggests that empathizing with victims forges a common interest between direct and indirect victims, making behaviors rooted in a common good (civic engagement) a more logical outcome than behaviors rooted in self-preservation (self-help prevention).

Lastly, the theory of empathy politics more persuasively explains the findings of those studies that use aggregate data to theorize micro-processes. Put simply, most citizens will experience violence indirectly rather than experience it themselves, simply through living in the shadow of war. This helps explain why a relationship between exposure to violence measured on the aggregate and civic engagement still obtains at high magnitudes in these other studies.

In sum, the empathy politics theory explains observed trends in existing evidence for a relationship between exposure to violence and civic engagement that alternative explanations cannot. First, empathy for victims, rather than personal victimization, explains why violence that befalls others motivates civic engagement. It also explains why even the most indirect experiences, such as those one sees or learns about through the media, are just as influential in shaping civic engagement as other, more personal events like losing a family member. When individuals empathically identify with victims of violence, they are made to feel personally vulnerable, similar to feelings of vulnerability that victimization might provoke. Additionally, empathy politics can explain the unique link between indirect experiences in particular and future civic engagement by revealing how feelings of vulnerability prompt preventative measures in the form of civic engagement. What is more, the theory of empathy politics explains

important variation in *who* is mobilized by *which* cases of violence and the mechanism through which those processes are motivated. My theory thus advances this existing research by proposing a compelling and heretofore unrecognized mechanism explaining the observed relationship between exposure to violence and civic engagement: empathy for victims.

Theoretical Implications

This study makes four major contributions to the study of violence, civic engagement and political mobilization. First, this research makes a fundamental contribution to our understanding of the relationship between exposure to violence and civic engagement by moving our attention beyond identifying the association and pushing us instead to seriously interrogate the mechanism. Accordingly, the study makes an important shift in methodological strategy by incorporating careful, in-depth qualitative analysis of the catalyzing factors that provoke citizens in violent contexts to pursue civic engagement, or not. It thus opens the "black box" of civic engagement amidst violence. Doing so reveals a crucial but heretofore unrecognized mechanism explaining the puzzle of civic engagement amidst violence, empathy. Second, by conceptualizing victimization as a spectrum of experiences rather than a binary distinction, I open new pathways for leveraging unexplored variation related to citizen politics amidst violence.

Third, my research reveals a previously overlooked pathway to civic engagement: empathy. In doing so, I highlight the crucial role of emotions in general and empathy in particular in facilitating political action. My research shows that empathic identification with victims of violence can spark citizen intervention into political processes, often in pursuit of peace and when the participation costs are high. The intersection of emotions and mobilization in and out of wartime has been widely documented. Fear, for example, is either an implicit or

explicit precondition of many theories of ethnic conflict (Posen 1993; Kaufman 2001; Petersen 2002; McDoom 2012; Pearlman 2016). Other emotions shown to provoke violent political mobilization include hatred (Petersen 2002), indignation (Elster 1998; Costalli and Ruggeri 2015), anger (Petersen and Zukerman 2010; Zeitzoff 2014; Balcells 2017), resentment (Petersen 2002), humiliation (Fattah and Fierke 2009; Longo, Canetti, and Hite-Rubin 2014), and moral outrage (Erickson Nepstad and Smith 2001; Wood 2003).[1] The same can be said for emotions-based theories of non-violent political participation.[2] The political power of empathy during violence, meanwhile, remains relatively unexplored.[3]

In a similar vein, this study contributes to dialogue about the emotional underpinnings of political choice. In my theory, citizens are moved by affect to share feelings of vulnerability like those felt by victims of violence. This sense of vulnerability, or the sense that they too could be at risk, leads them to pursue civic engagement that prevents their own victimization. With its interest in preventative action that simultaneously addresses a common interest, this choice involves elements of both rational, self-preservationist behavior and altruism, thus raising new questions about the intersection of egoism and altruism on one hand and emotions and decision-making on the other (Elster 1998). Indeed, research over the past 20 years suggests that emotions play an integral role in constructing logics of behavior. Scholarship suggests that "emotions constitute potent, pervasive, predictable…drivers of decision making" (Lerner et al. 2015, 799). In fact, Lerner, et al. (2015) note that "many psychological scientists now assume that emotions

[1] List adapted from Costalli and Ruggeri 2017.

[2] See Jasper 2011 for a comprehensive review.

[3] Two exceptions include Krause (2017), who suggests violence and empathy generated support for the Colombian peace referendum, and Hartmann and Morse (2018), who credit trauma-induced empathy for shaping attitudes toward refugees.

are, for better or worse, the dominant driver of most meaningful decisions in life" (801). This dissertation thus opens new avenues for research into how and why emotions in general shape political choices and the conditions under which one powerful but understudied emotion – empathy – influences these processes.

And finally, this research draws our attention to an important but understudied aspect of the contemporary political landscape, democratic citizen engagement in contexts of sustained violence. The research describes how living in such contexts shapes the everyday civic lives of citizens, including whether they choose to participate in civil society, or not, and the cognitive processes behind those choices. This is true for those who experience violence directly and those who experience it indirectly merely by living in a violent environment. In this way, the research illustrates how violence creates the overarching political context in which these political decisions are made and suggests that when we apply existing theories of civic engagement and political participation to these contexts, we must be mindful of how violence may mediate or intervene in those known processes.

Directions for Future Research

The evidence I presented in this dissertation paves the way for several avenues of future research and breaks ground on a new empathy politics research agenda. The dissertation raises a number of new questions. First, what are the outcomes of civic engagement during violence? Does civic engagement during violence in emerging democracies facilitate democratic consolidation? Or, does it lead to chaos and disruption as Huntington (1986) might expect? In Mexico, at least one monumental act of legislation has emerged from citizen anti-violence movements, the Victims' Law. The Victims' Law recognizes victims as a special class of citizen

with special rights and benefits. In Monterrey, meanwhile, the Citizen's Participation Law was stood up only after Monterrey's wave of violence. This law guarantees citizens' rights to participate in local governance. What role did the violence and citizens' responses to it have in producing these outcomes? Answering these questions in future research will shed light on the long-term, democratic consequences of civic engagement in violent contexts.

Second, future research should address empathy's limitations. While the popular imagination tends to think of empathy as a mechanism to bridge social divides, my research implies an alternative, less encouraging outcome. If empathy is generated by shared similarities with others, citizens in violent contexts are more likely to empathize with (and therefore politically mobilize for) victims who are like them. In a context like Mexico, where those among higher SES strata have greater resources for political and civic action than those of lower SES strata, this may result in the *exacerbation* of existing social divides as these more privileged classes exercise their greater political and economic power for their collective interests but not for those of citizens unlike them. These processes imply what I call a "political economy of empathy," in which empathy for one group holds greater social, political and economic weight than empathy for another. Indeed, existing research by others has documented but not fully explained an apparent in-group/out-group dynamic that shapes whether and *for whom* citizens are mobilized to civic action through violence (Bauer, et al. 2016, 271). My theory of empathy politics may provide a compelling answer.

Lastly, by revealing empathy as a mechanism of civic and political mobilization, my research lays the groundwork for an empathy politics research agenda. As outlined in Chapter 4, future research should explore the role that empathy plays in processes of collective action. My current research shows how individuals might be willing to take such action. However,

empathy's role in whether and how social movements, protests, and other collective endeavors maintain their movement, recruit participants, craft mobilizing frames and narratives, and make claims of the state remains unexplored. We might also question the degree to which empathy motivates *violent* civic and political participation. My dissertation research focuses on nonviolent civic engagement but the role that empathy may play in violent civic responses, like vigilantism, warrants in-depth investigation. And, lastly, future research should explore the political import of empathy outside violent democracies. To what degree does empathy with victims of violence explain civic engagement outside these contexts? Current movements in the US like the Black Lives Matter movement, the #MeToo movement, and debates about gun laws (which usually resurge after armed attacks on civilians) would provide fruitful cases through which to analyze the broader explanatory power and relevance of the empathy politics theory.

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