

DIVERSIFYING PUBLICS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYZING AUDIENCE COSTS WITHIN A CHANGING SOCIAL CONTEXT

William G. Nomikos

Washington University in St. Louis

Elana Resnick

University of California, Santa Barbara

Abstract

Recent survey-based experimental research has provided evidence for the theory of audience costs. This theory posits that concern over “the national honor” (Fearon 1994) pushes audiences to vote against leaders who back down in an international crisis. Yet not all voters identify primarily with the nation or feel connected to its purported “honor.” Drawing upon critical race theory (Omi and Winant 1986; Crenshaw 1989), we argue that individual-level variation in the salience of social identities other than national identity (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, class, or the intersection thereof) can reduce the size of audience costs. Existing theories implicitly exclude these categories of identification by relying on a framework in which the unmarked (whiteness) is unmarked, or the “default” (Waugh 1982). We measure the effects of ethnic identification on audience costs using a novel experimental design embedded in a survey of public opinion fielded exclusively with Latinx respondents. We find that priming the salience of Latinx identity effectively eliminates audience costs. Our results suggest that audience costs depend upon the social context in which they are generated. More generally, we conclude that researchers should be wary before extrapolating theoretical and empirical IR studies conducted with unmarked identities at the foundation.

Please contact William Nomikos at wnomikos@wustl.edu for more details on this ongoing project.