

Effects of Political Leaders' Speech on Violence Against Women

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Motivation: The Influence of Political Leaders

- People's behavior is increasingly explained by their cultural identity, beliefs, and stereotypes (Bordalo et al., 2016; Enke, 2020; Bonomi et al., 2021; Grosjean et al., 2023)
- Individuals align their beliefs with the stereotypes of the group and political leaders incorporate these stereotypes
- Political leaders are high-profile individual who can encourage pro-social and anti-social behaviors explicitly or implicitly

Motivation: The Influence of Political Leaders

- There are several examples of explicit encouragement of anti-social behavior:
 - *“We are going to walk down to the Capitol. . . If you don’t fight like hell, you are not going to have a country anymore. . . ”* Donald Trump, January 6, 2021
 - The use of state radio to promote the Tutsi genocide in Rwanda (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014)
 - The use of radio by the Nazis to promote antisemitism (Adena et al., 2015)
- What about implicit encouragement?

If political leaders' actions and speeches are charged with biases and prejudice against vulnerable groups, they can unintentionally increase discrimination and violence against these groups

This Paper

- We examine the unintended consequences of a political leader's attitudes and rhetoric on violence against women
 - We study the case of former Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa and his derogatory treatment of women in his national radio and TV show *Enlace Ciudadano*
 - President Correa frequently engaged in sexist behavior, belittling and objectifying women (Ayala, 2014; Arias and Guerrero, 2017; Cerbino et al., 2017; Granda, 2017; Campo, 2018)

If the president legitimizes discriminatory gender roles and verbal violence, individuals can perceive that the cost of violence against women is lower than expected, thus increasing the probability of committing violent acts

Related Literature

- The effects of Donald Trump's campaign, election, and social media discourse on the rise of prejudices, xenophobia, hate crimes, and discrimination against Blacks and Asians (Edwards and Rushin, 2018; Bursztyn et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2021; Cao et al., 2023; Grosjean et al., 2023)
- The effects of state-run media on violence (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2014; Adena et al., 2015)
- The effects of violent media on violence (Dahl and DellaVigna, 2009; Card and Dahl, 2011; Cunningham et al., 2016; Lindo et al., 2020; Gibbons and Rossi, 2021)

Preview of the Results

- We find that on Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano* reported crimes against women increased between **2.6 and 5 percent**
- We find additional evidence consistent with a shift in social norms toward normalizing violence against women.

Background on *Enlace Ciudadano*

- *Enlace Ciudadano* was a weekly radio and television program created by President Correa in 2007 and aired until 2017
- The programs were broadcast on Saturdays, starting at ten in the morning, from different provinces
- Initially, the program's objective was to provide weekly updates on government projects, but it became a space where President Correa reinforced his culture and attacked his opponents
- President Correa verbally attacked women in 1 out of 2 programs, where he disqualified women, denigrated them, and exposed them as sexual objects (Arias and Guerrero, 2017)
 - Neurotic, corrupt, liar, deranged, mediocre, dishonest, bad-faith, and anti-country are some of the statements used by President Correa to denigrate women

Data

- Administrative data on every emergency reported to the ECU 911 between January 2014 and December 2017
- We observe each emergency's type, subtype, province of occurrence, date, and time
- The emergency's type and subtype are not coded but described in words
- We focus on emergency reports related to violence against women by hour, date and province level (1,284,000 observations)
- We match by date with every *Enlace Ciudadano* that aired between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2017
 - President Correa hosted 138 programs, Vicepresident Glas hosted 31, and the show was cancelled on 8 Saturdays

Empirical Strategy

We leverage on variation coming from the fact that President Correa did not always host the program

We estimate a Poisson model:

$$E[Reports_{p,t,h} | program_t, \theta_p, \delta_t, X_t] = \exp(\beta program_t + \theta_p + \delta_t + X_t \tau)$$

- $Reports_{p,t,h}$: number of reported crimes against women
- $program_t$: Indicator when President Correa hosted the show
- θ_p : province fixed effects
- δ_t : time fixed effects
- X_t : national holidays indicator

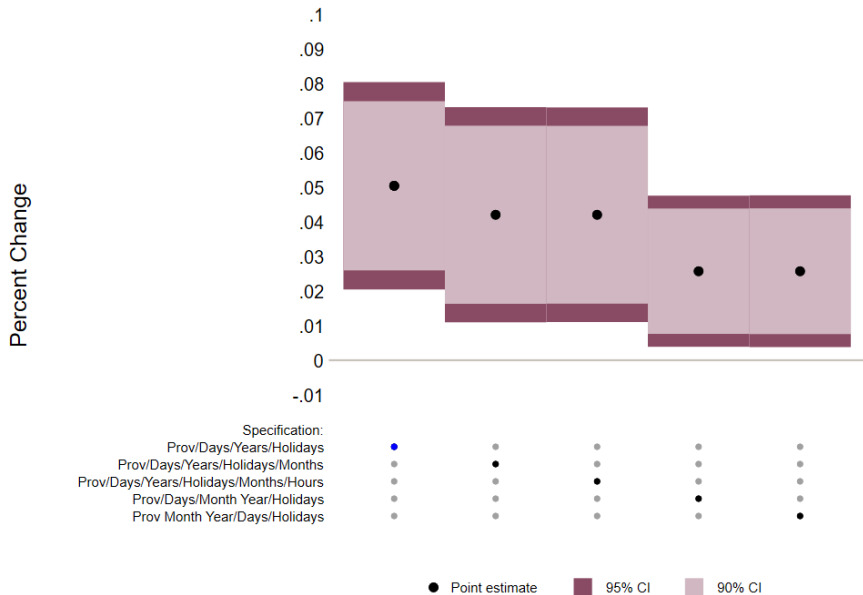
Empirical Strategy

The identifying assumption is that after controlling for the expected differences between years, months, days of the week, provinces, and time of the day, whether President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano* in a given week is essentially random

This identification strategy faces two potential challenges:

- Unobserved shocks that coincide with Saturdays when President Correa hosted *Enlace Ciudadano*
- We only observe reported crimes against women

Results



Robustness Checks

We face the following concerns:

- Misreporting of crimes against women
 - Crimes against women not identified as such in the data → include all violent crimes
 - Reporting increased substantially starting in 2015 → exclude 2014
- Unobserved shocks confounding the effect
 - Falsification 1: Look for effects when Vice President Glass hosted the show
 - Falsification 2: Look for effects on crimes against property

Robustness Checks

	Reported Crimes Against Women	Violent Crimes and Crimes Against Women	Reported Crimes Against Women since 2015	Hosted by President Correa vs. Hosted by Vice President Glas	Crimes Against Property
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	0.026 (0.011)	0.030 (0.009)	0.025 (0.010)	0.023 (0.010)	-0.007 (0.016)
Vice President Glas hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>				-0.007 (0.023)	
N	876,600	876,600	657,600	876,600	876,600

All estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects

Mechanisms

If social norms changed and individuals perceive a lower cost of committing acts of violence against women, individuals with a higher predisposition against women should react more

	Reported Crimes Against Women
President Correa hosted <i>Enlance Ciudadano</i>	-0.083 (0.060)
President Correa hosted <i>Enlance Ciudadano</i> x Violent Province	0.181 (0.089)
N	876,600

Estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects

Mechanisms

Incapacitation effect: if watching the show causes the effect then perpetrators should be watching it

	Before <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	During <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	After <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	Reported Emergencies Related to Alcohol Consumption
President Correa hosted <i>Enlace Ciudadano</i>	0.075 (0.031)	0.004 (0.022)	0.006 (0.021)	-0.011 (0.014)
N	876,600			

Estimates control for province, day-of-the-week, holiday, hour, and month-by-year fixed effects

The presence of incapacitation effects implies that an anticipation effect drives the results. This is consistent with salience of the new norms increasing in expectation of the show

Conclusion

- The results highlight the unintended consequences that can arise when political leaders serve as role models for large groups of people
- Even seemingly innocuous speech or actions can have far-reaching effects on vulnerable populations
- Political leaders should take a more deliberate approach to communication, carefully considering the potential impact of their words and actions (Implausible in a polarized world)
- Third parties should step in and provide factual cross-checking and context to the speech of political leaders (challenging if social norms in fact changed)

Thank you!

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