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Habyarimana, James, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner, and Jeremy M. Weinstein. 2009. *Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

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*Coethnicity: Diversity and the Dilemmas of Collective Action* is truly a landmark study. It brings to research on ethnic politics a central focus not on *whether* ethnic diversity shapes political outcomes such as public goods provision, but rather on *why* it may do so; it employs a series of both standard and original experimental games to sort out the reasons coethnics might be more prone to cooperate; it pays central attention to more general external validity limitations, yet also attempts to ascertain whether experimental results can at least illuminate patterns of public goods provision in the district of Kampala, Uganda from which the experimental study group was sampled. The authors combine their experiments with extensive fieldwork and interviews with focus groups, community members, and chairpersons of local community councils, making this a splendid example of multi-method research in the service of a deeply important topic.

The virtues of this ambitious volume are to be found in every chapter. After examining the relationship between ethnicity and public goods provision in the country, city, and district from which they select their experimental study group in the second chapter (the main point here is not to verify the negative relationship suggested elsewhere in the literature; still, it would have been useful to discuss the extent of ethnic diversity in those rich neighborhoods in which public goods are in fact provided), the authors carefully and persuasively separate “benchmark” demography (that used by government censuses) from subjective identification. They find that while individuals can most readily identify the benchmark ethnicity of co-ethnics from photographs (and their ability to do so intuitively increases in the information provided about native language and surname), there is marked variation across ethnic groups in the extent to which benchmark co-ethnics are identified as such. The authors also devise a very smart, original, and widely applicable measure of ethnic distinctiveness, based on the probability that members of any two groups will correctly identify coethnics and non-coethnics (and they express this measure as divergence from the 2x2 identity matrix that would result if members of both groups could perfectly discriminate between their ethnic brethren and non-coethnics).

This sets the stage for the analysis of their experimental games. Results from standard dictator games reject the idea that individuals care more about the welfare of their coethnics, at least in this context. (Survey results on preferred types and sources of public goods also do not suggest any significant differences in preferences across ethnic groups). There is somewhat greater evidence that “technology” might lead to coethnic cooperation—in particular, individuals believe

they can better assess the competence of coethnics, interact with them more frequently, and may better be able to track them down when asked. The authors design some especially innovative games to test these ideas, such as one in which individuals are asked to work in pairs to open a locked box (one member of the pair is given instructions and must then tell the other member, who is alternately a coethnic or non-coethnic, how to do it), and another in which an individual is rewarded for tracking down an individual (again either a co-ethnic or non-coethnic) after being given only the individual's photograph and district of residence. In the end, however, most of the explanation for co-ethnic cooperation in public goods games seems to come from norms of co-ethnic cooperation and sanctioning, which induce cooperation from "egoists" who would otherwise act selfishly but who can be induced to provide public goods when their behavior is observed by co-ethnics.

The volume pushes methodological frontiers in the study of ethnicity, and yet it also leaves some issues for future researchers to consider. For instance, the fact that the authors draw a random sample from the population of Mulago-Kyebando (an area of Kampala) introduces two sources of uncertainty into estimates of treatment effects *in this population*: the uncertainty that stems from random sampling, and the uncertainty that stems from random assignment to treatment and control. However, the standard errors and associated confidence intervals reported throughout the book only appear to consider the latter form of uncertainty (and sometimes rely on the perhaps impeachable assumptions of OLS models, rather than resting on the design of the experiments). This somewhat undercuts the usefulness of the authors' unusual and laudable step of recruiting the experimental study group through random sampling from a well-defined population. Another interesting issue relates to manipulability. While the authors are able to use their experiments to manipulate many aspects of the informational environment, one factor that emerges as having substantial explanatory power—whether subjects are "egoists," as measured by whether they ever share a portion of their maximum allowable earnings in a dictator game—is a non-manipulable feature of individuals. This raises interesting issues of interpretation and suggests some of the difficulties involved in uncovering deep causal factors at work in ethnic politics.

Space does not allow further discussion of the many vital contributions of this important book, including those drawing from their interviews of community leaders and residents of Kampala. These authors are extremely careful about what they can and cannot infer from their evidence; as they note, their findings about the relative importance of preferences, technologies, and strategy selection mechanisms might well vary in different contexts. Yet, the authors have provided a valuable template for careful analysis that could be replicated and extended in diverse contexts, thus allowing this variation to be investigated systematically. For this reason among many others, this wonderful book is certain to have a powerful impact on the study of ethnic politics and many other topics.