



Societal Responses to Natural Disasters: Helping in the Aftermath of the 2010 Chile Earthquake

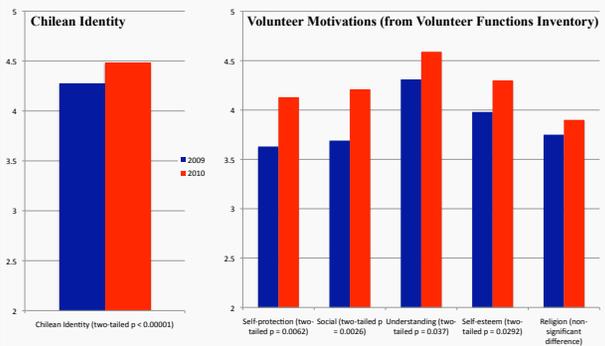
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INTRODUCTION

- Societies continuously face the challenge of responding to natural disasters. Responding to disasters may present a greater challenge in the future, as climate experts warn of the potential for more extreme weather ahead. To better understand societal responses to disasters, we investigated the effects of the 2010 Chilean earthquake on the people of Santiago, Chile, on the following:
 - National identities (Chilean Identity).
 - Motivations to volunteer (Volunteer Functions Inventory).
 - Behaviors (Money donations to various recipients).



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- Compared to those interviewed in 2009, those interviewed in 2010 more strongly endorsed their national Chilean identity, suggesting that the earthquake made people more aware of their common Chilean background.
- The prevalence of self-oriented helping motivations (e.g., self-protection, self-esteem) increased from 2009 to 2010. Suffering due to the earthquake was palpable and people may have struggled to explain the randomness of disaster. Self-oriented motivations may help people make sense of chaos.
- Money given to disaster efforts and the percentage of people reported giving help to institutions and charity increased from 2009 to 2010. Types of helping not related to the earthquake decreased in 2010, possibly because of the focus on disaster relief.
- The rise in Chilean identity and in helping motivations predicted a rise in providing disaster-oriented help (simple regression analyses).
- Our findings suggest that in the aftermath of a natural disaster, people come together under a national identity and are buffered by their self-oriented helping motivations, culminating in increased help to the victims.

DESIGN AND METHODS

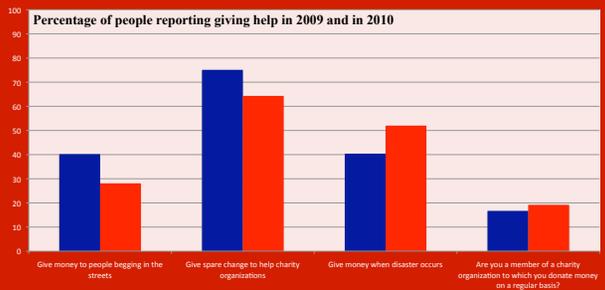
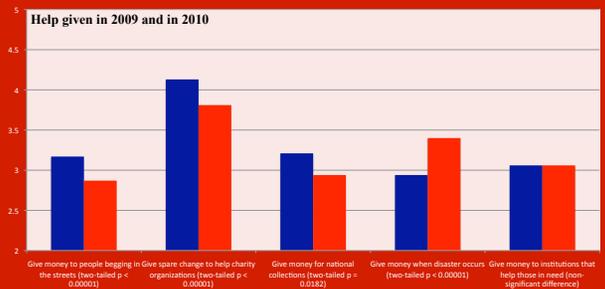
- Using an interrupted time series design, two random representative samples of citizens of Santiago, Chile, were interviewed, one before and one after the 2010 Chilean earthquake. The two samples from 2009 and 2010 are from the same region of Santiago and include participants from in-home face-to-face interviews.
- Note: With interrupted time series design, we can examine average change and investigate trends, but we cannot attribute these changes and trends to changes in individual characteristics.

PARTICIPANTS

- Interviews were made with 2033 participants (2009 $n = 644$, 2010 $n = 1389$), men and women, ages 18-64, from all socioeconomic groups.

MEASURES

- 46 measures and scales were included in the interviews. We report those of interest to the current investigation of helping behaviors:
 - Chilean Identity (four Qs, $\alpha = 0.76$).
 - Volunteer Functions Inventory (ten Qs, $\alpha = 0.51-0.83$).
 - Questions about frequency of giving help.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Relate amount of help given to (data from interviews not included here):
- People's attributions for poverty and perceptions of the poor.
 - People's preferred and provided helping orientation.
 - People's trust in other people and in political institutions related.
- Explore theoretical foundations, such as Terror Management Theory.

SELECT REFERENCES

- Penner, L. A., & Fritzsche, B. A. (1993). Magic Johnson and Reactions to People with AIDS: A Natural Experiment. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 23, 1035-1050.
- Snyder, M., Clary, G., Stukas, A. (2000) The Functional Approach to Volunteerism. In *Maio, G., & Olson, J. (Eds.), Why We Evaluate: Functions of Attitudes* (pp. 365-394). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

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