Trust is key motivator for individuals who protest on behalf of people different from them

August 21 2016

It appears that people who actively participate in demonstrations during social movements on behalf of those dissimilar to them do so for two important reasons.

First, they trust their outgroup peers. Secondly, the political climate in their home countries actually fosters both trust and political engagement, and this is particularly true in countries with well-functioning political institutions.

Such were the key findings from a new study—led by doctoral student Hyungjun Suh and Heidi Reynolds-Stenson, a doctoral candidate, both in the University of Arizona's School of Sociology—that included tens of thousands of participants in several dozen countries around the world.

"Trust in non-familiar people can be a key to explaining these kinds of participation," Suh said. He and Reynolds-Stenson will present their study at the 111th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA).

In the United States, Suh and Reynolds-Stenson said examples include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community members joining efforts to enhance nationwide equity for African-Americans, straight allies who chose to fight for LGBT rights during the recent nationwide equity movement, and white people who chose to link arms
with their African-American counterparts during the Civil Rights Movement.

For their study, Suh and Reynolds-Stenson relied on a subset of data culled from the World Values Survey's Wave 6, which featured data from numerous countries that was collected from 2010 to 2014. Using a common questionnaire, the World Values Survey, a global network of social scientists studying changing values and their impact on social and political life, collects data from people in nearly 100 countries around the world on issues related to human beliefs and values, making its data available to researchers and scientists around the globe.

Suh and Reynolds-Stenson's subset and subsequent analysis included more than 43,000 individuals in 41 countries, including the U.S., Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Nigeria, and Uruguay.

"We notice a theoretical gap in previous literature, which has assumed the effect of trust to be context-free," Suh said. "Trust can add to explanations of movement participation, which is not adequately explained by other theories."

Suh and Reynolds-Stenson explain that the current reality of micro-mobilization—swiftly organized efforts often propelled by ubiquitous social networking and digital technologies, like camera-enabled smartphones—helps people to more readily sympathize with certain social movements and protest acts.

But it was most often in those countries whose governments were more open to political engagement and protest actions—that had a more welcoming political environment—that people actively engaged in supportive protest acts, Suh and Reynolds-Stenson said.

Suh called for additional research, saying the link between the trust
people feel in others and why this ultimately leads them to participate in demonstrations remains understudied.

**More information:** The paper, "Contingent Effect of Trust?: Ingroup and Outgroup Trust on Social Movement Participation in Political Context," will be presented on Sunday, Aug. 21, in Seattle at the American Sociological Association's 111th Annual Meeting.

Provided by American Sociological Association

Citation: Trust is key motivator for individuals who protest on behalf of people different from them (2016, August 21) retrieved 26 November 2023 from https://phys.org/news/2016-08-key-individuals-protest-behalf-people.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.