

How social preferences change with (not) becoming elected

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Abstract

Social preferences may evolve endogenously with the context people live in or with life changing events. However, the existing literature often faces the difficulty of establishing causal relationships between these factors and preferences. We use a regression discontinuity design based on close election results in order to identify the causal effect of becoming elected in the village council on a set of pro-social preferences. Our data stems from lab-in-the-field experiments and surveys conducted in 30 villages in the Philippines two years after the election and carried out with elected councilors, candidates and normal citizens. We find that becoming a councilor fosters solidarity and trust measured both in the experiment and survey items. We find no evidence for changes in conditionality of behavior and personality traits.

Keywords: evolution of pro-social preferences, trust, solidarity, life changing event, lab-in-the-field experiment, Philippines

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