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Committee Project (#98822)

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1) Have any data been collected for this study already?

It's complicated. We have already collected some data but explain in Question 8 why readers may consider this a valid pre-registration nevertheless.

2) What's the main question being asked or hypothesis being tested in this study?

We employ a laboratory experiment where we simulate an environment where members of a committee are in charge of the redistribution of public funds generated by taxes imposed on private citizens. Committee members can secretly embezzle the funds. Citizens do not receive information on the occurrence of embezzlement. Periodically, committee members need to be replaced, and citizens have to decide whether they want to join the committee.

Our primary research questions are:

- 1) Do corrupt committees induce corrupt types to self-select into them? And do honest committees induce pro-social types to self-select into them?
- 2) Does the need to communicate the committee's decisions to the public, e.g., in a town hall meeting, induce existing committee members to be less corrupt? And does it induce more pro-social types to select into committees?
- 3) Does the possibility for citizens to ask questions to committee members during general meetings induce existing committee members to be less corrupt? And does it induce more pro-social types to select into committees?

3) Describe the key dependent variable(s) specifying how they will be measured.

We have two primary dependent variables: 1) The decision of committee members to embezzle public funds; 2) the decision of citizens to select into the committee.

Secondary dependent variables are: 1) The propensity of committee members to lie to the public (when communication is allowed), and the type of lie; 2) The willingness of citizens to ask questions to committee members during general meetings; 3) Citizens' beliefs about the honesty/corruption of committee members.

4) How many and which conditions will participants be assigned to?

We employ a 2 by 3 experimental design, where we vary the initial level of corruption of the committee (honest vs. corrupt), and the possibility for committee members to talk to the public and for the public to ask questions to committee members.

Subjects first play 4 pre-games (a cheating game, a charity donation game, a VCM game and a negative VCM game) that determine their "type" in the experiment. They then engage in the committee game. Subjects play in fixed "societies" made of 8 subjects - 3 committee members and 5 citizens - for 40 rounds. In each round, citizens engage in a real effort task that generates money into a public fund. Committee members engage in a task that can help augment the public fund, and then decide whether to embezzle the fund or redistribute it to the public. At the end of every 10 rounds, one committee member is forced to step down, and one citizen joins the committee. Citizens are asked whether they would like to join the committee, and the replacement is randomly selected among the interested citizens. Our 6 treatment conditions are as follows:

- T1: Honest committee & No Messages: The initial committee made of 3 "honest/pro-social" types. No communication with the public is allowed.
- T2: Honest committee & One-way Messages: The initial committee made of 3 "honest/pro-social" types. Every 5 rounds, committee members can agree on a public message to send to citizens.
- T3: Honest committee & Two-way Messages: The initial committee is made of 3 "honest/ pro-social" types. Every 5 rounds, committee members can agree on a public message to send to citizens, and citizens can pay a cost to send a message back to committee members.
- T4: Corrupt committee & No Messages: The initial committee is made of 3 "corrupt/not pro-social" types. No communication with the public is allowed.
- T5: Corrupt committee & One-way Messages: The initial committee is made of 3 "corrupt/not pro-social" types. Every 5 rounds, committee members can agree on a public message to send to citizens.
- T6: Corrupt committee & Two-way Messages: The initial committee is made of 3 "corrupt/not pro-social" types. Every 5 rounds, committee members can agree on a public message to send to citizens, and citizens can pay a cost to send a message back to committee members.

5) Specify exactly which analyses you will conduct to examine the main question/hypothesis.

For the analysis of the decision of committee members to embezzle the fund: We will conduct parametric and non-parametric tests of differences in the occurrence of embezzlement in each treatment, in round 1 and over time. We will also conduct regression analysis where the dependent variable is a committee member's decision to embezzle the fund in a given round, as a function the treatments, individual "type" and interactions between treatment

indicators and type.

For the analysis of the decision of citizens to self-select into the committee: We will conduct regression analysis of the decision to join a committee as a function of the citizen "type", treatment indicators and the interactions between type and treatments. In the most comprehensive specification, we will also control for citizens' beliefs about the corruption level of the existing committee members.

6) Describe exactly how outliers will be defined and handled, and your precise rule(s) for excluding observations.

The only exclusions will be based on failure to correctly answer comprehension questions regarding the rules of the games.

7) How many observations will be collected or what will determine sample size? No need to justify decision, but be precise about exactly how the number will be determined.

Due to budgetary constraints, we expect to have between 10 and 12 societies per treatment, i.e., between 80 and 96 subjects per treatment.

8) Anything else you would like to pre-register? (e.g., secondary analyses, variables collected for exploratory purposes, unusual analyses planned?)

Participants are university students. We will collect also participants' demographics, i.e., age, gender and field of study.

Prior to this pre-registration, we collected data from 48 subjects in T1 (Honest Committee& No Communication) and 48 subjects in T4 (Corrupt Committee& No Communication). This served to check that the methodology we designed to identify individual "types" through 4 the pre-games worked as expected.