On the Roots of the Intrinsic Value of Decision Rights: Evidence from France and Japan

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Abstract

In a recent experiment, Bartling, Fehr and Herz (2014, EMCA) found that Swiss individuals attach an economically meaningful intrinsic value to make a decision by themselves rather than delegating it to another person. We refine their analysis in order to disentangle how much of such value stems from (i) a preference for independence from others, (ii) a desire for power, or (iii) other motives such as a preference for self-reliance, and conduct a cross-cultural comparison between France and Japan. Our (preliminary) findings suggest that (i) Japanese and French individuals intrinsically value decision rights beyond their instrumental benefit, that (ii) self-reliance is the main rationale behind this intrinsic value in both France and Japan, that (iii) independence is a mild rationale in France and not in Japan, and that (iv) power is not a motivation in neither of the countries. These results bring new insights into the roots of the preference for being in control, which can be relevant for institutional design.

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