Leadership at School and the Formation of Character Skills

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Abstract

Recent research suggests that leadership experiences during school time are positively associated with later educational attainment and labor market outcomes. So far little is known about the mechanisms behind these leadership premia. This paper analyzes whether the engagement as class representative affects the formation of character skills in adolescents. The empirical analysis exploits data from the German Socio-Economic Panel Study, providing a large, nationally representative sample with detailed information on behavioral measures, including the Big Five personality traits. We address the selectivity of engagement as class representative with a flexible estimation strategy that is guided by an economic model of skill production. To estimate the ceteris paribus effect of being a class representative we combine a stratified propensity score matching approach with a flexible regression adjustment. We use different tests to check the plausibility and quality of our estimation strategy. Our findings are in line with the hypothesis that leadership experience during school time positively affects the development of character skills.

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