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The many faces of human sociality: uncovering the distribution and stability of social preferences

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Abstract: We uncover heterogeneity in social preferences with a structural model that accounts for outcome-based and reciprocity-based social preferences and assigns individuals to endogenously determined preferences types. We find that neither at the aggregate level nor when we allow for several distinct preference types do purely selfish types emerge, suggesting that other-regarding preferences are the rule and not the exemption. There are three temporally stable other-regarding types. When ahead, all types value others' payoffs more than when behind. The first, strongly altruistic type puts a large weight on others' payoffs even when behind and displays moderate levels of reciprocity. The second, moderately altruistic type also puts positive weight on others' payoff, yet at a lower level, and displays no positive reciprocity. The third, behindness averse type puts a large negative weight on others' payoffs when behind and is selfish otherwise. In addition, we show that individual-specific estimates of preferences offer only very modest improvements in out-of-sample predictions compared to our three-type model. Thus, a parsimonious model with three types captures the bulk of the information about subjects' social preferences.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvy018>

Posted at the Zurich Open Repository and Archive, University of Zurich

ZORA URL: <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-153593>

Journal Article

Other

Originally published at:

Bruhin, Adrian; Fehr, Ernst; Schunk, Daniel (2019). The many faces of human sociality: uncovering the distribution and stability of social preferences. *Journal of the European Economic Association*, 17(4):1025-1069.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/jeea/jvy018>

CORRECTION TO: THE MANY FACES OF HUMAN SOCIALITY: UNCOVERING THE DISTRIBUTION AND STABILITY OF SOCIAL PREFERENCES

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Journal of the European Economic Association 2019 17(4):1025–1069 DOI: 10.1093/jeea/jvy018

The appendix which appeared in the originally published version of this article is now available as Supplementary Data at the request of the Editorial team.

Also, the term ‘exemption’ in the abstract has been replaced by ‘exception’ at the request of the authors.

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