FAMILY NETWORKS AND DISTRIBUTIVE POLITICS

Marcel Fafchamps
Stanford University, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

Julien Labonne
Blavatnik School Of Government, University Of Oxford, Radcliffe Observatory Quarter

Abstract
We study the distribution of public services by local politicians when political support spreads through social networks. We sketch a model showing that incumbents target goods and services to individuals who would lead to the largest aggregate loss of support if they stopped supporting the incumbent. Those individuals have high betweenness centrality. Using data on 3.6 million households from the Philippines, we show that households with high betweenness centrality receive a greater number of public services from their local government. This result is robust to the inclusion of controls for program eligibility, detailed measure of family wealth and elite status, family ties with politicians, and other measures of centrality. (JEL: D72, P16)

The editor in charge of this paper was Paola Giuliano.

Acknowledgments: We thank Yann Bramoulle, Lorenzo Casaburi, Arun Chandrasekhar, Cesi Cruz, Pascaline Dupas, Sanjeev Goyal, Clement Imbert, Horacio Larreguy, Pablo Querubin as well as conference and seminar participants in Bolzano, Kent, Pamplona, NUS, Oxford, Stanford, Sydney and Vancouver for comments. We would like to acknowledge the use of the University of Oxford Advanced Research Computing (ARC) facility in carrying out this work (http://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22558). The Philippine Department of Social Welfare and Development kindly allowed us to use data from the National Household Targeting System for Poverty Reduction and Pablo Querubin kindly shared data. All remaining errors are ours.

E-mail: fafchamp@stanford.edu (Fafchamps); julien.labonne@bsg.ox.ac.uk (Labonne)

Journal of the European Economic Association
Preprint prepared on 26 March 2019 using jeea.cls v1.0.