

Abstract

The first chapter investigates the use of high-powered incentives for civil servants in the public sector by analyzing possible manipulations of drugs seized by Russian police. First, using a bunching estimator, I document a significant excess mass of heroin cases above the punishment threshold. Next, combining the bunching with an event study framework, I study the incentives for police officers to manipulate, and find evidence consistent with the motivation arising from officers' performance evaluations. Further negative consequences of inappropriate incentives are inequality in the enforcement of law and prolonged sentences for offenders.

The second chapter investigates the influence of the Orthodox Church network in Post-Soviet Russia on individual political preferences and election results. I use the numbers of monks and nuns from Orthodox monasteries operated in the Russian Empire before the Revolution as historical religious markers to construct a Bartik-style instrument (1991). I find that a denser Church network increases the average local approval rating for the current president and the share of votes cast for the government candidate in presidential elections. Further analysis of mechanisms shows that, today, the extending Church network is increasingly less able to attract people to attend church and to substantially increase the share of practicing believers. However, it does affect the political preferences of those who, regardless of their faith in God, self-identify as Orthodox. The potential channel for persuasion is media.

The third chapter (jointly with Andreas Menzel and Christoph Koenig) studies the long-run effects of personal experience of work-life disruption during the transition period in the 11 former communist CEE countries on life satisfaction and political left-right orientation. We implement an instrumental variable strategy, constructing an instrument which captures the potential exposure of a person to the country-wide sector-specific disruption shock. We find a significant negative impact of transition disruption on current life satisfaction, which is stronger for men without university degree. We also identify a number of negative long-run effects on marital status, perceived control over life, and some health outcomes (likelihood of drinking and smoking). Further, we document that a career disruption during the transition period tends to shift the political orientation to the right side of the left-right scale.