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Hey Look at Me:
The Effect of Giving Circles on Giving^{*}

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Abstract

Theories abound for why individuals give to charity. We conduct a randomized field experiment with a Yale service club and find that the promise of public recognition increases giving. Some may claim that they give when offered public recognition in order to motivate others to give too, rather than for the more obvious expected private gain from increasing one's social standing. To tease apart these two theories, we also conduct a laboratory experiment with undergraduates. Our evidence is not consistent with individuals giving primarily because of a desire to influence the gifts of others. We conclude that social image motivations are a central determinant of giving when gifts are publicly recognized.

Keywords: prosocial behavior, experiments, voluntary contributions, social image

JEL: D64, C90, L30

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