Abstract

According to both social value orientation and social utility models (in social psychology and economics respectively), people with a pro-social value orientation cooperate in the one-shot prisoner's dilemma game because they internalize payoffs to other people as a part of their social utility. To examine the validity of these models, we used an eye-movement tracking device to determine whether cooperators in one-shot PD games pay more attention than defectors to the other player's payoffs . We predicted that differential allocation of attention would emerge when, and only when, a decision-making heuristic was suppressed by increasing the complexity of the payoff matrix, thereby forcing players to engage in deliberate decision-making . Results of a one-shot PD experiment with 62 players supported this hypothesis; cooperators using a complex payoff matrix (heuristic-suppressed condition) gazed longer at their partner's payoffs than did defectors, but no difference was observed between cooperators and defectors using a simple payoff matrix (control condition). Moreover, cooperators in the control condition, spent about half of their gaze time looking at the mutual cooperation cell, focusing primarily on their own payoff. (180 words)