Abstract

Partner selection is ubiquitous in social exchange of everyday life. Partner preferences are developed within individuals. Across individuals, these preferences are matched to generate a pairing structure for social exchange. In this paper, I present an evolutionary model and report an experimental study to illustrate how partner selection facilitates the emergence of fairness in the Ultimatum game when partner preferences are driven by self-interest. In a zero-sum game, such as the Ultimatum game, preference for generous actors as partner can be seen as an act of self-interest maximization. Self-interest-driven partner preference, however, does not give rise to prevalence of egoism in allocation behavior. Instead, it is more beneficial than other partner preference structures, such as indifferent preferences, for fairness to emerge. The result shows that self-interest and prosociality in different behavioral domains are not necessary irreconcilable; it is possible that one breeds the other, as shown in the study.

Key Words: Fairness; Self-interest; Partner Preference, Ultimatum Game,
Two-Sided Matching