Grid/group Cultural Theory and Behavior in Ultimatum Games

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Abstract

This study introduces a methodology that builds a cultural profile of subjects using survey questionnaires, then uses the results to predict variations in behavior in controlled computer-mediated experiments across a range of conditions. 288 subjects were provided with pretest surveys, which were used to generate measures for each subject along grid and group, two very prominent and general cultural dimensions drawn from social/cultural anthropology. Grid was hypothesized to induce enforcement of social norms of reciprocity, and group to induce altruism towards other individuals. These subjects were then placed in incentivized computer-mediated interactions involving ultimatum games. Overall, it was shown that the group attribute was positively and significantly correlated with the level of individual offers in the standard ultimatum game. High-gridness individuals did reciprocate more than low-gridness individuals. Thus, average amount of dollars to divide was significantly lower for high-gridness designators in the convex version of ultimatum game.

JEL classification codes: C7, C91, C92, D64, M14, Z1.

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