

Playing Both Roles: Role Reversal Effects and Culture in Simple Games

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Abstract

Dictator, ultimatum bargaining and trust games have been used ubiquitously in economic experiments to study other-regarding behavior. While altruism, reciprocity and preference for fairness are the most discussed explanations for other-regarding behavior in such games, the origins of such tastes may lie in cultural values. The behavior may be further affected by experimental design choices on whether subjects play a game in both roles, or just in one role. While some studies adopt the role reversal setting and others do not, the effect of this variation in design is still not well understood. We consider the significance of cultural values along with the role reversal effects in a unified study using dictator, ultimatum bargaining and trust games. We further discuss several explanations of observed behavioral patterns.