

# Cooperative Choice

## *Cooperative and non-cooperative motives and their consequences*

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# Current trends in org. studies

- Focus is on social context and away from individual factors
- Also true for cooperation studies. Little focus on individual differences.

# This presentation

To discuss the multiplicity of cooperative motives that affect cooperative choices in the context of a social dilemma.

# Road map of presentation

- Using social dilemmas to study cooperation
- Critique of three current approaches
  1. Individualistic vs. Collectivist cultures
  2. Self-interest
  3. Situational determinism
- Multiplicity of motives
- Ways of talking about these motives
- Directions for the future work



# Social Dilemmas

A *social dilemma* is a situation in which if everyone follows their self-interest, everyone is worse off. The best pay-off to an individual is if everyone else cooperates, while s/he defects.

# Social Dilemmas: Also Known As

- Tragedy of the Commons
- Public Goods problems
- $n$ -player prisoner's dilemmas
- Problems of cooperation.
- Free-rider problem



# Examples of Social Dilemmas

- Overgrazing on a common field
- Failure to conserve water during a drought
- Raising one's own voice to be heard in a crowded room
- Shirking on group effort



# Dominant explanations

1. Individualistic vs. Collectivist cultures
2. Self-interest
3. Situational determinism





# What's wrong with culture

- Fails to account for differences within cultures
- Provides very few dimensions along which things vary
- Possibly circular
- Often based on 'weak' anthropology



# What's wrong with self-interest

Either:

- Sweeps the puzzle of cooperation under a rug, *or*
- Is entirely circular and meaningless.

# What's wrong with situationalism?

Situationalism is correct, unless it . . .

- Leaves no room for individual variation.
- Fails to provide psychological account of link between situation and behavior.

# The multidimensional view

- There are many “little” psychological factors
- People differ in how much different ones play a role
- Situations differ in how they “trigger” different motives
- No Grand Theory



# The motives

# The literatures

Many of these motives have been discussed *separately* in a variety of different literatures. In what follows

Exp. GT = Experimental Game Theory

Soc $\Psi$  = Social Psychology

Cog $\Psi$  = Cognitive Psychology

Poly = Political Science/Economics



# Some cooperative motives

- Altruism: A desire to help others. (Exp. GT, Soc $\Psi$ )
- Everyday Kantianism: “If I don’t do it, who will” (Elster, Goldberg & Markóczy, Cog $\Psi$ , Exp. GT)
- Elite participationism: Likes being at the start of something good. (Elster, Poly)

# Some more cooperative motives

- Mass participationism: Enjoying being part of something big (Elster, Soc $\Psi$ , Poly)
- High Efficacy: “Every little bit counts; you can make a difference” (Soc $\Psi$ , Zimbardo)
- Cooperative Fairness: “It would be wrong of me to defect if others are cooperating” (Soc $\Psi$ , Exp. GT, Croson)





# Some uncooperative motives

- Fear: Fear of being a sucker. (Exp. GT)
- Greed: Benefits of free-riding (Exp. GT)
- Spite: Wishes to maximize advantage *relative* to others (Exp. GT)

# Some more uncooperative motives

- Uncooperative Fairness: “It isn’t fair for me to cooperate if others are defecting” (Soc $\Psi$ , Exp. GT, Croson)
- Low efficacy: “My contribution is just a drop in the bucket”. (Chiates, et al.)
- Cool: “I don’t follow the crowd or social norms” (Chiates et al.)



# No Grand Theory

The implication of this approach which some may find depressing is that we will never have a general theory of collective action . . . If social scientists forgot their obsession with grand theory, and looked instead for small and medium sized mechanisms that apply across a wide spectrum of social situations, some mathematical economists and Parsonian sociologists (to name but a few) might go out of business, but the world would be a better-understood place (Jon Elster, *The Cement of Society*).



# Problems of Grand Theory

Grand theories and categories have forced prior researches into noticing *only* those motives that fit the categorization, from what ever literature they come.



# Groupings of motives

Even with no grand categorization it is still useful to provide some groupings of these 12 motives. Such groupings might be

- Cooperative vs. uncooperative
- Conditionality on what others may do
- Sensitivity to social influence



# Conditionality on others

	Coop	Un-coop
Cond.	mass, fairness	fear, fairness, cool
Uncond.	altruism, elite, high efficacy	greed, spite low efficacy



# Measures and Models

- Some motives have been very well researched (eg, Fear and Greed), others have merely been proposed (eg, Elite participationism).
- Only some motives have been shown to persist to a variety of situations, but most haven't been subject to such study.

# Measures and Models continued

- Only some motives can be easily formally modeled with existing techniques of experimental game theory, others require extensions to the existing formalisms.
- Some motives may turn out to be irrelevant for social dilemmas in general or cooperation in organizations in particular (eg, mass participationism)





# Are others really wrong?

- Situationalism isn't wrong, but despite its promises, it forces a blindness to the multiplicity motives.
- Cultures may certainly vary in the degree to which they support some of these motives. But there is no single "norm of cooperation".



# Resources

The full paper, these slides, and possibly other information about this project can be found at:

<http://www.goldmark.org/livia/papers/coc>