

ABSTRACT

Trust is an important ingredient of human interaction. Would two players trust each other more when they play the game directly with each other or the use of an "agent" that play the game on their behalf may promote such trust? The paper conducts an experiment in which the players play different variations of the trust game. While in the original trust game it is the second player that decides how much he wishes to return to the first player, in our experiment we let an agent make this decision. All the treatments in our experiment were strategically equivalent and the agents' payoffs were identical and independent of their decisions. We vary the description or the title of the agent. In the first treatment the agent was labeled just as an agent. In the second treatment he was labeled as the agent of the first player while in the third treatment he was labeled as the agent of the second player. In the last two treatments we strengthen the association of the agent with the players such that the "source" of the agents' payment can be identified. While all the treatments have been strategically equivalent there was an interesting variation in the players' payoffs but the only effect which we found significant is that the agents' returns have been higher than those of the original players.