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The (un)willingness to reward cooperation and punish non-cooperation

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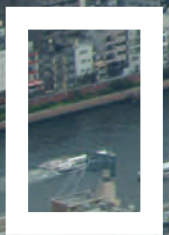
The central theme of this dissertation is the (un)willingness to reward cooperation and punish non-cooperation. Whereas rewards and punishments can be effective means to enhance cooperation in social dilemmas, a prerequisite for any effect of sanctions is that people are willing to administer them. In the present work, I shed more light on this important – yet long neglected – topic. The aim is twofold: (1) identifying determinants of the use of sanctions in social dilemmas, and (2) testing the central proposition that people are not as willing to punish non-cooperative choice behavior as they are willing to reward cooperative choice behavior. The results of this dissertation show that the type of sanction people have at their disposal – either reward or punishment – is as primary determinant of the willingness to sanction. In addition to sanction type, I argue and demonstrate that the type of social dilemma people face (Public good dilemma versus Common resource dilemma), the extent of personal responsibility people have for the sanction (Individual responsibility versus Joint responsibility), and the timing of the sanctioning decision (Beforehand versus Afterwards) are also important determinants of the (un)willingness to sanction in social dilemmas. These findings reveal that there are not only psychological processes at play that foster sanctioning, but also psychological processes that hamper sanctioning. By taking a closer look at people's (un)willingness to incur the costs of rewarding cooperative choice behavior and punishing non-cooperative choice behavior, this work thus provides a more comprehensive view of the potential that sanctions can have to solve social dilemmas in the real world.



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