Motivation & Research Questions

Cooperation and economic efficiency enhanced by informal agreements
- Theoretical perspective: promises are cheap talk
- Experimental evidence: promises are more than cheap talk (e.g. Sally, 1995)
- Motives to keep a promise can be rooted in social preferences:
  - Theory of guilt aversion (e.g., Charness and Dufwenberg, 2006)
  - Social norms (e.g., Vanberg, 2008)
- Gender differences in social preferences and related fields (e.g., Croson and Gneezy, 2009)

Research Agenda
- Are there gender differences in promise keeping?
- Specific research questions on gender differences
  - in the share of kept promises?
  - in the motives for promise keeping?
  - in the understanding of promises?
  - in mixed and single gender interactions?

Related Literature

Gender differences in:
- Social preferences (e.g., Croson and Gneezy, 2009): equally pronounced for men & women, but women’s social preferences have a higher range than those of men
- Trust (e.g. Chaudhuri and Gangadharan, 2003): men trust more (or at least equally) than women, whereas women are more (or at least equally) trustworthy than men
- Lying and honesty (e.g., Rosenbaum et al., 2014): women are more (or at least equally) likely to tell the truth
- Group composition: most studies find single gender teams to be more (or at least equally) cooperative than mixed gender teams (e.g., Dufwenberg and Muren, 2006)

Experimental Design

Basic game (Vanberg, 2008)
- Random matching into pairs
- Communication within pairs: both can send two messages (160 characters)
- Assignment and information about roles (dictator and receiver in each pair): roles determined by nature and equally likely
- Partner switching (in half of all pairs)
- Review own conversation /conversation of new partner
- Dictator decision
- Belief elicitation (first order and second order beliefs)

Main Results

Roll decisions contingent on promise and condition

Motives for promise keeping

Beliefs

First order beliefs
- Promises raise expectations (FOB promise received > FOB no promise received, p<.01)
- More pronounced for women (FOB promise received (women) > FOB promise received (men), p<.01)

Second order beliefs
- Dictators anticipate that promises raise expectations:
  - Own promises (no switch: SOB promise > SOB no promise, p<.01)
  - Own promises as well as promises made by others
    (SOB promise in no switch = SOB partner received promise)
- No differences between own promises and promises made by others
  (SOB promise in switch = SOB partner received promise in switch, p<.17)
- No gender differences in promise keeping cannot be explained by different beliefs about receivers' expectations

Summary

Promises are a predictor of cooperative behavior
- Women keep more promises than men (own promises)
- Men and women differ in their motives for promise keeping
  - Men: promises are a commitment only to a specific subject
  - behavior does not differ across mixed and single gender interaction
  - Women: the own promise and the expectations of the receiver matter
  - in single gender interactions it is sufficient that women communicate and interact with the same partner or they made a promise

Understanding of promises
- Promises raise expectations of receivers (more for women)
- Own promises and promises made by others are understood as promises

Selected Literature


Contact: Janina Kleinknecht, Helmholtzstr. 18, 89081 Ulm, Janina.Kleinknecht@uni-ulm.de