Do social competencies facilitate success in social interactions?

The present experiment introduces a new paradigm for examining play behavior in the iterated prisoner's dilemma paradigm (PD). In contrast to the dilemma situation with only one game opponent that has been used thus far, here, the participants interact with five fictitious opponents within one game. As the independent variable, it was varied for 120 participants whether they played against all five opponents in a random order (change condition) or whether they competed against each of the opponents in succession (block condition). It is assumed that the change condition simulates the social interactions of a real environment more accurately, because in everyday life we interact with many people, and we seldom find ourselves in a continuous reciprocal exchange with only one person. Thus, social skills may be more important in a change condition than in a block condition. As the dependent variable, the participants' score in the game was recorded. In addition, the memory performance regarding information about the opponents, and a measure of the general social skills of the participants were assessed. Results show that the memory performance and social knowledge lead to higher scores only in the realistic play condition with changing opponents, but not in the block condition of the game.

Keywords: cooperation, social skills, prisoner's dilemma