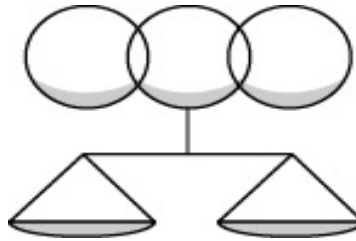


GRUTER INSTITUTE

FOR
LAW AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH



The Evolution of Cooperation

Virtual Squaw Valley Conference

October 15 – 17, 2020

**Convened by the Gruter Institute for Law & Behavioral Research
With Support from Ann & Gordon Getty**

Co-Organizers:

Monika Gruter Cheney, J.D.

Oliver Goodenough, J.D.

Andrew Torrance, J.D., Ph.D.

Isabel Behncke, Ph.D.

Topic Précis

How does cooperation work? This topic is of critical importance when studying any gregarious, group-living species. In the midst of a global pandemic, we see the importance of cooperation in nearly every aspect of life, perhaps more than ever. Darwin is often said to have left cooperation “unexplained.” Subsequent evolutionary biologists such as W.D. Hamilton have spent decades seeking to understand it. It is particularly important for humans. Cooperative groups allow the division of labor, the specialization of abilities, and productive trade. This was recognized in the 18th Century by the astounding Scottish polymath Adam Smith in The Wealth of Nations:

The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour.

When you apply this approach across entire countries or even the globe, the productive power of groups of humans is huge. And the advantages are not just on the production side. Sharing of resources across groups provides important insurance against short term failure by any given member. If a solitary hunter or gatherer has a run of bad luck, it can be fatal. But if the individual is a member of a group with a food-sharing ethic, they can be sustained from the success of others until their individual luck changes and they regain the potential for self-sufficiency. The many kinds of insurance in our contemporary markets are scaled up applications of similar principles. The extraordinary power of human exchange, as impressively detailed in Matt Ridley’s book The Rational Optimist, is another example of the productive potential of cooperation.G

The study of cooperation has sometimes been couched as a matter of “selfishness vs. altruism.” But is this really the case? The pay-offs of cooperation are often large, and acting cooperatively is potentially a very self-regarding act. What makes it problematic are two factors: (i) will there be defection or predation at some point in the production cycle that will derail the pay-offs, and (ii) will the distribution of the pay-offs make participation a sensible action for all involved in the cooperative effort?

Much of the study of cooperative action has focused on the game structures that can help to stabilize cooperation. Proposed solutions have included: repeat play; dealing with kin; costly signaling/commitment; “hostages;” and physical mechanisms. Some of this study has focused on “mechanism design,” which looks at the structure of the game-forms involved and at how they may be altered by intentional intervention. In the human context, these interventions can be called “institutions,” and one of the most important domains of institutional design and creation is law.

Thursday, October 15: 9:00 am – 1:00 pm Pacific Time

Session I: The Evolution of Cooperation

Chair: Monika Cheney

Sample Sub-Topics include:

- An Evolutionary Perspective
- Behavioral Insights

Speakers:

Mati Patel, Yoav Ram & Marcus Feldman, Erol Akçay,
Herb Gintis, Ullica Segerstrale, Joshua Plotkin

Session II: The Evolution of Cooperation – Continued

Chair: Oliver Goodenough

Sample Sub-Topics include:

- Non-human Primates
- Human Behavior

Speakers: Kaleda Denton & Marcus Feldman, Sarah Brosnan, Isabel Behncke, Andrew Torrance

Friday, October 16: 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm Pacific Time

Session I: Cooperation in Economic Systems

Chair: Isabel Behncke

Sample Sub-Topics include:

- Human Behavior and Markets from Adam Smith to Today
- Theories for facilitating Cooperation: Repeat Play, Costly Signaling, Investment
- Mechanism Design

Speakers: Lynne Kiesling, Kevin McCabe, Bob Frank, Charles Taylor, Gordon Getty

Session II: Cooperation in Legal Systems

Chair: Siri Terjesen

Sample Sub-Topics include:

- Law as the Codification of Cooperation
- Cooperation in the Context of Complexity & Scale
- Managing Defection: Legal Remedies

Speakers:

Roberta Romano, Dan Katz, [Katherine Strandburg], Peter Winn, Pamela Dixon, Dorothy Glancy, Rebecca Purdom

Comments: Claire Hill

***** Optional: Virtual Festival of Beverages on Zoom immediately following the session**

Saturday, October 17: 10:00 am – 2:00 pm Pacific Time

Session I: Institutions and Cooperation

Chair: Andrew Torrance

Sample Sub-Topics include:

- Existing Institutions and Cooperation
- New Institutions and Cooperation: AI, Blockchain, Gene Editing

Speakers: Simon Levin, Andrew Torrance, Jacob Levin, Siri Terjesen, Max Etschmaier, Richard Webb, Oliver Goodenough, Amedeo Santosuosso, Jeff Stake, Tim Cummins

Session II: Lessons for a Pandemic

Chair: Monika Cheney

Sample Sub-Topics include:

- Cooperation at Large Scale and Family Scale... Benefits and Costs
- Innovation During a Pandemic: Freedom's Forge to Project Warp Speed for a Vaccine
- Behavioral Economics
- Regulating Risk: Legal Perspectives
- Regulating Risk: Scientific Management
- Regulating Behavior
- Privacy
- Information Processing & Policy Making in a Super Complex System
- Cooperation in Scientific Research
- Intellectual Property Re Scientific Research in a Pandemic

Discussion by All Participants