The Impact of Political Group Membership and Perceived Threat on Trust
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Background
• People tend to hold positive beliefs about their own social group (in-group) compared to those not part of their social group (out-group)¹
• Perceived threat can also influence facial trustworthiness and likability²
• We used a trust game to investigate the impact of political group membership and perceived threat on levels of trust
• Hypotheses:
  • Participants will share more points with trustees whose political affiliation is associated with their political ideology
  • Participants with higher levels of perceived threat for Democrats or Republicans will share less points with trustees belonging to those groups

Results

Method
Trust Task
• 4 points endowed to participant per trial
• Participants share 0-4 points with trustee (computerized partner)
• Points shared to trustee are quadrupled
• Trustee either shares half the points back or keeps all the points
• Predictor variables:
  • Participant Ideology (1 – Conservative, 7 - Liberal)
  • Perceived Threat (1 – Low, 7 - High)
  • Trustee Party (Democrat or Republican)
• Outcome Variable = Mean points shared by participant

Conclusions
• More liberal participants tend to trust Republicans less than Democrats
• Higher perceived Republican threat is associated with less trust towards Republicans
• Mean-shift towards liberal in sample may have impacted results

References