

Abstract

In a series of five studies, we demonstrate a robust tendency to prefer to place one's fate in the hands of a stranger from one's ingroup than an outgroup. We explored two possible bases for such trust in ingroup members: positive ingroup stereotypes and generalized expectations of fair treatment by ingroup members. In two of the studies, participants chose between an ingroup allocator, and an allocator from an outgroup stereotyped as more positive, more negative, or similar in valence to the ingroup; the allocator had complete control over the distribution of a fixed resource between self and a recipient. A strong preference for an ingroup allocator existed only when the allocator had knowledge of shared identity; lacking such knowledge, preferences reflected the relative valence of the allocators' own group. Results have implications for broadening the scope of social identity theory to include norms of reciprocity and exchange.