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Generalized trust moderates the demand for ‘ethical reciprocity’ in large-N collective action. Evidence from a scenario experiment in Sweden

A theoretical claim in social capital theory is that high-trusting individuals cooperate more in collective action situations. In addition, some scholars theorize that high-trusting individuals cooperate whether other people are willing to do so or not. To put these claims to a test, a scenario experiment (n=1482) was implemented in which respondents could vaccinate altruistically, in order to protect other people from contagion. A 2x2x3 full factorial design was utilized where transferability, risk, and proclaimed immunization uptake among other people were between-subject factors. Results indicate that mean

willingness to vaccinate altruistically is higher among high-trusting individuals, as compared with non high-trusting respondents. Results also support the theoretical claim that trust moderates the demand for ‘ethical reciprocity’. High-trusting individuals are willing to vaccinate altruistically, irrespectively of other people’s choices. However, non high-trusting individuals are more motivated to altruistic vaccination if more people vaccinate altruistically.