

In Online and Laboratory We Trust: Comparing Trust Game Behavior in Three Environments

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Abstract : Comparisons of online and laboratory environments are important for assessing whether the environment influences behavioral results. Trust game behavior was examined in three environments: 1) The standard laboratory setting with physically present participants (laboratory), 2) An online environment with an online meeting before playing the trust game (online plus a meeting); and 3) An online environment without a meeting (online without a meeting). In laboratory, participants were present in a classroom and played the trust game anonymously via computers. Online plus a meeting mimicked the laboratory in that participants could see each other in an online meeting before sessions started, whereas online without a meeting was a standard online experiment in which participants did not see each other at any stages of the experiment. Participants were recruited through pools of student subjects at two universities. The trust game was identical in all conditions; it was played with the same software, anonymously, and with stranger matching. There were no statistically significant differences between the treatment conditions regarding trust or trustworthiness. Results suggest that conducting trust game experiments online will yield similar results to experiments implemented in a laboratory.

Keywords : laboratory vs. online experiment, trust behavior, trust game, trustworthiness behavior

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