

Abstracts of the 2021 Technology, Mind, & Society Conference

Relying on the Kindness of Perceived Artificial Intelligence:

Role of agency, status, and generosity in human-agent trust

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Research shows that A.I. agents are trusted less than humans. However, little is known about the impact of competency status and task-relevant moral status on human-agent trust. In this study ($N = 300$) we used an economic trust game to investigate how partner agency (human vs A.I.), status (high vs low competency), and generosity (generous vs neutral vs greedy partner reciprocation rates) interact to influence investments made in partners. Participants played 10 rounds each with 6 humans or 6 A.I. who varied in both competency status and generosity. We found that participants were more sensitive to the generosity of human trustees compared to A.I. trustees and showed a greater range of trust for human trustees as a function of their generosity. They trusted more money to generous human trustees compared to generous A.I. trustees, and less money to greedy human trustees compared to greedy A.I. trustees. Because reciprocation amounts are influenced by expectations about the partner's investment, we also investigated trust when partners violated expectations about how they typically reciprocate (e.g., a greedy partner suddenly acts generous). We found that individuals responded similarly to partners of low competency irrespective of agency, perhaps suggesting they viewed their decisions as less informed. However, participants invested more money in highly competent partners who confirmed they were generous compared to greedy partners who suddenly acted generous, irrespective of agency. Our findings suggest that in economic decision-making, humans place more trust in high status and generous partners. Therefore, status is important in understanding human-agent trust.