

FACULTY SEMINAR

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From Partisanship to Preference: How Identity Shapes Intrinsic Preferences for Choice Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

Political polarization has witnessed a substantial increase in the United States over recent years, accompanied by a notable decline in public trust towards political decisions and democratic institutions. This study presents experimental findings elucidating the phenomenon by showing hesitancy in delegating decisions based on the political identity of the decision-maker in situations in which decisions do not carry instrumental value. Notably, Republican respondents display a substantive and significantly higher willingness to incur costs to retain decision autonomy over instrumentally inconsequential choices when faced with the prospect of delegating to a Democrat decision-maker, relative to delegating to a fellow Republican. Our findings thus suggest that individuals experience psychic disutility when their outcomes are determined by (political) outgroup members. This observed pattern cannot be attributed to a generalized tendency to exhibit groupiness, as there is no discernible evidence of groupiness based on alternate characteristics such as gender or a minimal group paradigm.