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Reports

# Outgroup primes induce unpredictability tendencies under conditions of distrust ☆

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## HIGHLIGHTS

- Being primed with an outgroup (relative to the ingroup) increases people's tendencies to be unpredictable.
- This effect is strongest among people high in chronic or manipulated distrust of others.
- This effect emerges across a variety of group contexts (e.g., race/ethnicity, university affiliation).

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## ABSTRACT

The present research provides novel insights into people's automatic reactions to outgroup members. Specifically, three experiments examine the unpredictability tendencies that can arise from mere primes of outgroups and the circumstances that produce these tendencies. In Studies 1 and 2, participants reported stronger unpredictability tendencies (Study 1) and were rated by independent coders as more unpredictable (Study 2) after being subliminally primed with a racial outgroup than a racial ingroup, but only if they had a chronically high distrust of others. Study 3 replicated the findings of Studies 1 and 2 by using a different ingroup/outgroup context (university affiliation) and experimentally manipulating distrust. Together, these studies reveal that people's unpredictability tendencies emerge upon being reminded of outgroup members and when distrust is high, which ironically may make understanding and trust between parties all the more difficult to achieve.



## Introduction

People's anxiety and unease in the presence of outgroup members, whether of different racial, ethnic, national, religious, or political backgrounds, are pervasive (Plant & Devine, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). These feelings often result in attempts to avoid intergroup interactions altogether (Plant & Butz, 2006). Even when outgroup members are not physically present but merely salient – for instance, when thoughts about outgroup members are primed outside of conscious awareness – people exhibit avoidance-related movements (e.g., pushing away from compared to pulling toward oneself; Paladino & Castelli, 2008) and behaviors (e.g., preparing oneself to escape from the outgroup member; Cesario, Plaks, Hagiwara, Navarrete, & Higgins, 2010).

Avoiding outgroups or even reminders of them, however, may not always be possible in a culturally diverse and interconnected global workplace, nor is doing so necessarily ideal for societies as a whole. Not only are our communities and work environments becoming increasingly diverse, with contact between groups becoming increasingly frequent and unavoidable (Brewer & Brown, 1998), but exposure to members of different groups can limit conflict and reduce prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). It is thus important to better understand people's automatic responses to outgroup members — that is, how people respond when they are reminded of outgroup members who are not physically present. We propose that people may react by adopting unpredictable and elusive self-concepts, to the extent that distrust is chronically high or situationally induced. Such reactions may ultimately be counterproductive to the establishment of harmony and trust between groups.

### *Effects of mere exposure to outgroups*

Research suggests that people adopt particular "response tendencies" toward salient outgroups. In other words, when an outgroup is primed, people often behave as they would when actually interacting or preparing to interact with a member of that group (Jonas & Sassenberg, 2006; see also Wheeler, DeMarree, & Petty, 2007). In one representative set of studies, individuals who were primed with the elderly stereotype walked more slowly if they held positive attitudes toward the elderly (presumably to affiliate with members of a

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group stereotyped as slow), but they walked more quickly if they held negative attitudes toward the elderly (presumably to avoid members of that group) (Cesario, Plaks, & Higgins, 2006). Also consistent with the notion that responses to outgroup primes can reflect approach versus avoidance of outgroup members, people primed with outgroups are more likely to exhibit avoidance-related response tendencies the more strongly they identify with the ingroup (Hall & Crisp, 2008) and the more distant they feel from the primed outgroup (Ledgerwood & Chaiken, 2007).

Even physical surroundings can influence responses to an outgroup prime. For example, participants primed with African Americans are more likely to exhibit hostility in situations where there is little opportunity for escape (e.g., a closed booth) than in situations where there is an opportunity to escape (e.g., an open field) (Cesario et al., 2010).

### *Unpredictability as a response to outgroup primes*

In the face of outgroup primes, how do individuals shift their self-concepts to ready themselves for the distrust and uncertainty that intergroup interactions often involve? The above studies suggest that people's self-concepts can change upon being reminded of outgroups associated with specific stereotypes (e.g., slowness, hostility). However, these studies do not examine the self-concept changes that emerge in preparation to interact with outgroups more generally, not just outgroups stereotyped as possessing certain characteristics. In the present research, we examine the possibility that under conditions of distrust, people who are primed with an outgroup (versus the ingroup) may exhibit tendencies toward unpredictability, perceiving themselves and behaving in an opaque and elusive manner. Similar to how non-human animals strive to avoid being caught by their predators (Driver & Humphries, 1988; Humphries & Driver, 1967), we propose that among humans, seeming unpredictable to the outgroup may have functional significance in situations fraught with distrust and uncertainty.

Unpredictability is a multidimensional construct that facilitates the ability to adapt to ambiguous and potentially contentious situations (Ybarra et al., 2010). Because different situations have unique properties, people can present themselves as unpredictable using a wide range of strategies, including being inconsistent across time or contexts (e.g., agreeable one day and argumentative the next), intentionally deceiving other people, and limiting self-disclosure. Importantly, unpredictability tendencies can involve describing oneself as difficult to pin down, actually behaving in elusive ways, or both.

The study of unpredictability has traditionally focused on non-human animals, whose erratic behaviors when under attack function as anti-predator defenses. For example, moths take irregular flight patterns and gazelles zigzag through open savannahs in order to escape potential predators (Driver & Humphries, 1988; Humphries & Driver, 1967). Unpredictability in humans has only recently gained empirical attention. In one set of studies, people were told or asked to imagine that they would be participating in either a competitive or cooperative interpersonal interaction. Those in the competitive interaction condition subsequently demonstrated greater unpredictability tendencies, both in terms of their self-perceptions (e.g., indicating on a questionnaire that they were inconsistent and deceptive) and behaviors (e.g., drawing a moth's flight pattern as more erratic) (Ybarra et al., 2010).

In the present article, we integrate these findings with other work demonstrating people's motives to avoid interactions with outgroup members (Paladino & Castelli, 2008; Stephan & Stephan, 1985) and propose that unpredictability tendencies may increase after being primed with an outgroup (relative to the ingroup). Additionally, as described below, these tendencies should surface only among individuals high in distrust or in situations where distrust is prevalent. Such findings would offer insight into the ways in which people may alter their self-concepts and behaviors when it is difficult for them to avoid exposure to outgroup members (i.e., being primed beyond conscious will or awareness). They would also suggest, somewhat ironically, that people's tendencies toward unpredictability may emerge precisely when there is the greatest need for mutual understanding, hence making positive intergroup outcomes even more difficult to achieve.

### *The role of distrust*

Preliminary evidence suggests that unpredictability tendencies are stronger in situations that involve distrust and competition than in situations that involve trust and cooperation (Ybarra et al., 2010). Trust is defined as the expectation that one will be treated well by others in ambiguous or risky situations (Foddy, Platow, & Yamagishi, 2009). Among the most critical precursors of trust is familiarity: people tend to trust strangers less than close others (Macy & Skvoretz, 1998). Indeed, people tend to trust ingroup members more than outgroup members (Brewer, 1981; Insko & Schopler, 1998), and lack of trust in the outgroup is associated with intergroup biases (Voci, 2006).

Although trust and group membership tend to covary, outgroups are not always associated with distrust, nor are ingroups always associated with trust. For example, people tend to be more trusting of an outgroup to the extent that they have had positive prior contact with its members (Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009). Thus, outgroup primes and distrust of others may interact to affect unpredictability, rather than outgroup primes triggering unpredictability across all circumstances. In particular, people who have been primed with outgroups may perceive (and present) themselves as unpredictable when distrust is high.

### *Overview of research*

We describe three experiments examining whether and when people exhibit greater tendencies toward unpredictability following exposure to outgroup (relative to ingroup) primes. In Studies 1 and 2, participants were subliminally primed with the faces of racial ingroup or outgroup members prior to completing a measure of unpredictability tendencies. We hypothesized that participants would be more unpredictable after being primed with an outgroup than the ingroup, but that this effect would only appear among participants chronically high in distrust of others. In Study 3, we used a different ingroup/outgroup context (university affiliation) and an experimental manipulation of distrust. We predicted that among participants in the distrust condition, participants primed with an outgroup would exhibit greater unpredictability tendencies than those primed with the ingroup.

## Study 1

### *Method*

#### *Participants*

Forty-six university students and staff members (21 males, 25 females), all of whom self-identified as White American, participated in this laboratory study for $7. Each participant was randomly assigned to either the ingroup ($n = 25$) or outgroup ($n = 21$) prime condition. Three participants were omitted from analyses: two who guessed the purpose of the study and one statistical outlier on the unpredictability measure whose Cook's $D$ score (.30) was more than 5 SD from the sample mean.[1] The remaining 43 participants were retained.

[1] In Study 1, the results were similar but slightly weaker when the outlier was included in the analyses ($p < .19$ for the prime x distrust interaction, $p = .08$ for the contrast at 1 SD above the mean distrust score). In Studies 2 and 3, there were no statistical outliers, and both the prime x distrust interaction and the contrast for high-distrust individuals were significant.

*Procedure and materials*

The ostensible purpose of the experiment was to pilot-test a variety of unrelated materials for use in future research. Participants first completed the experimental manipulation, which took the form of a "word judgment" (i.e., lexical decision) task. For each trial, participants were subliminally primed for 17 milliseconds with one of six faces, obtained from the Implicit Association Test (IAT) website (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2006). Participants in the ingroup prime condition were primed with White faces, and participants in the outgroup prime condition were primed with Asian faces. Each face was followed by a row of Xs, shown for 225 milliseconds. Finally, a letter string appeared, and participants pressed a specified computer key to indicate whether or not it was a real word. The letter string remained on the screen until participants made their judgment. There were 60 trials total; all words (e.g., chair, juice) were neutral and stereotype-irrelevant.

After the prime, participants completed an eight-item measure of unpredictability tendencies that has been validated in previous research (see Ybarra et al., 2010), using a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). The scale assesses different strategies people can adopt to seem unpredictable, including being difficult to understand (e.g., "It is not hard to understand what is important to me") and unwilling to self-disclose (e.g., "I generally feel open to talking about myself with people"). Ybarra et al. (2010) have found that these eight items form a reliable composite ($\alpha = .77$ in this sample; $M = 3.91$, $SD = .97$).[2]

Next, participants completed a five-minute filler task, followed by Rosenberg's (1956) "Faith in People" scale. This scale consists of five items assessing people's dispositional tendencies to trust others (e.g., "If you don't watch yourself, people will take advantage of you"). Participants responded to each item on a seven-point scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree," and their responses were averaged to form a composite with higher scores indicating greater distrust ($M = 3.86$, $SD = .98$; $\alpha = .77$). Participants' distrust scores were not affected by experimental condition, $F < 1$.

Finally, participants completed a suspicion probe and a demographic questionnaire prior to being fully debriefed.

## Results and discussion

We predicted that participants would report greater unpredictability tendencies after being primed with outgroup than ingroup members, but only when they were high in distrust. People low in distrust should not be wary of outgroup members and hence should not feel the need to describe themselves as unpredictable in the face of outgroup primes. To test these predictions, we regressed participants' unpredictability scores onto condition (0 = ingroup prime, 1 = outgroup prime), distrust (mean-centered continuous variable), and the interaction term (Aiken & West, 1991). We entered and interpreted the lower-order effects in the first block of the analysis and the condition × distrust interaction in the second block of the analysis (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003).

There were no overall effects of condition or distrust ($ps > .35$), but the predicted condition × distrust interaction was significant ($\beta = .45$), $t(39) = 2.03$, $p < .05$ (see Fig. 1). Decomposition of the interaction at high (1 SD above the mean) and low (1 SD below the mean) levels of distrust revealed that participants with high distrust portrayed themselves as more unpredictable in the outgroup than ingroup prime condition ($\beta = .43$), $t(39) = 2.11$, $p = .04$, whereas participants with low distrust were equally unpredictable across conditions ($\beta = -.17$), $t(39) < 1$, *ns*. To examine the relationship between distrust and unpredictability within each condition, we dummy-coded the condition of interest as 0 and then recomputed its interaction with (mean-centered) distrust. These analyses indicated that more distrust was associated with greater unpredictability tendencies in the outgroup prime condition ($\beta = .42$), $t(39) = 2.07$, $p < .05$, but not in the ingroup prime condition ($\beta = -.19$), $t(39) < 1$, *ns*.

The results of Study 1 demonstrate that the tendency for people to be more unpredictable after being primed with outgroup than ingroup members emerges among those with high (but not low) distrust of others. Notably, people high in distrust exhibited greater unpredictability even though the outgroup was primed subliminally. Moreover, the dependent measure was based on a private self-assessment of unpredictability tendencies, suggesting that exposure to an outgroup prime can actually alter whether people judge themselves as unpredictable. In Study 2, we tested whether these results would hold on a non-self-reported measure of unpredictability: others' ratings of participants' autobiographical essays.

Another objective of Study 2 was to extend our findings to a different outgroup. More than other racial/ethnic groups, Asian Americans are stereotyped as competitive and untrustworthy (Maddux, Galinsky, Cuddy, & Polifroni, 2008; Morrison & Ybarra, 2008). Thus, it is important to ensure that the effects of outgroup primes and distrust on unpredictability are independent of the particular content of stereotypes about the outgroup (see Foddy et al., 2009). Thus, in Study 2 we used an outgroup – African Americans – that previous research has found to be relatively less closely associated with stereotypes of competition and distrust (Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011).

## Study 2

*Method*

*Participants*

Thirty-eight White Americans (21 men, 17 women; $M_{age} = 38.57$ years, $SD = 11.79$) were recruited from a national email database

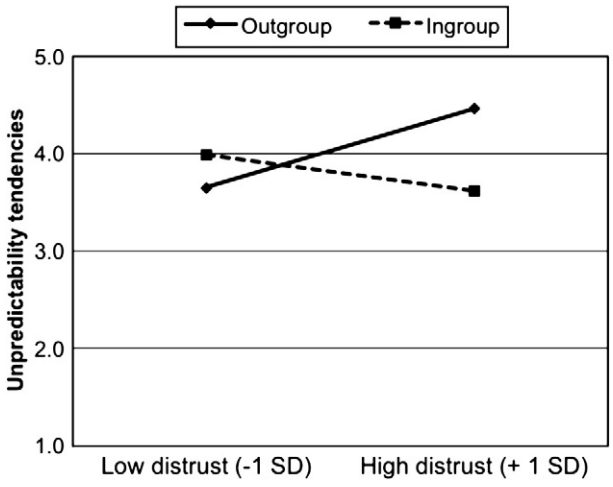


**Fig. 1.** Unpredictability tendencies as a function of prime condition (ingroup vs. outgroup) and interpersonal distrust (±1 SD), Study 1.

[2] To further establish discriminant validity, we recruited 91individuals from Amazon's Mechanical Turk website to complete the unpredictability scale as well as several potentially related measures. These measures included the 25-item Self- Monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974), the 12-item Self-Concept Clarity scale (Campbell et al., 1996), and the 18-item Preference for Consistency scale (Cialdini, Trost, & Newsom, 1995). Unpredictability tendencies were not significantly correlated with Self-Monitoring ($r = .17$, $p < .12$) or Preference for Consistency ($r = .02$, $p = .87$). However, unpredictability tendencies were negatively correlated with Self-Concept Clarity ($r = -.57$, $p < .001$), indicating that people who described themselves as unpredictable also described themselves as having an unclear self-concept. Overall, these results suggest that unpredictability tendencies are related to but not redundant with other previously established constructs.

of people who had indicated an interest in completing paid online studies. They received $5 for completing both parts of the study. Participants were randomly assigned to be primed with either White American (ingroup) faces ($n = 17$) or African American (outgroup) faces ($n = 21$).

*Procedure and materials*

Participants completed all experimental materials online in two sessions, administered approximately one week apart. In the first session, participants filled out Rotter's (1967) Interpersonal Trust Scale. This scale consists of eight items assessing chronic distrust of others (e.g., "There are few people in the world you can trust, when you get right down to it"). Participants responded to each item on a seven-point scale, and the items were averaged to form a composite, with higher scores reflecting greater distrust ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.01$; $\alpha = .83$).

In the second session of the study, participants completed the priming task. Specifically, they indicated which of several emotions (e.g., happy, content, angry) best described the expression on each of six faces. All six faces were either White American or African American and had neutral expressions; there were three from each gender. The faces were taken from the same website used in Study 1, and participants were randomly assigned to see either the White American (ingroup) or African American (outgroup) faces (Nosek et al., 2006).

Next, participants wrote an autobiographical essay under the guise that the researchers were collecting writing samples for use in future studies. Two independent judges rated participants on the extent to which they seemed to possess the following characteristics, based on their essays (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*): difficult to predict, unwilling to open up, authentic, and revealed a lot about himself/herself. The last two items were reverse- scored, and each judge's ratings were averaged into a composite with higher scores reflecting greater unpredictability ($\alpha$s > .75). The two judges' ratings were highly consistent (ICC = .76), so they were combined into a single unpredictability measure.

## Results and discussion

We hypothesized that participants' essays would be rated as more unpredictable following an outgroup than ingroup prime, but only among participants who had a chronically high distrust of others. To test this prediction, we submitted participants' unpredictability composites to a condition × distrust multiple regression analysis, as in Study 1. There were no overall effects of condition or distrust ($ps > .49$); however, the predicted condition × distrust interaction was significant ($\beta = .50$), $t(34) = 2.24$, $p = .03$ (see Fig. 2).

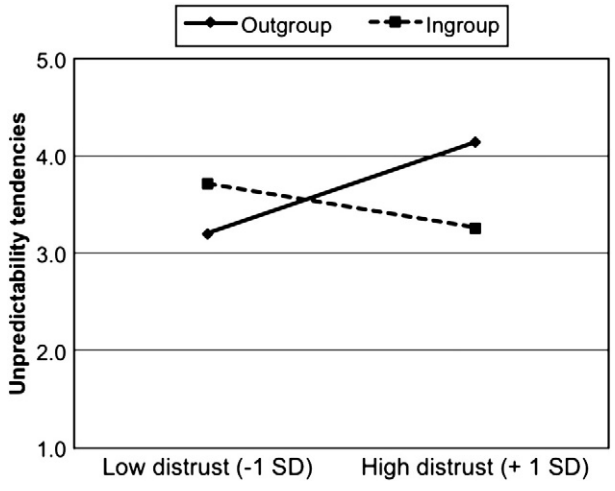


**Fig. 2.** Unpredictability ratings as a function of prime condition (ingroup vs. outgroup) and interpersonal distrust (±1 SD), Study 2.

Decomposition of the interaction revealed that participants with high distrust (1 SD above the mean) were rated as more unpredictable in the outgroup than ingroup prime condition ($\beta = .45$), $t(34) = 1.99$, $p = .055$. By contrast, participants with low distrust (1 SD below the mean) were rated as equally unpredictable across conditions ($\beta = -.27$), $t(34) = -1.19$, $p = .24$. Additionally, higher levels of distrust were associated with higher unpredictability ratings in the outgroup prime condition ($\beta = .48$), $t(34) = 2.11$, $p = .04$, but not in the ingroup prime condition ($\beta = -.23$), $t(34) = -1.05$, $p = .30$.

Using a different outgroup from Study 1, the results of Study 2 again demonstrate that the tendency to describe the self as more unpredictable following an outgroup (relative to ingroup) prime only emerges among people with a high distrust of others. Whereas the findings of Study 1 were based on people's private, self-reported unpredictability tendencies, the findings of Study 2 were based on a more public, behavioral measure (i.e., observers' ratings of autobiographical essays). Studies 1 and 2 thus provide convergent evidence that outgroup primes and distrust cause people to become more unpredictable in terms of both their self-perceptions and the way they present themselves to others.

Study 3 built upon these results in two ways. First, a different ingroup/outgroup context was used. Specifically, participants were primed with either students from their own or a rival university. In addition to increasing generalizability, replicating the paradigm with a rival university of relatively equal status would suggest that our phenomenon is not limited to dominant group members (White Americans). This is important to demonstrate because status differences are associated with differential tendencies to trust others (Lount & Pettit, 2012).

Second, although the moderating role of distrust highlighted an important boundary condition of our effect, the items on the distrust scales may have been simply tapping related but distinct alternative factors (e.g., prejudice toward outgroups) that contributed to the results. To bolster our argument that distrust moderates the relationship between outgroup primes and unpredictability, and to better establish causality, in Study 3 we experimentally manipulated rather than measured distrust.

## Study 3

*Method*

*Participants and design*

Seventy-four University of Chicago students and alumni participated in this study. As compensation, they received a $3 gift card to a major online retailer. Participants were randomly assigned to either the outgroup ($n = 40$) or ingroup ($n = 34$) prime condition, and to either the trust ($n = 30$) or distrust ($n = 44$) condition.

*Procedure and materials*

Participants completed all materials online. The experiment was described as three separate studies. First, participants completed the distrust manipulation, ostensibly a language task. For this task, they viewed twelve sets of five words and arranged four words in each set into a grammatically correct sentence (e.g., "big chairs the box are" could form "The chairs are big"). In the distrust condition, six sets contained a word related to distrust (e.g., *suspicion*, *wary*). In the trust condition, six sets contained a word related to trust (e.g., *trust*, *reliable*). Similar manipulations have been used in previous research to prime distrust- versus trust-related concepts (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011).

To check the manipulation, participants completed a second "language task," which consisted of several word fragments that participants filled in to form the first English-language word that came to mind. Although all word fragments had multiple solutions, three fragments could be completed to form a word related to trust (e.g.,

FAI_ _ _ could be completed to form *faith* as well as *faint*, *fails*, *or fairy*), whereas three fragments could be completed to form a word related to distrust (e.g., DO_ _T could be completed to form *doubt* or *donut*). The numbers of trust-related solutions and distrust-related solutions that participants generated were counted separately to form two indices.

Next, participants completed either the ingroup or outgroup priming manipulation. Participants were told that they would evaluate a particular form of art – in this case, university logos – on a variety of dimensions. They then viewed six images of either the University of Chicago logo (ingroup prime condition) or the Northwestern University logo (outgroup prime condition) and, to disguise the purpose of this task, rated how much they liked the design and color of each logo.

Participants then completed a "personality measure." Specifically, they indicated the extent to which each of four unpredictability-related traits – *unpredictable*, *straightforward*, *honest*, and *consistent* – described them (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). The last three traits were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicated greater unpredictability, and participants' responses were averaged into a composite ($M = 2.44$, $SD = .59$, $\alpha = .49$).[3]

Finally, participants were probed for suspicion and debriefed.

## Results

One participant who took the study twice was omitted, as were two participants who suspected that the study involved ingroup/outgroup trust and self-perceptions. The remaining 71 individuals were retained.

### *Manipulation check*

Participants in the trust condition completed the word fragments with more trust-related words ($M = .87$, $SD = .19$) than participants in the distrust condition ($M = .69$, $SD = .23$), $F(1, 69) = 12.93$, $p = .001$. Additionally, participants in the trust condition completed the word fragments with fewer distrust-related words ($M = .17$, $SD = .21$) than participants in the distrust condition ($M = .38$, $SD = .27$), $F(1, 69) = 12.07$, $p = .001$. Thus, our trust manipulation was successful.

### *Unpredictability*

We hypothesized that participants primed with the outgroup would have higher scores on the unpredictability measure than participants primed with the ingroup, but only within the distrust condition. To test this prediction, we submitted participants' unpredictability scores to a 2 (trust vs. distrust prime) × 2 (ingroup vs. outgroup prime) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA).

There were no main effects of ingroup/outgroup prime ($ps > .47$). However, the predicted two-way interaction was significant, $F(1,67) = 4.38$, $p = .04$, $\eta\rho 2 = 06$. Simple effects tests revealed that among participants primed with distrust, those reminded of the outgroup ($M = 2.65$, $SD = .55$) exhibited greater unpredictability tendencies than those reminded of the ingroup ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .43$), $F(1,67) = 3.85$, $p = .05$, $\eta\rho 2 = .05$. By contrast, among participants primed with trust, those reminded of the outgroup and those reminded of the ingroup exhibited equal unpredictability tendencies: $F(1,67) = 1.18$, $p = .28$, $\eta\rho 2 = .02$ ($M_{outgroup} = 2.25$, $SD = .63$; $M_{ingroup} = 2.48$, $SD = .72$). Additionally, participants primed with the outgroup rated themselves as more unpredictable in the distrust condition than in the trust condition, $F(1,67) = 4.13$, $p < .05$, $\eta\rho 2 = .06$, whereas participants primed with the ingroup rated themselves as equally unpredictable across trust conditions, $F(1,31) = .52$, $p = .48$, $\eta\rho 2 = .02$ (see Fig. 3).

[3] "Unpredictable" was less strongly correlated than the other three traits, likely due to the reverse-scoring. When "unpredictable" was dropped from the composite, the alpha coefficient increased to .61. Regardless of whether it was included, however, outgroup prime × trust condition on unpredictability tendencies remained significant.

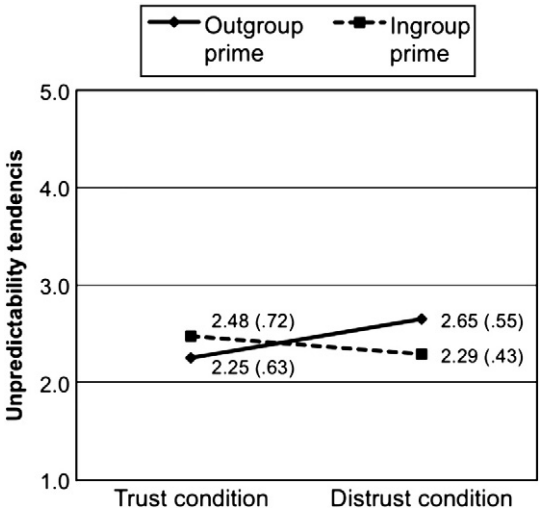


**Fig. 3.** Mean (SD) unpredictability tendencies as a function of prime condition (ingroup vs. outgroup) and trust condition (distrust vs. trust), Study 3.

## Discussion

The results of Study 3 conceptually replicate the previous experiments, using a different ingroup/outgroup context (university affiliation) and a distrust prime. The experimental manipulation of distrust further supports our hypothesis that the effect of outgroup primes on unpredictability is, in fact, moderated by distrust and not some other construct (e.g., prejudice). This manipulation also provides stronger evidence that outgroup primes and distrust *cause* unpredictability tendencies, rather than unpredictability causing feelings of distrust (which in Studies 1 and 2 were measured as individual differences).

### *General discussion*

Even the mere accessibility of an outgroup is known to produce avoidance-oriented behaviors (Paladino & Castelli, 2008) and other actions designed to create distance between oneself and the outgroup (e.g., walking more quickly when primed with the elderly) (Cesario et al., 2006; Jonas & Sassenberg, 2006; Ledgerwood & Chaiken, 2007). These tendencies have been theorized to emerge in preparation to flee from a possible intergroup encounter. In many real-life situations, however, avoiding the outgroup altogether – much less reminders of the outgroup – is neither possible nor practical (see Cesario et al., 2010). It is thus important to understand how people cope and how their self-perceptions change in the face of such reminders.

The present studies introduce a new consequence of outgroup primes, and one that is not linked to particular stereotypes of the outgroup. Across three studies, people reported having (Studies 1 and 3), or were rated by others as having (Study 2), greater tendencies toward unpredictability after being primed with outgroup than ingroup members, but only when they had a high chronic or experimentally induced distrust of others. Such behaviors could ultimately exacerbate relations between groups and make mutual understanding all the more difficult. Importantly, our results emerged using a range of outgroups, some of which were stereotyped as competitive and untrustworthy (e.g., Asian Americans; see Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011) and some of which were not.

The present results were obtained using both private measures of unpredictability (e.g., self-descriptions of one's personality; Studies 1 and 3) and more "public" measures (e.g., portraying oneself as unpredictable in an essay that another person would supposedly read; Study 2). Thus, people's unpredictability tendencies are present in both their perceptions of themselves and the way they present themselves to others. In other words, those who are primed with an

outgroup and who have high levels of distrust do not simply portray themselves as unpredictable in public; they also appear to shift their actual self-concepts as indicated by their subsequent responses on personality scales.

That this phenomenon is only present among people with high measured or manipulated distrust is notable because it demonstrates a critical condition under which being reminded of an outgroup increases unpredictability. That is, when are people inclined to exhibit unpredictability tendencies, and how can such tendencies be attenuated? Although previous research has found that people generally tend to be wary of outgroup members (Brewer, 1981; Foddy et al., 2009; Insko & Schopler, 1998), this is not necessarily the case. For example, having positive contact with an outgroup member can increase overall trust in the outgroup (Tam et al., 2009). Consistent with this perspective, our studies demonstrate that it is possible to disentangle the effects of outgroup primes and distrust on unpredictability — indeed, that the relationship between outgroup primes on unpredictability is contingent upon distrust.

Unpredictability is theorized to be more functional than predictability in potentially contentious or uncertain situations (e.g., competition) (Driver & Humphries, 1988; Ybarra et al., 2010). However, people who are primed with outgroups may find that it is more adaptive to perceive and present the self as *predictable* on certain dimensions. For example, perhaps outgroup primes motivate people to describe themselves as predictable on competence-related traits (e.g., power), whereas such primes motivate people to describe themselves as unpredictable on morality-related traits (e.g., honesty) (see Ybarra, Chan, & Park, 2001). In the future, it would be interesting to test whether people's unpredictability tendencies in response to outgroup primes vary according to the dimension on which they are describing themselves.

It may also be that people's greater unpredictability could influence outgroup members' perceptions of the ingroup. For example, unpredictability among ingroup members may foster distrust or disliking on the part of outgroup members. This may in turn cause outgroup members to adopt unpredictable response tendencies as well, even if the outgroup did not exhibit them to begin with (cf. Chen & Bargh, 1997). Thus, a cycle could be created whereby both groups' proclivities toward unpredictability increase over time, a possibility that awaits investigation.

## Conclusion

Overall, our results suggest that people who are merely reminded of an outgroup may demonstrate a desire to not be known or predicted, and that they even do so in the absence of conscious awareness. In the real world, reminders of outgroups can be triggered in many ways — for example, by driving through an ethnic neighborhood or watching a sporting event. It is when such reminders are coupled with distrust (e.g., driving through a neighborhood perceived as dangerous) that they are likely to have the adversarial consequence of leading to unpredictability tendencies.

Because encounters between groups tend to be more ambiguous and unfamiliar than encounters within groups, behaving unpredictably enables people to prepare themselves for whatever might happen in an intergroup interaction (cf. Miller, 1997; Ybarra et al., 2010). However, the growing diversity of society suggests that unpredictability tendencies can also have detrimental and far-reaching effects on intergroup trust and understanding. People may thus do well to keep their tendencies toward unpredictability in check. At the very least, they may benefit from being aware that if an outgroup member is behaving unpredictably, it could be more a byproduct of the ingroup/outgroup distinction itself than a reflection of any inherent qualities of the outgroup or its members.

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