Trust and distrust are essential elements of human interaction, yet little is known about how trust and distrust shape how we perceive others. To close this gap, we examined how trust versus distrust influences stereotyping. Recent research has suggested that distrust fosters the use of cognitive nonroutine strategies. Building on these findings, we investigated the hypothesis that—contrary to intuition—it might be distrust rather than trust that reduces stereotyping. Supporting this hypothesis, engaging in an untrustworthy (vs. trustworthy vs. trust-unrelated) interaction resulted in less stereotypic evaluations in an unrelated person-judgment task (Experiment 1). Replicating the stereotype-reducing effect, 2 different distrust (vs. trust) priming manipulations led to less stereotypic person judgments in 2 different stereotyping paradigms (Experiments 2A and 2B). We hypothesized that a comparison focus on dissimilarities—a nonroutine mechanism that works against stereotyping—causes this stereotype-reducing effect. In line with this notion, distrust led to a more pronounced dissimilarity-focus (Experiment 3), and the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust diminished when this dissimilarity-focus was impaired (Experiment 4). Our findings suggest that distrust induces a dissimilarity-focus that in turn reduces stereotyping.

*Keywords:* distrust, trust, stereotyping, person judgment, dissimilarity-focus

Trust is the social glue that brings people together and facilitates their interactions. When people trust each other, they are more likely to seek company, share resources, and cooperate (cf. Fukuyama, 1995; T. R. Tyler, 2001; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Trust and its counterpart distrust are clearly core elements of human social life that probably shape all social interactions. In light of the pivotal importance of trust, it is hardly surprising that humans have developed an arsenal of tools to detect whether a given interaction partner can be trusted or not (e.g., DePaulo et al., 2003). In fact, trustworthiness is a central evaluative dimension in social judgment (Oosterhof & Todorov, 2008) that is quickly and automatically inferred (Todorov, Pakrashi, & Oosterhof, 2009). One cue people use to infer whether another person can be trusted are social category memberships (e.g., Stanley, Sokol-Hessner, Banaji, & Phelps, 2011). Specifically, people tend to assume that members of their in-group are more trustworthy than out-group members (Foddy, Platow, & Yamagishi, 2009). In addition, stereotypes about some social groups hold specific assumptions about the trustworthiness of their members (e.g., Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Clearly, most people—whether rightfully or not—have less trust in the proverbial used-car dealer than in their physician. As is clear from this example, an activated stereotype may influence how much we trust. What is less clear, however, is whether the reverse direction of influence also holds. Does how much we trust influence how much we stereotype? And if so, in what way? The present research was designed to help answer these questions.

The Distrustful Mind: Information Processing Under Distrust

Distrust is a natural reaction to deception. It is as old as mankind itself—and arguably even older. In fact, evidence from comparative psychology suggests that even nonhuman primates deceive each other in numerous ways (Melis, Call, & Tomasello, 2006) and react to deceptive acts with distrust-like reactions (De Waal, 2005; Jensen, Call, & Tomasello, 2007). In the animal world, deception typically arises in the contexts of foraging and mating. In the human world, the causes of deception are much more multifaceted. Whatever the source may be, however, it is tremendously valuable for a social being to be aware of when a conspecific with deceitful intentions is around. A psychological state of distrust serves as a signal that this may be the case and alerts people to the fact that others’ motives, intentions, and prospective actions may be am-
are characterized by many trust-enhancing factors such as and justified still predominate. In fact, our social interactions misleading one another, situations in which trusting is effective behavior. Although information processing strategies may differ for making functional sense of a currently threatening situation and enabling a person to act—even if it comes at the cost of biased processing (Maner et al., 2005). Although information processing strategies may differ under threat and distrust, both of these strategies critically shape people’s behavior.

Despite the many ways in which people can potentially mislead one another, situations in which trusting is effective and justified still predominate. In fact, our social interactions are characterized by many trust-enhancing factors such as anticipated future interactions (cf. Gibbons, 2001) and reputation (Charness, D., & Yang, 2011). Furthermore, trust often comes along with a multitude of benefits on interpersonal (e.g., Simpson, 2007), economic (Cook, Hardin, & Levi, 2005), and even societal levels (Knack & Keefer, 1997). In light of these results, trusting one another is typically a reasonable strategy. Our default state of mind is well attuned to this fact, and we generally expect others to behave in our own best interest (cf. Légal, Chappé, Coiffard, & Villard-Forest, 2012). This allows us to take risks and make ourselves vulnerable (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998; Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007; Schul et al., 2004, 2008). In fact, evidence of the prevalence of trusting behavior can be found in different contexts (e.g., Berg, Dickhaut, & McCabe, 1995; Lount, Zhong, Sivathan, & Murnighan, 2008; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).

Given that trust appears to be the default state of mind (as long as no conflicting interests are evident, such as in conflict-laden intergroup contexts; e.g., Dovidio et al., 2008; Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002), it is not surprising that people typically rely on routine strategies of information processing in situations of trust. By contrast, a state of distrust signals a potentially misleading environment and fosters the use of nonroutine strategies. Nonroutine strategies match the needs of distrustful minds in several ways: First, one is prepared for multiple nonobvious outcomes. Second, a heightened sensitivity to nonroutine actions helps to detect others’ attempts to deceive. Third, behaving in a nonroutine manner reduces one’s own predictability to anyone who is trying to deceive (cf. Schul et al., 2004, 2008). This fundamental processing difference for trust versus distrust is apparent on different levels of information processing. Even at the most basic level of semantic activation, distrust already entails nonroutine effects: Under distrust, participants activate incongruent and remote associations (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011; Schul et al., 2004). At higher levels, distrust increases cognitive flexibility, creativity (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011), sensitivity to nonroutine contingencies (Schul et al., 2008), information interpretation in multiple frames (Schul et al., 1996), and multiple category activation (Friesen & Sinclair, 2011). Taken together, these findings attest to the idea that distrust induces people to deviate from their set ways of processing information. This notion holds a provocative implication for the realm of stereotyping. To see this, one has to take a close look at stereotypes and the mechanisms that contribute to their influence on the impressions we form of others.

**Others in Mind: Stereotypic Influences and Their Reduction**

Stereotyping is a crucial mechanism that frequently shapes our judgments and allows individuals to form impressions of others even when judgment-forming circumstances are taxing (e.g., Bodenhausen & Lichtenstein, 1987; Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994). However, in addition to their beneficial effects, stereotypes are often accompanied by detrimental consequences. Not only can they impair the target’s self-esteem, psychological well-being (e.g., Major & O’Brien, 2005), and performance (e.g., Steele & Aronson, 1995), but they may also bias how judges process information about (e.g., Devine, 1989; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000) and behave toward (e.g., Agerström & Rooth, 2011) stereotyped others.

Considering these partly detrimental consequences, finding conditions that alleviate stereotyping effects is of substantial theoretical and practical importance. One way to do so is to explicitly try to prevent (e.g., Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994) or correct (e.g., Wegener & Petty, 1995) stereotypic thoughts. Evidently, these forms of stereotype control not only consume considerable cognitive resources, but may also result in rebound effects (Macrae, Bodenhausen, et al., 1994). One more indirect method is the activation of stereotype-incompatible goals and mindsets (for a review, see Moskowitz, 2010). For example, creativity mindsets (Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005), or goals to be egalitarian (Moskowitz & Li, 2011) or to take someone’s perspective (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011), reduce stereotyping. A closer look at these stereotype-reducing circumstances discloses that they share one noteworthy characteristic: They involve nonroutine information processing. Creativity, for one, involves the generation of novel ideas by definition (e.g., Amabile, 1983; De Dreu, Baas, & Nijstad, 2008; Mumford, 2003). In fact, one of its core constituents, originality, inherently means to generate uncommon and infrequent, thus nonroutine, solutions (e.g., Amabile, 1983; De Dreu et al., 2008). In much the same way, successful perspective taking involves nonroutine thinking: It implies that the dominant egocentric bias is overcome, and one’s own perspective is not mistaken for the perspective of another (e.g., Todd, Hanco, Galinsky, & Mussweiler, 2011).

Examining the commonalities of these stereotype-reducing strategies thus shows that they share nonroutine information processing as a mutual feature. These findings have clear implications for how distrust may influence stereotyping: Distrust induces nonroutine information processing, and nonroutine information processing in turn reduces stereotyping. Hence, and in stark contrast to what intuition suggests, it may be distrust rather than trust that reduces stereotyping. The present research was designed to examine this intriguing possibility and to shed some light on the mechanisms that contribute to this hypothesized effect.
Mind the Comparisons: How Comparisons Shape Judgments and Relate to Distrust

What are the possible concrete information-processing mechanisms that underlie this potential effect of distrust? To answer this question, it is helpful to focus on an essential characteristic of all judgments, namely, their essential relativity (Huttenlocher, Higgins, & Clark, 1971). Whenever we evaluate the characteristics of other persons, we assess them in relation to other people. Thus, to understand the dynamics of social judgment, one has to examine the comparison mechanisms that contribute to the critical judgment. When judging other people, we spontaneously compare them to accessible comparison standards (Dunning & Hayes, 1996; Gilbert, Giesler, & Morris, 1995; Mussweiler & Rüter, 2003). How this comparison influences target judgments depends on the nature of the engaged comparison mechanism. Across a variety of different domains, two alternative comparison mechanisms with distinct judgmental consequences have been identified: Similarity-focused comparisons lead target judgments to be assimilated toward the comparison standard, whereas dissimilarity-focused comparisons lead target judgments to be contrasted away from the comparison standard (Mussweiler, 2001, 2003). This is the case because similarity-focused comparisons induce judges to focus on target-standard similarities and selectively activate consistent target information. This information forms the basis of a subsequent target judgment so that the target is assimilated toward the standard. Dissimilarity-focused comparisons, however, selectively activate information that indicates that target and standard are dissimilar on the dimension of interest. Using this activated knowledge as a basis for a subsequent social judgment leads to a contrast of the target away from the standard (Mussweiler, 2003).

How could these comparison mechanisms play out in the realm of stereotyping? Stereotyping is one prominent example of person judgment. Thus, the reasoning applied to other person judgments should also hold here. Recent research has suggested that stereotyping involves a comparison between the target person and a stereotypic exemplar (Corcoran, Hundhammer, & Mussweiler, 2009). Just as trait concepts are linked to person representation and the mere activation of a trait concept (e.g., aggressiveness) activates trait-consistent person representations (e.g., George W. Bush; Mussweiler & Damisch, 2008), social categories are also linked to person representations (Smith & Zárate, 1992). When judging an overweight target person, for example, judges appear to spontaneously activate a stereotypic exemplar of an overweight person and compare it to the target. How this comparison influences target judgments depends on the nature of the engaged comparison mechanism. Stereotyping is one example of an assimilation effect by which judgments of a target are assimilated toward the implications of a stereotype (Hugenberg & Sacco, 2008). Directing a judge’s comparison focus toward dissimilarities compensates for this tendency and reduces stereotyping (Corcoran et al., 2009).

Notably, and of particular importance for the present argument, dissimilarity-focused comparisons constitute a nonroutine strategy (Corcoran, Epstude, Damisch, & Mussweiler, 2011; Mussweiler, 2003). In the context of trust versus distrust, a similarity-focus thus constitutes an example of a routine strategy that is more likely to be used under trust. A dissimilarity-focus, however, constitutes a nonroutine strategy that is more likely to be used under distrust. This reasoning suggests that distrust may trigger a dissimilarity-focus as a nonroutine strategy of comparison, and this in turn reduces stereotyping.

The Current Research

The present research was designed to test this intriguing possibility. Four experiments examined whether distrust would indeed reduce stereotyping. We used interpersonal experiences as well as subtle priming procedures to activate trust versus distrust in our participants. Subsequently, in ostensibly unrelated contexts, we assessed their tendency to stereotype. Our first two experiments focused on the hypothesized stereotype-reducing effect of distrust. In these studies, we used three different distrust (vs. trust) inductions and three stereotyping paradigms that assessed stereotypes of high ecological validity. Specifically, in Experiment 1, we used a relational approach to induce distrust. Following the logic of an economic deception game (Gneezy, 2005) with an actual payoff, participants engaged in an ostensibly untrustworthy, trustworthy, or trust-unrelated interaction. Subsequently, we assessed the extent to which they stereotyped a female (vs. male) target person. In Experiments 2A and 2B, we used more subtle priming manipulations to elicit distrust versus trust. Past research has demonstrated that, as is true for other core elements of social interaction such as power (e.g., Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), trust versus distrust mindsets can be successfully activated by standard priming procedures and will carry over to subsequent tasks (e.g., Friesen & Sinclair, 2011). Applying these procedures in the present research allowed us to evoke distrust independent of specific target persons or messages. More specifically, Experiment 2A examined whether subliminally priming participants with distrust versus trust (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011) would reduce their stereotyping of a Turkish (vs. German-) looking young man (adapted from Gawronski, Gecilke, & Banse, 2003). Experiment 2B used a scrambled-sentences priming procedure (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011) to elicit distrust versus trust and examined their effect on the evaluations of an overweight (vs. underweight) target. The final two experiments took a closer look at the hypothesized mechanism. We expected distrust to elicit a comparison focus on dissimilarities that in turn would reduce stereotyping. We tested this in Experiment 3 by investigating whether distrust would indeed induce a dissimilarity-focus. After priming participants with distrust versus trust, we measured their comparison focus (Mussweiler & Damisch, 2008). Experiment 4 then examined whether the expected distrust-induced dissimilarity-focus would play a mediating role and contribute to the hypothesized stereotype-reducing effect. To do so, we either left the hypothesized distrust-induced dissimilarity-focus undisturbed or disrupted it via the induction of a similarity-focus. We expected that only distrust would reduce stereotyping when the dissimilarity-focus was not disrupted.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 examined for the first time whether distrust would in fact reduce stereotyping. To do so, we manipulated distrust and compared it to two control conditions: one trust and one trust-neutral condition. Subsequently, in an ostensibly unrelated context,
our participants engaged in a gender-stereotyping task. Specifically, participants received deceptive, trustworthy, or no advice from an apparent counterpart in an economic deception game. Afterwards, in an ostensibly unrelated context, participants judged one female and one male target on gender-stereotypic and -neutral dimensions. We expected that participants in the distrust condition would stereotype less than participants in the two control conditions. Because distrust often promotes negative interpersonal relationship outcomes (Holmes & Rempel, 1989; Murray et al., 2009; Murray & Holmes, 2009; Simpson, 2007; Wieselquist, Rusbuldt, Foster, & Agnew, 1999), and deceivers are rather disliked (J. M. Tyler, Feldman, & Reichert, 2006), we did not expect this effect to extend to the deceitful counterpart.

Method

Participants and design. The study was based on a 3 (Mind-set: control vs. trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: female vs. male) mixed-model design, with the last factor as a within-subjects factor. We recruited 86 participants on the campus of the University of Cologne. They were given a coffee voucher or chocolate bar as compensation for participating. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three between-subjects conditions.

Materials and procedure. Participants were led to one of two adjacent labs where they were seated in individual cubicles. After giving their informed consent, they were told that they would work on unrelated tasks. Allegedly, the first task (our distrust manipulation check) involved an interaction with another participant in the adjacent lab. Apparently, to avoid any face-to-face interaction with the counterpart while he or she left the neighboring lab, the participants would work on a second unrelated filler task (the stereotyping measure).

Distrust manipulation. To create a trust-diagnostic interaction, we adopted an economic two-player deception game (Gneezy, 2005). In a typical deception game, two possible monetary distributions exist: Distributions A and B. Player 1 has information regarding the outcomes of Distributions A and B. Player 2 lacks this information, yet Player 2 has to choose one of the two outcome options. Prior to Player 2’s decision, Player 1 can tell Player 2 which outcome option contains the better outcome for Player 2. This advice may be truthful or deceptive.

We modified this game to better serve our purpose to induce trust, distrust, and also include a trust-unrelated control group in the experimental design. Specifically, we told the participants that they were about to interact via computer messaging with another participant in the adjacent lab. The participants entered their names (or a pseudonym) and some gender-neutral information (age, city of residence, and time spent living there; Gawronski, Ehrenberg, Banse, Zukova, & Klauer, 2003), which would be conveyed to their counterpart. All participants were assigned to the role of Player 2 and informed that with the other participant’s help, they could earn lottery tickets as additional compensation. The lottery prize would be (and actually was) a 20€ Amazon voucher. Their task was to decide between outcome Options A and B, which determined the number of lottery tickets they would earn. The ostensible counterpart would know the exact outcomes behind the options, and could provide them with one of two messages: “Option A provides you with a better payoff than Option B” or “Option B provides you with a better payoff than Option A.” Player 1 always advised them to choose Option A. Participants then made their choice. On the subsequent pages, they learned about the outcome distributions. In the trust condition, they were informed that Option A had endowed each player with three lottery tickets. Option B would have endowed Player 1 with four and Player 2 with only one lottery ticket. Thus, Player 1 had given trustworthy advice. In the distrust condition, the outcome distributions of Options A and B were interchanged. Thus, Player 1 had given misleading advice. In the control condition, participants did not receive any message, apparently due to technical problems. This left the participants without any information regarding their counterpart’s trustworthiness. All participants then received the same information about Player 1 that the participants had provided about themselves before. To control for the gender ascribed to Player 1, we systematically varied the gender of Player 1’s name: It was either female (“Julia”) or male (“Julian”).

Stereotyping paradigm. Ostensibly to prevent any face-to-face interaction with their counterpart, participants engaged in a filler task and rated a female and a male person portrait (taken from Minear & Park, 2004). The order of person presentation was counterbalanced. The rating consisted of 10 trust-unrelated items. As Table 1 depicts, a pretest with a different set of 40 participants (19 female; 18–35 years of age) revealed that four dimensions were gender distinctive (α = .70).

Evaluations of the counterpart and manipulation check. Subsequently, participants rated their ostensible counterpart on the same gender-stereotype-related and -unrelated dimensions. As a manipulation check, we asked them to rate Player 1’s trustworthiness on a 9-point Likert scale (1 = not at all, 9 = very).

Awareness check. In an awareness check at the end of the study, none of the participants identified the true purpose of the study. Seven participants indicated suspicion about the actual presence of their counterpart and were excluded from the analyses, leaving a final sample of 79 participants (47 female; 18–35 years of age). All participants were told that their choice had not affected the lottery outcome and received three lottery tickets in addition to their regular compensation.

Table 1
Means (and Standard Deviations) of Pretest Ratings for Gender-Stereotype-Relevant and -Irrelevant Dimensions for Female and Male Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technically skilled*</td>
<td>4.35 (1.73)</td>
<td>7.00 (1.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical*</td>
<td>4.65 (1.63)</td>
<td>6.40 (1.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistically skilled*</td>
<td>7.15 (0.81)</td>
<td>4.45 (1.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dexterous</td>
<td>6.75 (1.33)</td>
<td>4.95 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td>5.75 (1.12)</td>
<td>5.60 (1.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>4.10 (1.80)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>6.50 (1.61)</td>
<td>6.10 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>5.05 (1.82)</td>
<td>5.45 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>6.80 (1.85)</td>
<td>6.05 (1.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>5.10 (1.52)</td>
<td>4.55 (1.43)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means of dimensions labeled with an asterisk differed significantly at the level of p = .05. All other means did not differ (all ts ≤ 1.4, ps ≥ .16).
Initial trust. To examine whether participants initially trusted their counterpart, we analyzed their answers about choosing the recommended Option A over Option B in the advice conditions (i.e., the trust and distrust conditions combined) compared to the no-advice condition (i.e., the control condition). Indeed, participants in the advice conditions were more likely to choose Outcome A (86.00%) than participants in the control condition (55.17%), χ²(1) = 9.23, p < .01.

Stereotypicity of judgments. We averaged the stereotypic male and female items (male items reverse-coded) into one stereotyping index with higher values indicating higher female stereotypicality. We submitted this index to a 3 (Mindset: control vs. trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: female vs. male) mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the last factor as a within-subjects factor.

Figure 1. Mean female-stereotypic ratings as a function of mindset and target in Experiment 1. Error bars represent ±1 standard error.

We expected that participants in the trust-neutral condition would by default engage in stereotyping. Thus, we predicted that the same pattern of stereotyping judgments would occur in the control and trust conditions. In line with our predictions, the gender-stereotypic judgments of the female target in the control (M = 5.25, SD = 0.99) and trust (M = 5.38, SD = 0.72) conditions did not differ, t < 1. Likewise, judgments of the male target were not different in the control (M = 4.27, SD = 0.75) and trust (M = 4.25, SD = 0.83) conditions, t < 1. However, our main hypothesis concerned the distrust condition: We expected that distrustful participants would stereotype less than trustful or trust-neutral participants. As depicted in Figure 1, indeed, distrustful participants judged the female target to be less stereotypically female (M = 4.78, SD = 0.73) than participants in the two other conditions (combined M = 5.31, SD = 0.87), t(76) = 2.65, p = .01, d = 0.69. Also, judgments for the male target tended to differ between the distrust (M = 4.57, SD = 0.64) and the other two conditions (combined M = 4.26, SD = 0.78), t(76) = 1.73, p = .09, d = 0.42.1 This pattern produced an interaction effect in the Mindset × Target ANOVA, F(2, 76) = 5.75, p < .01, η² = .13.

1 Simple contrasts demonstrated that the female target was judged as less stereotypically female in the distrust condition compared separately to the trust condition, t(76) = 2.54, p = .01, and the neutral condition, t(76) = 2.06, p = .04. For the male target, this pattern of results for the distrust condition compared separately to the trust condition, t(76) = 1.52, p = .13, and the neutral condition, t(76) = 1.49, p = .14, also occurred, yet was not significant.

To analyze whether nonstereotypic judgments were differently affected by the mindset manipulation for the female and male counterparts, we conducted the same 3 (Mindset: control vs. trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Counterpart: female vs. male) between-subjects ANOVA for the stereotype-neutral index. As expected, we did not find a moderating effect of mindset, F < 1. To explore whether overall the stereotype-related and unrelated items were differently affected by the mindset and target manipulations, we submitted the
stereotyping and stereotype-neutral indices to a 3 (Mindset: control vs. trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Counterpart: female vs. male) × 2 (Type of Trait: stereotype-related vs. stereotype-neutral) between-subjects ANOVA. No moderating effect of the type of measure was found, $F < 1$.

To examine whether our mindset manipulation had affected the perceived trustworthiness of the counterparts, we calculated a one-way ANOVA between the three mindset conditions (control vs. trust vs. distrust). The pattern of results was in line with our intended manipulation: The trustworthy counterpart was judged as more trustworthy ($M = 7.28, SD = 1.43$) than the neutral counterpart ($M = 5.52, SD = 2.03$), $t(76) = 3.48, p < .01, d = 1.01$, who was perceived as more trustworthy than the deceitful counterpart ($M = 3.60, SD = 2.02$), $t(76) = 3.78, p < .01, d = 0.97$. Overall, this pattern resulted in a significant effect in the respective one-way ANOVA, $F(2, 76) = 24.54, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .39$.

**Discussion**

These findings are the first to demonstrate that distrust may indeed reduce stereotyping effects. As hypothesized, participants who had engaged in a distrustful interpersonal interaction gender-stereotyped a person in an unrelated context less than participants who had previously engaged in either a trusting or a trust-unrelated interaction. Even though this stereotype-reducing effect also seemed to exist for the female distrust-eliciting counterpart, it was not significant overall.

In this first demonstration of the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust, we altered the level of experienced trust versus deceitful interaction. Although this manipulation clearly influenced the level of perceived interpersonal trust, it may have also altered other psychological variables that are in turn relevant for person judgment. We designed Experiments 2A and 2B to demonstrate that it is indeed the activation of trust versus distrust that influences the amount of stereotyping. Specifically, these studies set out to (a) conceptually replicate the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust with minimalistic and well-controlled priming manipulations and (b) investigate this effect beyond the domain of gender stereotypes. To do so, we used two subtle priming manipulations to induce a state of mere distrust. We then assessed the effect of distrust with two different stereotypes: negatively evaluated out-group stereotypes and weight-based stereotypes.

**Experiment 2A**

In Experiment 2A, we used subliminal priming procedures (Bargh & Pietromonaco, 1982), which have recently been successfully employed to evoke trust and distrust in participants (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011; Posten, Ockenfels, & Mussweiler, 2013). Upon completing the priming task, participants engaged in an allegedly unrelated person judgment task. This time we used young Turkish men as the stereotyped group. In German populations, this stereotype is associated with negative evaluations (Gawronski, Geschke, & Banse, 2003). Specifically, participants received a portrait photograph of a Turkish versus German-looking young man and read a description about his behavior (Gawronski, Geschke, & Banse, 2003). Subsequently, they evaluated the target on stereotypic and nonstereotypic dimensions.

**Method**

**Participants and design.** Sixty-eight participants were approached on the campus of the University of Cologne. They were offered a chocolate bar or a coffee voucher as compensation for participating. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: Turkish vs. German) between-subjects design.

**Materials and procedure.** Upon arrival at the lab, participants were led to individual cubicles and seated in front of a personal computer equipped with an 85-Hertz monitor. After giving their informed consent on the first screen, they were asked to work on two ostensibly unrelated tasks.

**Distrust manipulation.** The first task was a subliminal priming procedure (materials taken from Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011) that was designed to repeatedly expose participants—under the threshold of awareness—to the German word *vertrauen* (to trust) versus *missstrauen* (to distrust). In particular, the procedure was introduced as a lexical decision task (e.g., Dijksterhuis, Aarts, Bargh, & van Knippenberg, 2000). Participants were instructed to indicate whether the presented letter strings constituted words or not. Each of the target letter strings was preceded by a fixation string (XWWXWWXXWX). Allegedly to improve participants’ concentration, the fixation string “flashed” after 3,000 ms. The real purpose of the interruption was the presentation of the critical prime word for 13 ms. To mask the prime word, it was immediately followed by a postmask string that was identical to the fixation string. After 506 ms, the postmask string was replaced by the target letter string, and the participants indicated their lexical decision by pressing one of two critical buttons on a response box. With their response, the next trial began. In total, participants engaged in 26 lexical decision trials. The first two trials were practice trials without presentation of the prime word. Previous research has repeatedly demonstrated that this subliminal priming procedure reliably induces trust versus distrust mindsets that carry over to subsequent tasks. One study using this procedure demonstrated that higher levels of trust were shown toward strangers in the trust compared to the distrust condition (Posten et al., 2013). This priming procedure elicits no differences in hedonic tone or arousal (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011).

**Stereotyping paradigm.** Upon completing the priming task, participants proceeded with the person judgment task. They received a photograph portraying a Turkish-versus German-looking young man and read a story that described the target spending the evening out with his friends, engaging in diverse activities such as asking a girl for her telephone number, changing clubs, and talking with his friends (description taken from Gawronski, Geschke, & Banse, 2003). Participants then evaluated him on a total of 16 dimensions, eight being stereotypic of Turkish men (e.g., aggressive) and eight being stereotype-neutral (e.g., athletic). Scales ranged from 1 (*a little*) to 9 (*very*). To test for any differences in processing times, we computer-recorded the time used to read the...
DISTRUST REDUCES STEREOTYPING

Table 2
Means (and Standard Deviations) of Pretest Ratings for Stereotype-Relevant Dimensions for Male Turkish (vs. German) Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Turkish</th>
<th>German</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious*</td>
<td>6.67 (0.65)</td>
<td>3.80 (1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive*</td>
<td>6.00 (1.13)</td>
<td>5.00 (1.13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirited*</td>
<td>7.08 (0.79)</td>
<td>4.13 (1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-oriented*</td>
<td>6.75 (0.87)</td>
<td>5.60 (0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable*</td>
<td>6.92 (0.67)</td>
<td>6.20 (0.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy*</td>
<td>6.67 (0.99)</td>
<td>5.13 (1.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macho-like*</td>
<td>7.08 (0.79)</td>
<td>4.80 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vengeful*</td>
<td>5.58 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring</td>
<td>4.67 (0.99)</td>
<td>4.53 (1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bashful</td>
<td>5.00 (1.04)</td>
<td>5.13 (1.46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clumsy</td>
<td>4.67 (0.99)</td>
<td>4.67 (1.29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envious</td>
<td>4.92 (1.68)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laid-back</td>
<td>5.25 (1.36)</td>
<td>5.07 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic</td>
<td>5.83 (1.03)</td>
<td>6.07 (0.80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>5.67 (0.78)</td>
<td>5.80 (1.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous</td>
<td>5.25 (0.87)</td>
<td>5.07 (1.44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means of dimensions labeled with an asterisk differed significantly at the level of $p = .05$. All other means did not differ (all $t < 1$).

Results

Stereotypicality of judgments. We hypothesized that distrust-primed participants would stereotype less than trust-primed participants. To investigate this possibility, we averaged participants’ target ratings of the stereotypic dimensions into one index, for which higher values indicated more Turkish-stereotypic judgments, and submitted this index to a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: Turkish vs. German) between-subjects ANOVA.

We expected the Turkish-looking (but not the German-looking) target person to be judged as less stereotypically Turkish when a distrustful mindset was activated. The means (see Table 3) revealed that, indeed, the Turkish target person was judged as less stereotypically Turkish after the activation of a distrust mindset ($M = 4.92, SD = 0.83$) compared to the activation of a trust mindset ($M = 5.64, SD = 0.79$), $t(62) = 2.65, p = .01, d = 0.92$. Yet, judgments of the German target did not differ between the distrust ($M = 4.85, SD = 0.71$) and trust ($M = 4.68, SD = 0.79$) conditions, $t < 1$. This pattern resulted in a significant interaction of mindset and target, $F(1, 62) = 5.41, p = .02, \eta^2_p = .08$. In the overall ANOVA, a main effect of target validated that the Turkish target person was judged as more stereotypically Turkish ($M = 5.25, SD = 0.88$) than the German target person ($M = 4.77, SD = 0.74$), $F(1, 62) = 7.05, p = .01, \eta^2_p = .10$. No main effect of mindset emerged, $F(1, 62) = 2.04, p = .16$.

To analyze the influence of our manipulations on the nonstereotypic items, we computed a stereotype-unrelated subscore by averaging the eight stereotype-unrelated dimensions. Negative scales were reverse-scored. We submitted this index to a similar 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: Turkish vs. German) between-subjects ANOVA. No interaction between mindset and target occurred, $F < 1$. To examine whether type of trait (stereotype-related vs. stereotype-unrelated) would moderate the different interaction patterns, we submitted the stereotypic and nonstereotypic indices to a 2 (Mindset: distrust vs. trust) × 2 (Type of Trait: stereotype-related vs. stereotype-unrelated) mixed-model ANOVA, with the last factor as a within-subjects factor. A significant interaction effect indicated that the mindset and target manipulations differently affected the stereotype-related and -unrelated scores, $F(1, 62) = 4.03, p = .05, \eta^2_p = .06$.

Processing time. As a proxy for the amount of effort that participants invested, we took a closer look at the processing time. Participants in the distrust condition did not spend more time reading the task instructions and the target information ($M = 67.96$ s, $SD = 17.12$ s) than participants in the trust condition ($M = 73.43$ s, $SD = 16.15$ s), $t(64) = 1.33, p = .19$. Also, mean response times for the trait evaluations did not differ between the distrust ($M = 4.70$ s, $SD = 1.55$ s) and trust ($M = 4.32$ s, $SD = 1.42$ s) conditions, $t(64) = 1.04, p = .30$.

Discussion

These findings further suggest that the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust even seems to hold for targets who belong to a

Table 3
Means (and Standard Deviations) of Stereotypically Turkish Ratings as a Function of Mindset and Target in Experiment 2A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Mindset</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>5.64 (0.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>4.68 (0.79)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means labeled with different subscripts within one row or column differed according to the respective simple-contrast analysis at the level of $p = .05$. 

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negatively evaluated out-group. As hypothesized, participants who were subliminally primed with a distrust mindset stereotyped the Turkish-looking man less than participants who were primed with a trust mindset. No such effect was found for the German-looking man. This is in line with our reasoning: We did not expect a German-looking person to be judged as more (or less) stereotypically Turkish because Turk-stereotypic dimensions should not be critical to German target persons. Yet, the opportunity to investigate this effect with two truly antagonistic out-groups judged on the same dimension was intriguing. Experiment 2B set out to investigate this possibility.

Experiment 2B

To do so, we adapted a classic experimental tool for the study of stereotypes (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991) and examined our hypotheses in the context of weight stereotypes. Weight stereotypes lend themselves particularly well to our purpose because they involve two groups that represent opposing endpoints of one dimension: the weight dimension. In addition to the two stereotyped groups (i.e., underweight vs. overweight people), there is a third nonstigmatized group of normal-weight people representing the middle of the same scale. By recruiting normal-weight participants, our participants did not belong to either of the stigmatized target groups. Using the weight stereotype thus not only allowed us to generalize the findings obtained in Experiments 1 and 2A, but also to rule out the ambiguities that were associated with these studies. In addition, we used a different priming technique to induce distrust (vs. trust) mindsets. Precisely, we applied a scrambled-sentences priming procedure (Srull & Wyer, 1979), which has recently been adapted to manipulate trust and distrust (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011).

Method

Participants and design. We recruited 81 normal-weight female participants from the University of Cologne. For their participation, they were offered a chocolate bar or a coffee voucher. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: overweight vs. underweight) between-subjects factorial design.

Materials and procedure. Participants were seated in separate cubicles in front of a personal computer. After providing their informed consent, they were told that they would work on two unrelated tasks.

Distrust manipulation. The first task—introduced as a task on language processing—was a scrambled-sentences priming task (e.g., Bargh & Chartrand, 2000; Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Srull & Wyer, 1979) that has been successfully used to prime a trust versus distrust mindset in previous research (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011). Here, participants were asked to use four out of five listed words to build a coherent sentence. Eight of a total of 15 word listings contained either one trust-related or one distrust-related word (e.g., trusting vs. suspicious; see Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011, for exact materials). The remaining seven word listings were trust-neutral and did not differ between conditions. This priming procedure yields no effects on mood, alertness, and calmness (Burgmer & Mussweiler, 2012; Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011).

Stereotyping paradigm. The second task was a stereotyping measure. Participants were asked to form an impression of a target person based on the description of the previous day in the person’s life (Gilbert & Hixon, 1991). Participants received a text in which target person “S”—allegedly a student at their university—described some rather mundane actions (e.g., going to the library, doing school assignments, and buying light bulbs). No gender information was given about the target. The critical part of the description concerned target person S’s weight, which was either 48 kg or 110 kg. Being 170 cm tall, this weight clearly suggested that S was underweight versus overweight (World Health Organization, 2011). After reading the description of the target’s activities, participants were asked to judge target person S on several dimensions, of which eight represented the overweight-underweight stereotype. Scales ranged from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very). We computer-recorded the time spent reading the stereotyping materials and providing each target judgment.

To identify under- and overweight stereotypic dimensions, we conducted a separate pretest with 41 female participants (18–40 years of age) from the University of Cologne. They were asked to read one version of the descriptions of target person S and rate the target on 30 different dimensions. Each rating was provided on a scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 9 (very). As displayed in Table 4, eight dimensions turned out to be distinctive of the overweight compared to the underweight target. To ensure that those dimensions represented opposing ends of a continuous scale, we also included a condition in which target person S was described as normal-weight (63 kg; BMI = 21.80). The four overweight-representative items were positively correlated and the four underweight-representative items were negatively correlated with target weight information (see Table 4). We calculated one overweight stereotyping measure by reverse-coding the underweight-stereotypic items and averaging them with the overweight-stereotypic items (α = .75). We also pretested whether targets varied in trustworthiness ratings depending on the weight information. This was not the case (Munder = 5.77, SD = 1.42 vs. Mover = 6.08, SD = 1.66 vs. Mnormal = 5.73, SD = 1.98, F < 1).

Awareness check. Upon completion of the stereotyping task, participants were asked to provide their demographic data and to complete an awareness check. None of the participants indicated awareness of the true purpose of the study.

Results

Stereotypicality of judgments. We expected distrust-primed participants to judge the target persons less stereotypically. To test this, we reverse-scored the underweight-stereotypic items and averaged them with the overweight-stereotypic items into one stereotypicality index. We submitted this overweight-stereotypicality index to a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: underweight vs. overweight) between-subjects ANOVA.

We expected more stereotypic judgments in the distrust compared to the trust condition. As Figure 2 reveals, distrust-primed participants indeed judged the overweight target as less stereotypically overweight and the underweight target as less stereotypically underweight than trust-primed participants. These differential influences of trust and distrust on the overweight and underweight targets yielded a significant interaction effect, F(1, 77) = 10.06, p < .01, ηp² = .12. Simple contrast analyses demonstrated that
DISTRUST REDUCES STEREOTYPING

Table 4

Means (and Standard Deviations) of Pretest Ratings for Stereotype-Relevant Dimensions for Overweight, Normal-Weight, and Underweight Targets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Underweight</th>
<th>Normal-weight</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
<th>r</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lazy*</td>
<td>2.69 (1.11)</td>
<td>3.15 (1.68)</td>
<td>4.27 (1.87)</td>
<td>.40*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undisciplined*</td>
<td>2.69 (1.38)</td>
<td>3.69 (2.39)</td>
<td>4.67 (2.66)</td>
<td>.34*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placid*</td>
<td>4.31 (1.55)</td>
<td>5.23 (1.64)</td>
<td>5.73 (1.91)</td>
<td>.30*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clumsy*</td>
<td>3.54 (1.98)</td>
<td>3.92 (2.43)</td>
<td>4.80 (0.94)</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxurious</td>
<td>4.54 (2.07)</td>
<td>5.23 (1.48)</td>
<td>5.67 (2.09)</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insecure</td>
<td>4.23 (2.09)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.61)</td>
<td>4.93 (1.79)</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politically interested</td>
<td>3.31 (1.25)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.47)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.00)</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendy</td>
<td>6.23 (1.36)</td>
<td>6.46 (1.45)</td>
<td>6.80 (1.52)</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustrated</td>
<td>4.23 (2.24)</td>
<td>3.62 (1.33)</td>
<td>4.33 (1.95)</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careing</td>
<td>5.46 (2.07)</td>
<td>5.92 (1.85)</td>
<td>5.87 (1.55)</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraverted</td>
<td>4.85 (1.46)</td>
<td>5.31 (1.65)</td>
<td>5.13 (1.55)</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>4.31 (1.55)</td>
<td>5.15 (1.57)</td>
<td>4.73 (1.79)</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>5.85 (1.41)</td>
<td>7.15 (0.90)</td>
<td>6.27 (1.67)</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orderly</td>
<td>6.69 (1.18)</td>
<td>5.54 (2.18)</td>
<td>6.33 (1.63)</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bashful</td>
<td>4.31 (2.18)</td>
<td>4.62 (1.85)</td>
<td>4.40 (1.35)</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple-minded</td>
<td>4.31 (1.80)</td>
<td>4.31 (2.32)</td>
<td>4.20 (1.86)</td>
<td>- .03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>6.08 (1.32)</td>
<td>6.08 (1.50)</td>
<td>5.93 (1.91)</td>
<td>- .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>4.60 (1.84)</td>
<td>4.85 (1.41)</td>
<td>4.60 (1.35)</td>
<td>- .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>6.38 (2.06)</td>
<td>7.00 (1.87)</td>
<td>6.40 (2.06)</td>
<td>- .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested in technology</td>
<td>4.31 (1.55)</td>
<td>5.08 (1.55)</td>
<td>4.00 (1.84)</td>
<td>- .04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal</td>
<td>2.31 (1.89)</td>
<td>3.08 (2.25)</td>
<td>2.53 (1.80)</td>
<td>- .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envious</td>
<td>4.38 (1.71)</td>
<td>4.31 (1.32)</td>
<td>4.13 (1.51)</td>
<td>- .07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eloquent</td>
<td>5.00 (1.96)</td>
<td>4.77 (1.88)</td>
<td>4.53 (2.36)</td>
<td>- .09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>6.38 (1.39)</td>
<td>6.85 (0.99)</td>
<td>6.20 (1.61)</td>
<td>- .12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nervous</td>
<td>5.54 (2.18)</td>
<td>3.85 (1.63)</td>
<td>4.40 (2.13)</td>
<td>- .14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>6.62 (1.50)</td>
<td>6.08 (2.40)</td>
<td>5.87 (2.07)</td>
<td>- .14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious*</td>
<td>7.38 (1.19)</td>
<td>6.54 (2.30)</td>
<td>5.87 (1.96)</td>
<td>- .31*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kempt*</td>
<td>7.46 (0.88)</td>
<td>6.92 (1.12)</td>
<td>6.07 (1.53)</td>
<td>- .44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body focused*</td>
<td>6.69 (2.32)</td>
<td>6.46 (2.40)</td>
<td>3.93 (2.82)</td>
<td>- .46*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic*</td>
<td>5.23 (1.24)</td>
<td>4.31 (1.60)</td>
<td>2.13 (0.92)</td>
<td>- .73*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Means between under- and overweight target conditions of dimensions labeled with an asterisk differed significantly at the level of p = .05 (all other ps ≤ .12). Correlations (rs) between judgmental dimension and body weight information labeled with an asterisk were significant at the level of p = .05; for the dimension clumsy, p = .07 (all other ps ≥ .15).

judgments of the overweight target differed significantly between the distrust (M = 4.41, SD = 0.76) and trust (M = 5.20, SD = 1.12) conditions, t(77) = 2.49, p = .02, d = 0.84. Likewise, judgments of the underweight target differed significantly between the distrust (M = 3.62, SD = 0.95) and trust (M = 2.99, SD = 1.12) conditions, t(77) = 1.99, p = .05, d = 0.61. Validating our stereotyping paradigm, overall, the overweight target was judged as more stereotypically overweight than the underweight target, F(1, 77) = 44.93, p < .01, ηp² = .37. No significant main effect of mindset emerged, F < 1.

Again, we calculated a stereotype-unrelated subscore by taking the mean of the stereotype-unrelated dimensions (negative dimensions reverse-scored) and submitting it to the same 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Target: overweight vs. underweight) ANOVA. Stereotype-neutral items did not yield a Mindset × Target interaction, F(1, 77) = 1.47, p = .23. To examine whether type of trait would moderate the different interaction patterns, we submitted the stereotype and the nonstereotypic scores to a 2 × 2 ANOVA, with repeated measures on the last factor. In line with our expectations, a significant three-way interaction demonstrated that stereotype and nonstereotypic scores were differentially affected by the mindset and priming manipulations, F(1, 77) = 10.65, p < .01, ηp² = .12.

Processing time. As in Experiment 2A, we examined whether the processing times of the stereotyping task differed. This was not the case: Distrust-primed participants did not spend more time reading the information provided in the stereotyping paradigm (M = 89.60 s, SD = 29.24 s) than participants with a trust mindset (M = 80.91 s, SD = 24.15 s), t(79) = 1.46, p = .15. Likewise, distrust-primed participants provided their judgments on average as quickly (M = 4.35 s, SD = 1.58 s) as trust-primed participants (M = 4.14 s, SD = 1.83 s), t < 1.

Discussion

As conceptual replications of our first experiment, Experiments 2A and 2B provide further support for our hypothesis that distrust leads to less stereotypic judgments and also speak to the generalizability of the hypothesized effect. More specifically, Experiment 2A demonstrates that distrust reduces stereotyping even for a negatively evaluated out-group characterized by a different ethnicity. Experiment 2B adds to this finding by showing that distrust reduces stereotyping for two opposing out-groups that are located along the same dimension. Apart from extending the initial find-
The goal of Experiment 3 was to shed initial light on the mechanism that underlies the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust. In line with our expectations, participants with a distrust mindset showed a more pronounced focus on dissimilarities than participants with a trust mindset. Yet, it was unclear whether the dissimilarity-focus indeed contributes to the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust. In our final study, we set out to demonstrate that the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust is driven by a heightened dissimilarity-focus.

Experiment 3

To do so, we primed participants with either distrust or trust mindsets. If distrust induces a more pronounced dissimilarity-focus compared to trust, this should show up in a subsequent task designed to measure the direction of the comparison focus. One way to assess the participants’ comparison focus on similarities versus dissimilarities is by measuring the perceived (dis)similarity between pairs of objects (Mussweiler & Damisch, 2008; Steinmetz & Mussweiler, 2011). The more participants’ focus is directed toward similarities while processing the objects, the more similarly they should judge the objects. The more they focus on dissimilarities, the more dissimilarly they should judge the objects.

Method

Participants and design. Thirty-eight participants were recruited on the campus of the University of Cologne and randomly assigned to one of the two priming conditions (trust vs. distrust). Participants were offered a chocolate bar or a coffee voucher as compensation.

Materials and procedure. Upon arrival in the lab, participants were seated in individual cubicles in front of personal computers endowed with 85-Hertz monitors. After completing the consent form, they were asked to complete two ostensibly unrelated tasks.

Distrust manipulation. The first task—the distrust manipulation—was nearly identical to the priming procedure used in Experiment 2A. Only stimuli presentation durations were varied to correspond to the refreshment rates of the computer monitors used in the present study. Precisely, a 3,000-ms premask string was followed by a 23-ms prime and a 517-ms postmask string.

Comparison focus measure. The second task was a comparison focus measure (Mussweiler & Damisch, 2008). Participants indicated how dis/similar they perceived different pairs of objects to be. Screen by screen, nine pairs of objects were presented. All pairs were recruited from different nonsocial domains (e.g., whale–dolphin; white wine–red wine; bicycle–motorcycle). Specifically, they completed sentences referring to two objects’ dis/similarity (e.g., “Whale and dolphin are . . .”) by choosing one of six answer options on a scale ranging from 1 (very dissimilar) to 6 (very similar). Response times for each answer were computer recorded.

Awareness check. At the end of the experiment, participants provided their demographic data and completed a funnelled debriefing. None of the participants identified the purpose of the study. One participant who provided the correct priming word was excluded from further analyses, leaving a final sample of 37 participants (26 female; 19–30 years of age; 1 missing value).

Results

Comparison focus measure. If distrust does indeed lead to a heightened focus on dissimilarities, then distrust-primed participants should rate the target pairs as more dissimilar than trust-primed participants. To analyze this possibility, we calculated mean ratings with higher scores indicating a more pronounced focus on similarities. In line with our hypothesis, participants with a distrust mindset focused more on dissimilarities (M = 3.04, SD = 0.67) than participants with a trust mindset (M = 3.47, SD = 0.61), t(35) = 2.08, p = .05, d = 0.70.

Processing time. We also tested whether a distrust focus would influence the processing time in the nonsocial rating task. We calculated the mean processing time for the nine different dis/similarity ratings. Response times did not differ between the distrust (M = 4.51 s, SD = 1.47 s) and trust (M = 4.11 s, SD = 0.80 s) conditions, t(35) = 1.03, p = .31.

Discussion

The goal of Experiment 3 was to shed initial light on the mechanism that underlies the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust. In line with our expectations, participants with a distrust mindset showed a more pronounced focus on dissimilarities than participants with a trust mindset. Yet, it was unclear whether the dissimilarity-focus indeed contributes to the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust. In our final study, we set out to demonstrate that the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust is driven by a heightened dissimilarity-focus.
Experiment 4

To do so, we followed recent methodological suggestions to examine process hypotheses (Jacoby & Sassenberg, 2011; Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005), which propose that causal influences can be investigated by establishing a contextual condition that disrupts (vs. does not disrupt) the execution of the proposed mediating mechanism. Two major advantages of this approach over the more traditional method of mediation analysis (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffman, West, & Sheets, 2002) have been proposed. First, it does not infer causality from correlations, but uses experimental conditions to manipulate the mediator in a randomized way instead (Jacoby & Sassenberg, 2011; MacKinnon et al., 2002). Second, it does not rely on the measurement of the mediator variable. Hence, there is no potential contamination of the process itself by its assessment (Jacoby & Sassenberg, 2011; Sigall & Mills, 1998).

In the present research, the hypothesized mediating role of a dissimilarity-focus could be examined by establishing a contextual condition that disrupts this focus. If disrupting the distrust-induced dissimilarity-focus interferes with the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust, this would suggest that a dissimilarity-focus plays a causal role. Applying this logic in our final experiment, we first primed participants with distrust (vs. trust) and subsequently either disrupted the presumed distrust-elicited dissimilarity-focus by priming a similarity-focus or left it uninfluenced. For the distrust-primed participants, we expected that stereotyping would be reduced if participants’ initial comparison focus remained uninfluenced, but not if it was disrupted. For the trust-primed participants, no such effect was expected.

Method

Participants and design. We recruited 174 normal-weight participants (141 female; 18–48 years of age; 1 missing value) for an online study. As compensation, they entered a lottery in which they could win one of six 20€ Amazon vouchers. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions of a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Focus: similarity-focus vs. uninfluenced focus) × 2 (Target: overweight vs. underweight) between-subjects design.

Materials and procedure. After completing the consent form, participants worked on three allegedly unrelated tasks. Specifically, participants were informed that they were about to take three separate pretests to validate research materials for future research.

Distrust manipulation. The first task was the scrambled-sentences priming task (Mayer & Mussweiler, 2011) used in Study 2 to prime participants with trust versus distrust.

Comparison focus manipulation. The second task—introduced as a visual perception task—was a procedural priming task that either did or did not induce a similarity-focus. Specifically, participants were presented with a color painting of a jungle scene depicting a river surrounded by various trees, flowers, and animals (Mussweiler & Epstude, 2009). To activate a similarity-focus, we used instructions that have been successfully applied in previous research (e.g., Mussweiler, 2001; Mussweiler & Damisch, 2008) and asked participants to list five similarities between the vertical halves of the picture. The halves were indicated by marks at the midpoints of each side in the frame surrounding the picture. Participants in the focus-uninfluenced conditions were presented with the exact same painting and asked to list any five features of the painting. For them, the frame of the picture was also marked, but the marks did not mean anything. Looking at the same visual materials, participants in the similarity-condition could, for instance, indicate that the river was presented in both sides of the picture, whereas participants in the control condition could list the exact same river as one feature of the picture.

Stereotyping paradigm. Upon completion of the focus manipulation, participants worked on the stereotyping task from Experiment 2B: Participants evaluated target person S, who was described as under- or overweight, on stereotypic and nonstereotypic dimensions.

Awareness check. Upon completion of the stereotyping task, participants provided their demographic data, completed an awareness check, and received their compensation. None of the participants identified the true purpose of the study.

Results

Stereotypicality of judgments. If a comparison focus on dissimilarities is indeed the mechanism that drives the demonstrated effect of distrust on stereotypes, interfering with this process should eliminate the stereotype-reducing consequences of distrust. To test this assumption, we conducted a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) × 2 (Focus: similarity-focus vs. uninfluenced focus) × 2 (Target: overweight vs. underweight) between-subjects ANOVA, and submitted the same stereotypicality index to this analysis as in Experiment 2B.

We expected that the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust (compared to trust) would be replicated if the focus remained uninfluenced. In line with this hypothesis, Figure 3 shows that focus-uninfluenced participants made fewer stereotypic judgments of the two targets when distrust (vs. trust) was activated. This pattern resulted in a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 78) = 4.83, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .06$. In detail, in the focus-uninfluenced condition, the overweight target was judged as less stereotypically overweight in the distrust condition ($M = 3.89, SD = 0.97$) compared to the trust condition ($M = 4.64, SD = 0.86$), $t(166) = 2.57, p = .01, d = 0.84$. For the underweight target, judgments did not differ significantly, $t < 1$, between the distrust ($M = 3.34, SD = 0.53$) and trust ($M = 3.28, SD = 0.83$) conditions.

More importantly, this study was designed to investigate our process hypothesis more closely. We reasoned that a similarity-focus would interfere with the distrust-elicited dissimilarity-focus. Thus, we expected participants with a distrust mindset whose focus was uninfluenced to stereotype less than participants with a distrust mindset whose focus was interrupted. The pattern for distrust-primed participants was in line with this hypothesis (see Figure 3): Distrust-primed participants judged the stereotypically overweight target as less stereotypically overweight in the focus-uninfluenced compared to the similarity-focus condition, whereas the means for the underweight target pointed in the opposite direction. This pattern yielded a significant interaction effect, indicating that the stereotypicality of target judgments for distrust-primed participants indeed depended on their comparative focus, $F(1, 74) = 4.71, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .06$. Simple contrast analyses further revealed that for distrust-primed participants, the means for the overweight target differed significantly between the focus-uninfluenced ($M = 3.89, SD = 0.97$) and similarity-focus ($M = 4.66, SD = 1.35$)...
conditions, \( t(166) = 2.67, p < .01, d = 0.68 \). For the underweight target, the difference between the focus-uninfluenced \((M = 3.34, SD = 0.53)\) and similarity-focus \((M = 3.15, SD = 0.79)\) conditions did not reach significance, \( t < 1 \).

However, if all participants stereotyped more when a similarity-focus was activated, the finding that a similarity-focus undoes the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust could have been driven by two separate main effects: One main effect of distrust that reduces stereotyping and one main effect of a similarity-focus that fosters stereotyping. If this explanation is true, then participants in the trust condition with a similarity-focus should also stereotype more than participants in the trust condition with an uninfluenced focus. To eliminate this alternative explanation, we analyzed, for the trust-primed participants, whether the focus manipulation would also differentially affect the stereotypicality of target judgments. In line with this reasoning, we did not find a significant interaction between focus and target for trust-primed participants, \( F(1, 92) = 2.64, p = .11 \). Similarly, when a similarity-focus was induced, distrust compared to trust did not lead to significantly less stereotypical judgments, \( F(1, 88) = 3.05, p = .08 \). In fact, a close look at Figure 3 reveals that if anything, these patterns of results even point in opposite directions.

In line with our hypothesis, the overall pattern of results yielded a significant three-way interaction, \( F(1, 166) = 7.38, p < .01 \). \( \eta_p^2 = .04 \), in the 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) \( \times 2 \) (Focus: similarity-focus vs. uninfluenced focus) \( \times 2 \) (Target: overweight vs. underweight) ANOVA.

To analyze the influence of the mindset and focus manipulations on the nonstereotypic items, we calculated the same stereotype-unrelated subscore as in Experiment 2B and submitted it into the same 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) \( \times 2 \) (Focus: similarity-focus vs. uninfluenced focus) \( \times 2 \) (Target: overweight vs. underweight) between-subjects ANOVA as we had done for the stereotype-related index. Supporting our reasoning that our results are specific to stereotypic items, no interaction between mindset, focus, and target was found in this analysis, \( F < 1 \). Furthermore, to investigate whether the influence of our manipulations on stereotypic and nonstereotypic items differed, we submitted both measures to a 2 (Mindset: trust vs. distrust) \( \times 2 \) (Focus: similarity-focus vs. uninfluenced focus) \( \times 2 \) (Target: overweight vs. underweight) \( \times 2 \) (Type of Trait: stereotype-related vs. stereotype-neutral) mixed-model ANOVA, with the last factor as a within-subjects factor. As hypothesized, the resulting omnibus ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect, indicating the moderating role of type of trait, \( F(1, 166) = 5.53, p = .02, \eta_p^2 = .03 \).

### Discussion

The findings of Experiment 4 replicated those of Experiments 1 and 2 by demonstrating the stereotype-reducing effect of distrust under circumstances that allowed for an uninfluenced execution of any elicited comparison focus. More importantly, though, the findings of Experiment 4 give credence to the notion that the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust are driven by a distrust-induced dissimilarity-focus. Distrust-primed participants showed reduced stereotyping only if their focus could remain on dissimilarities. If their focus was disrupted and set on similarities, the pattern of reduced stereotyping under distrust was no longer observed. For the trust-primed participants, the similarity-focus induction did not lead to more stereotypic judgments compared to the uninfluenced focus condition. This indicates that a similarity-focus in and of itself did not act as a stereotype-increasing mechanism. Rather, the induced similarity-focus led to higher levels of stereotyping only if it undid the dissimilarity-focus spontaneously evoked by distrust. Experiment 3 already demonstrated that a distrust mindset induces a focus on dissimilarities. The results of Experiment 4 go an important step further by demonstrating that distrust reduces stereotyping because it induces a dissimilarity-focus. As previous research has demonstrated, a dissimilarity-focus is a useful tool for doing away with the often unwanted effects of an activated stereotype (Corcoran et al., 2009).
Notably, this effect emerged more clearly for overweight targets—the group with stronger stereotypes. This resonates with the finding of Experiment 1 for the female targets and raises the question of whether the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust hold only for strongly stereotyped groups. To find an empirical answer to this question and to determine the overall reliability of the effect, we used a meta-analytic procedure (cf. Rosenthal, 1991). Specifically, we used the Stouffer method (weighted for dfs) to combine the results for the less stereotyped groups (men and overweight targets) of Experiments 1, 2B, and 4. The results demonstrate that overall distrust also reduces stereotyping for the less stigmatized targets of men and overweight people ($Z = 2.45, p = .01$).

**General Discussion**

Intuition suggests that distrust may have detrimental effects on the impressions we form of others. Yet, our research demonstrates that distrust actually works against one of the most ubiquitous potentially negative influences on person judgment, namely, stereotyping. Four experiments provided consistent evidence for the hypothesis that a distrust mindset reduces the stereotypicality of person judgments. Our first two experiments, using three different distrust manipulations and three different stereotyping paradigms, provide the first empirical demonstration that distrust reduces stereotyping. In the first study, interacting with an apparently untrustworthy (vs. trustworthy vs. trust-neutral) individual led to less gender-stereotypic judgments of an unrelated female (vs. male) target person. In line with existing research on the evaluation of deceivers (J. M. Tyler et al., 2006), this finding did not extend to the deceitful individual him/herself. Studies 2A and 2B further investigated this phenomenon by conceptually replicating this experiment while at the same time stressing different key aspects. In Study 2A, evoking distrust with a subtle subliminal priming procedure led to less stereotypic judgments of a negatively stereotyped out-group (Turkish men). In Study 2B, a scrambled-sentences distrust priming led to less stereotyping of an over- versus overweight target. Notably, the targets were judged as less stereotypic on the same scale: The same set of attributes was ascribed more to the overweight target and less to the overweight target.

Our research also speaks to the cognitive mechanism that underlies this stereotype-reducing effect of distrust. We suggested that dissimilarity-focused comparisons would represent a nonroutine information processing strategy that underlies this effect of distrust. The findings of our final two experiments supported this assumption. We demonstrated that, indeed, distrust induces judges to engage in dissimilarity-focused comparisons. We further showed that this distrust-induced dissimilarity-focus plays a causal role in the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust: If the execution of dissimilarity-focused comparisons is hindered, the stereotype-reducing effects of distrust diminish. These findings attest to the surprising benefits of distrust.

**Theoretical Implications**

Although these findings appear to contradict intuition at first glance, they fall nicely in line with a growing body of literature on trust and distrust. As the mental states of trust and distrust have probably preceded mankind (e.g., Jensen et al., 2007) and are present in every social interaction (cf. Schol et al., 2008), it seems only natural that humans would have developed specific information processing techniques to accompany these essential mental states. The adaptive value of the distrust-accompanying strategies lies in their nature to prepare us for the possibility that the acts of fellow humans may be misleading (Schul et al., 1996; Schol, Mayo, Burnstein, & Yahalom, 2007). When people are distrustful, they simultaneously process incoming information as if it is both true and false (Schol et al., 1996), activate incongruent associations (Schol et al., 2004), and start nonroutine information processing (Schol et al., 2008). In a nutshell, when deception is prevalent and leads us to distrust, the rules of inference that usually enable us to predict the world and reach correspondent conclusions do not match reality. Thus, we alter our set ways of making inferences. The present results resonate nicely with this perspective: Stereotyping clearly constitutes one of the most fundamental and most routine inference strategies for forming impressions of others. Hence, the logic underlying other routine inference strategies should also hold for stereotyping. As a result, stereotyping is reduced under circumstances of distrust. By providing experimental support for this conjecture, the present findings extend previous research by offering new insights into how distrust-eliciting cognitive mechanisms shape social perception and judgment. To our knowledge, we are the first to demonstrate how distrust directly affects stereotyping and that—against all odds—this influence does not need to be invidious. Distrust rather provides us with an exceptional view of others that does not mirror the picture we typically obtain.

Evolutionary (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992) as well as social cognitive approaches (Schol et al., 2004, 2008; Todorov, Baron, & Oosterhof, 2008) have identified trust and distrust as basic contexts for social information processing. Our research extends this previous work by examining how trust and distrust influence two of the most fundamental social cognitive mechanisms, namely, stereotyping and social comparison. The influence of trust versus distrust on stereotyping seems particularly provocative given that stereotyping is a wide-ranging phenomenon that is basically present whenever we engage in social interactions and encounter other people. Finding conditions that reduce the effects of stereotyping has proven to be a challenge. In fact, reduced stereotyping is often accompanied by substantial costs, for example, in the form of cognitive processing capacity (e.g., Gilbert & Hixon, 1991; Macrae, Milne, et al., 1994; Wegener, Clark, & Petty, 2006). The present research demonstrates that distrust is a powerful mindset that reduces stereotyping. In doing so, it builds on previous work that has demonstrated that specific mindsets allow people to alleviate stereotyping effects in an indirect fashion that does not seem to involve capacity-consuming monitoring processes (e.g., Mos...
The present research extends this previous work in significant ways. First, it identifies two alternate mindsets that are easily triggered in each and every interpersonal interaction (e.g., DePaulo et al., 2003; Lount, 2010; Schul et al., 2004, 2008). The omnipresence of trust versus distrust in social interactions suggests that these basic mindsets will shape virtually every single instance of stereotyping. Second, the present research demonstrates that mindsets may influence not only whether stereotypes are activated in the first place, but also how they are used. The majority of findings showing stereotype-reducing effects of specific mindsets suggest that a given mindset (e.g., creativity) may hinder the critical stereotype from being activated in the first place (e.g., Moskowitz, 2010). By contrast, distrust changes how an activated stereotype is used for social judgment. In fact, the critical stereotype-reducing mechanism of dissimilarity-focused comparisons influences the social judgment process after the initial activation of the stereotype has already occurred (Corcoran et al., 2009). We demonstrate how a contextually triggered distrust mindset reduces the effect of an activated stereotype via the basic information processing mechanism of dissimilarity-focused comparisons. Experiment 4 strongly supports this conclusion: Under distrust, stereotyping may or may not occur—depending on the comparative focus. If the stereotype would not have been activated in the first place under distrust, one would not expect stereotyping to occur in any of the distrust conditions. Yet, our findings for the distrust condition in which a similarity-focus was induced demonstrate that stereotyping effects can occur under distrust. These findings suggest that for distrust-primed participants too, the activation of stereotypic representations had already occurred, and only the execution of dissimilarity-focused comparisons reduced the effect. Thus, the present findings demonstrate that mindsets may reduce stereotyping not only by hindering their activation (Moskowitz, 2010; Sassenberg & Moskowitz, 2005) but also by altering the application of already activated stereotypes.

The implications of the present research for social comparison research seem equally important. Circumstances that lead to similarity- versus dissimilarity-focused comparisons are relevant for a variety of assimilation and contrast-based phenomena. Discovering conditions that lead to one or the other outcome thus has substantial explanatory value across different paradigms. To date, most of the antecedents of a similarity- versus a dissimilarity-focus that have been identified are directly related to a given set of comparison targets and standards (e.g., Mussweiler, 2003; Mussweiler, Rüter, & Epstude, 2004). Standard extremity is probably the most obvious case in point. Specifically, judges are more likely to focus on dissimilarities when making a comparison with an extreme rather than a moderate standard (Mussweiler et al., 2004). Only recently have researchers begun to identify target- and standard-unrelated context conditions that promote a similarity-versus a dissimilarity-focus. A recent set of studies demonstrated that ambient physical warmth critically influenced judges’ comparison focus (Steinmetz & Mussweiler, 2011). Our research adds to this body of evidence by showing how a fundamental social context of information processing—trust versus distrust—relates to the two alternative comparison foci. Similarity- and dissimilarity-focused comparisons are essential for the emergence of assimilation and contrast across different paradigms, such as self-evaluations (Hanko, Crusius, & Mussweiler, 2010; Mussweiler et al., 2004), performance evaluations (Damisch, Mussweiler, & Plessner, 2006), or negotiations (Galinsky, Mussweiler, & Medvec, 2002). The present research suggests that trust and distrust mindsets may be found to be important moderators in these domains as well.

In this respect, our findings provide novel insights into how distrust shapes social information processing. At the same time, they suggest novel avenues of research on how distrust may influence nonsocial information processing. Stereotyping constitutes one example of the use of mental schemas (e.g., Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). Although the use of schemas has been shown to be beneficial in areas as diverse as learning, problem solving, and understanding the world in general, they may also have detrimental effects. One prominent case in point is eyewitness testimony, where the activation of schemas may impede memory performance, as is the case with schema-consistent false memories as one example (Bower, Black, & Turner, 1979; Neuschatz, Lampinen, Preston, Hawkins, & Toglia, 2002). Interestingly, it has been demonstrated that memory performances may be improved by focusing on differences (Hunt, Smith, & Dunlap, 2011). In light of the present findings that distrust induces a dissimilarity-focus, this suggests that distrust may also improve memory performance. However, this possibility awaits empirical scrutiny.

Study Limitations and Future Directions

The present research focused on the cognitive underpinnings of distrust. Clearly, however, distrust also has affective consequences. This begs the question of whether these cognitive and affective underpinnings would influence stereotyping in similar ways. To speculate about potential affective influences, research on mood effects on stereotyping is a good starting point. A frequent finding in this literature is that people in a positive mood stereotype more than people in a negative mood (e.g., Bodenhausen, Kramer, & Süsser, 1994; Charttrand, van Baaren, & Bargh, 2006; Park & Banaji, 2000). Assuming that distrust entails a more negative mood, this suggests that the affective and cognitive underpinnings of distrust may have converging effects on stereotyping. Interestingly, however, the opposite prediction of diverging affective and cognitive influences can be derived from research on how specific emotions rather than general mood states influence stereotyping. Here, it has been demonstrated that specific negative emotions that are associated with heightened arousal (e.g., anxiety, fear, and threat) foster stereotypic thinking (Bodenhausen, 1993; Maner et al., 2005). Arousal has been suggested as one of the associated affective components of distrust (Schul et al., 2008). This suggests that these more specific affective underpinnings of distrust may influence stereotyping in ways that diverge from the cognitively driven effects examined in the present research. Clearly, this potential interplay of cognitive and affective influence remains to be examined in future research.

So far, we have focused on the merits of distrust. Yet, it is important to emphasize that distrust is of course not a panacea. Clearly, distrust does not have solely beneficial consequences for interpersonal relationships. This becomes immediately apparent if social perception at the group rather than the individual level is taken into account. If a stereotyped group as a whole is judged, distrust is likely to foster the same dissimilarity-focus that the
present research identified for the individual level. As a consequence, distrustful judges are likely to see an out-group as more different from their in-group. Due to in-group-favoring biases (e.g., Brewer, 1999), this is likely to result in a contrast effect with even more negative judgments of the out-group. In fact, some evidence points in this direction. Trust as well as the recognition of similarities between groups enhances the group relationship (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Also, distrust may play out more adversely on an individual level of social perception. As outlined above, the standard that is used for the comparison process that underlies critical person judgment plays an important role. In the case of stereotyping, dissimilarity-focused comparisons reduce assimilative effects to a stereotypic standard (Corcoran et al., 2009). However, if a shift from stereotypic standards to, for instance, the self is taken, dissimilarity-focused comparisons may yield opposing effects (Ames, Mor, & Toma, 2013). Thus, trust and distrust might produce their respective beneficial consequences under different judgmental circumstances.

In line with the distinction of focused and unfocused distrust (Schul et al., 2008), the data from Experiment 1 suggest that one important feature in the evaluative process of person judgment is how distrust relates to a specific person. If distrust is directly attached to a person, the person is evaluated more negatively (e.g., J. M. Tyler et al., 2006). Applying these findings at the intergroup level may resolve how distrust in intergroup conflicts may play out more negatively. For instance, if a stereotyped out-group is directly evaluated as distrustful, this may result in more negative evaluations and behavioral tendencies overall (Tam, Hewstone, Kenworthy, & Cairns, 2009). Nevertheless, even within such conflict settings, once activated, a distrust mindset may affect how stereotypically conflict-unrelated persons are perceived. The ease with which those evoked states of mind can spill over into unrelated contexts has been repeatedly demonstrated (e.g., Bargh et al., 1996; Dijksterhuis et al., 2000).

Another intriguing question arises for groups whose stereotypes include distrust as an integral element. Those groups themselves are likely to function as a cue to distrust. Could it be that single members of those distrust-eliciting groups would be stereotyped less and thus be judged to deviate more from the group stereotype than members of trust-eliciting groups? Returning to the examples we started off with: Would a physician be stereotyped more than a used-car dealer? To date, these questions remain unanswered and emphasize that examining how trust versus distrust shapes person perception in general and stereotyping specifically is a fruitful path for future research.

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Received May 16, 2012

Revision received April 16, 2013

Accepted April 19, 2013