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journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/jespGroup-based biases influence learning about individual trustworthiness^{☆,☆☆}Marieke Vermue^{a,*}, Charles R. Seger^a, Alan G. Sanfey^{b,c}^a School of Psychology, University of East Anglia, Norwich, United Kingdom^b Donders Institute for Brain, Cognition and Behaviour, Nijmegen, The Netherlands^c Behavioural Science Institute, Radboud University Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

People often have generalised expectations of trustworthiness about ingroup and outgroup members, based on previous direct and indirect experience with these groups. How do these prior biases interact with new experiences when learning about individual group members' trustworthiness? These three studies are the first to examine the effect of group-level biases on learning about individuals' trustworthiness. Participants from the Netherlands and the United Kingdom played iterated Trust Games with trustworthy and untrustworthy members of both ingroups and outgroups. We show that the influence of group membership on trust decisions depended on the valence of the interactions with individual group members. When interacting with trustworthy partners, people displayed outgroup favouritism throughout the game, investing higher in outgroup members than ingroup members. However, for untrustworthy partners, initial outgroup favouritism disappeared, and ingroup and outgroup members were equally distrusted by the end of the game. Our work suggests that when individual experience is integrated with group-based biases, group membership influences trust decisions over time, but mostly when experiences are positive. These findings are discussed in relation to complexity-extremity theory and previous work on learning in the Trust Game.

Imagine you are at a bar and see one person wearing a New England Patriots jersey, another sporting a Republican Party badge, and a third with a German accent talking to their friend. What would you infer about their personality and their attitudes? Which of these people would you choose to ask for a favour or trust to look after your bag? We quickly categorize others in terms of their group membership (Bargh, 1999; Willis & Todorov, 2006) and the social categories to which others belong are vitally important cues for making decisions about how we then act towards them (Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014). In three studies, we investigate how social category biases interact with individual experiences in forming decisions to trust.

Feelings of trust are essential for successful cooperation, particularly when the other person is relatively unknown to you, and you cannot therefore rely on previous experiences with the person (Balliet & Van Lange, 2013). In this situation, feelings of trust come from external cues such as a person's physical features (e.g. Chang, Doll, van't Wout, Frank, & Sanfey, 2010; Todorov, Pakrashi, & Oosterhof, 2009) and particularly their group membership (Williams, 2001). Generally, people exhibit more trust, cooperation and positive reciprocation towards ingroup members than outgroup members (Balliet et al., 2014). This so-called

ingroup bias for trust has been extensively observed using well-validated economic games, such as the Trust Game (Berg, Dickhaut, & McCabe, 1995). In this game, a trustor is given an endowment that he/she can invest in a trustee. If the trustor invests his/her endowment, the amount is multiplied and given to the trustee. The trustee then has the choice to reciprocate trust by returning some of the received amount to the trustor, but he/she does not have to do so. Both players can end the game with more money than they started out with, but only if they both cooperate. Ingroup favouritism in these cooperative settings has been found with many types of naturally occurring groups, such as race (e.g. Burns, 2006), nationality (e.g. Stoddard & Leibbrandt, 2014), or religion (e.g. Rotella, Richeson, Chiao, & Bean, 2013) as well as in a minimal-group setting (e.g. Buchan, Johnson, & Croson, 2006).

However, people do not always prefer the ingroup or individual ingroup members. A considerable amount of research shows that outgroup preferences can exist when that group is perceived as high status (Jost, Pelham, & Carvallo, 2002; Trifiletti & Capozza, 2011), or high in warmth and competence (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). Even ethnic majorities can occasionally show outgroup preferences towards minority groups (Jussim, Coleman, & Lerch, 1987). One theory that

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accounts for how individual ingroup members can be viewed less favourably than outgroup members, particularly once some learning occurs, is the *Black Sheep Effect* (BSE; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). In the BSE, people punish deviating ingroup members more strongly than deviating outgroup members. This has the purpose of maintaining a positive image of the ingroup, which is vital for maintaining a positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The BSE predicts that extreme ingroup devaluations occur when the deviating member is relevant to one's social identity, and identification with the ingroup is strong.

Another theory that highlights differences between how ingroup and outgroup members are represented is *Complexity-Extremity Theory* (CET; Linville, 1982). CET accounts for situations in which ingroup members (or the ingroup as a whole) can be rated as less favourable than outgroup members, and describes situations in which negativity towards outgroups may be exacerbated. According to Linville, people's representations of outgroups are less complex than for ingroups, which leads to more extreme evaluations of outgroup members than ingroup members for both positive and negative information. Therefore, each piece of information about an outgroup member changes the evaluation more than when similar information is provided about an ingroup member. This can therefore lead to outgroup favouritism (Jussim et al., 1987).

Thus, these two theories both provide cases where the ingroup would not be favoured over the outgroup, but different patterns are predicted. According to BSE, ingroup members are generally favoured over the outgroup in positive situations, but more strongly devalued when behaving negatively. Complexity-extremity theory, however, would predict that the outgroup is evaluated more extremely positive than the ingroup when both are presented in a positive situation, but more extremely negative when negative information about these groups is learned.

1. Updating trustworthiness impressions

Previous studies have focused on *initial* trust reactions towards ingroup or outgroup members. These studies employed one-shot Trust Games in which players interact only a single time with another person. However, this is not analogous to real-world settings, which require interaction over some course of time. We are interested in how group biases influence judgments about individuals' trustworthiness when *experience* becomes available. Group membership is a useful piece of information when having to decide on an initial response. Once you gain experience with an individual, group-based expectations should be integrated with the information you have learned. The aim of the current paper is to examine whether, and how, group information influences decisions to trust in these iterated settings, when people have to integrate experience with initial group-based biases.

The influence of group-level biases on learning about individuals' trustworthiness has not been examined before. However, studies utilising an iterated Trust Game show that people are able to learn about the behaviour of individual partners over multiple interactions, and adjust their trust decisions accordingly (Chang et al., 2010; Delgado, Frank, & Phelps, 2005; Fareri, Chang, & Delgado, 2012; Fouragnan et al., 2013). In these studies, information about characteristics related to the partner's trustworthiness, as well as the amounts that the partner returned (reciprocity behaviour), were manipulated. Chang et al. (2010) found initial beliefs based on facial trustworthiness of the partner influenced initial trust decisions, and remained important throughout the entire game. In the last round of the iterated game, participants invested more in the trustworthy appearing partners that acted trustworthy than in the untrustworthy appearing partners that showed similar trustworthy behaviour. However, investments were lower for the trustworthy-appearing partners that did not reciprocate trust than for untrustworthy appearing partners that did not reciprocate. In the current study, we examine the influence of group-based biases on investment decisions, instead of the individual-based

biases of facial trustworthiness.

2. Overview of studies and hypotheses

The present research consists of three studies in two different European countries, with group membership manipulated through nationality. We adopted an iterated Trust Game paradigm, where participants played multiple rounds with several purported individuals from the ingroup and outgroup. Trustworthiness of behaviour was manipulated by pre-programming the return behaviour of the partner to be high or low. Study 1 and 2 explored ingroup and outgroup trust in the iterated Trust Game in two different European countries, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The outgroup consisted of people from different European foreign nationalities. Study 3 dived deeper into the underlying processes and examined how perceptions of trustworthiness, expectations of return, and affective feelings towards the partners are related to changes in investments over time. Moreover, in Study 3 the outgroup was restricted to one outgroup nationality to control for possible stereotype perceptions of the different countries.

We predicted that, based on the research described above, players should learn to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy partners based on the game experiences over trials. Secondly, based on the literature on ingroup favouritism in cooperation (Balliet et al., 2014), and Chang and colleagues work, we hypothesised that, should initial ingroup favouritism occur, trustworthy ingroup members would receive higher investments than trustworthy outgroup members across repeated interactions.

Thirdly, and most interestingly, both the BSE and Chang et al.'s (2010) study would predict that responses to untrustworthy ingroup members should be more negative than responses to untrustworthy outgroup members, as untrustworthy ingroup members defy the positive image and expectations of the ingroup, but this does not apply to the outgroup. However, complexity-extremity theory predicts that responses to outgroup members are more extreme for both positive and negative reciprocity, due to a low complexity of the group representation. From this theory, we would expect investments in trustworthy outgroup members to be higher than for trustworthy ingroup members, and investments in untrustworthy outgroup members to be lower than for untrustworthy ingroup members.

3. Study 1

Our first experiment was conducted in the Netherlands, with Dutch participants playing repeated Trust Games with (pre-programmed response) partners who were supposedly Dutch (ingroup) or from another Western European country (outgroup). In addition to the Trust Game, we measured expectations that participants had about these partners before playing the game, and the certainty of those expectations. Partners were also rated individually on trustworthiness, likeability and generosity after the game. Ingroup (Dutch) identification was additionally measured.

In accordance with past research (Ashraf, Bohnet, & Piankov, 2006; Buchan & Croson, 2004), we predicted that expectations would be related to any biases found in investment behaviour. Based on the results of Chang et al. (2010), partner ratings following the game were expected to reflect both learning from the game, with higher ratings for trustworthy than untrustworthy partners, and congruency with any initial group-level biases. Ingroup identification may be related to ingroup bias (Kenworthy & Jones, 2009; Voci, 2006), with people that identify stronger with the ingroup showing more differentiation between ingroup and outgroup investments than people that identify to a lesser extent.

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