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Detecting and Experiencing Prejudice: New Answers to Old Questions

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## Abstract

This contribution reviews the state of the art of research on the effects of prejudice on its targets. We structure this review around ongoing debates and core questions that have been guiding this field of research and how these are addressed by recent evidence. We address five central themes that have characterized research on the way prejudice emerges in modern societies, and the impact this has on its targets. First, we examine whether members of devalued groups tend to over- or under-estimate the extent to which they are targeted by discrimination. Second, we assess the self-protective and harmful effects of perceived discrimination on well-being. Third, we consider whether concealable stigmas are less problematic than visible stigmas. Fourth, we examine whether individual success is helpful or harmful for the disadvantaged group. Finally, as a fifth theme, we review evidence of the social costs of confronting prejudice and highlight the more neglected social benefits of confrontation. The research evidence we present in this way aims to resolve a number of common misunderstandings regarding the presence and implications of prejudice in modern societies.

Keywords: prejudice, implicit bias, discrimination, stigma, well-being, identity concealment, confronting prejudice

## Detecting and Experiencing Prejudice: New Answers to Old Questions

Whether prejudice still exists, how this can be detected, and what the implications of this might be, represent questions of longstanding interest in academic as well as public debates. Over the years, empirical evidence aiming to shed more light on these issues has accumulated. Nevertheless, the answers remain elusive. One reason is that—as is the case for many issues in the social sciences—results of studies carried out reflect, at least in part, beliefs and political debates that are salient at a given point in time, and yield different results in different national, cultural, and historical contexts (e.g., Ceci, Ginther, Kahn, & Williams, 2014; Miller, Eagly, & Linn, 2014). Hence, it is not always self-evident how evidence from such studies provides cumulative insights, or whether ‘inconclusive’ results primarily document changes over time and across contexts. As a result, the multitude of efforts pertaining to this domain of inquiry has not inevitably resulted in the emergence of clear and consistent answers to these questions. Nevertheless, with ongoing changes in the social fabric relating to globalization, migration, and inequality, the questions remain as relevant and challenging as ever.

In this contribution, we review the state of the art of research on the detection and effects of prejudice on their targets. We address core debates, recurrent questions, and frequent misconceptions relating to this field of research and show how empirical research conducted by ourselves and other researchers informs these issues. Our overarching aim in doing this is to address and hopefully resolve a number of common misunderstandings regarding the way prejudice is experienced in modern societies, with a particular focus on the impact this has on its targets. We thus follow up on prior literature reviews addressing some of these issues (Crocker & Major, 1989; Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), advancing their insights by including additional evidence that has

become available since, elaborating on areas not covered by those papers, and structuring this review around a number of key debates and questions in the field.

The first issue we address relates to the *detection* of prejudice and discrimination. There is by now clear consensus that prejudicial views and discriminatory treatment can take different forms, some of which are easier to detect than others. Nevertheless, there is less agreement as to whether members of devalued groups tend to downplay or exaggerate the extent to which they encounter discrimination, or when and why they are most likely to do so. We review evidence from experimental studies in which the objective presence versus absence of discrimination could be kept equal, as this allowed researchers to isolate the cognitive and motivational factors that play a role in prejudice recognition.

We follow up on this discussion by considering whether perceptions of discriminatory treatment can help protect individual *well-being*, or are more likely to be harmful instead. In this area of inquiry a multitude of studies has been recently carried out and both types of effects have been documented. Reviewing this work allows us to identify relevant moderators that may help understand and predict the systematic nature of these different patterns of results.

We then move on to examine whether the experience of prejudice and discrimination, as well as its implications, depend on the *nature* of the stigma under consideration. Specifically, we compare the situation of those for whom their devalued identity is immediately apparent, as it is implicated in some visible characteristic or bodily feature (such as gender or race), to the experience of those who have the choice whether or not to reveal their stigmatized identity (e.g., relating to their health status, social background, or sexual preferences). At first sight, having a concealable stigma would seem to be less challenging, and a common view is that suffering in such cases results from the choice to reveal or ‘flaunt’ one’s stigmatized identity. We present recent evidence suggesting the situation is not that straightforward, as there are

important costs to hiding, as well as significant benefits associated with revealing a stigmatized identity.

We continue our consideration of ways in which individuals can cope with a stigmatized identity by addressing the pursuit of *individual advancement* as a further topic of interest. Here we consider implications of the view that current outcomes and relations in contemporary societies reflect the achievement and merits of individuals, instead of being co-determined by their membership in social groups. Specifically, we examine how the success of individuals who can be seen to represent a devalued group reflects on others sharing the same identity, and define the conditions under which their personal successes either undermine or benefit group-level advancement.

We conclude our review by considering how people may benefit or suffer from *confronting* prejudice. In this final section, we extend existing insights that have revealed that those who claim to have suffered discrimination are likely to incur considerable social costs. Countering the widespread conclusion that targets of discrimination fare better when they do not protest their unequal treatment, we highlight existing findings for the benefits of confrontation. In addition, we review more recent evidence that reveals how these negative implications of confronting prejudice might be curbed, reminding us of the ways in which such initiatives may contribute to the achievement of social equality.

By addressing these five issues in turn, this review considers the different phases in the process of detecting, experiencing, and countering prejudice and discrimination (see also Barreto, 2014). On the one hand, these multiple aspects covered in this review attest to the complex and multi-faceted nature of the processes involved. At the same time, organizing the relevant evidence around these different issues and concerns, and identifying the types of processes involved at each stage, helps uncover the systematic and predictable nature of the variety of effects that have been documented. We conclude this review by noting how

combining the different insights that emerge at each level can help us develop a deeper understanding of how people detect and experience the prejudice to which they are exposed. In doing so, we also consider the ways in which this can inform attempts to mitigate the negative impact of discrimination in practice.

### **1. Do Members of Devalued Groups Over or Under-Estimate the Extent to Which They are Targeted by Discrimination?**

A commonly held view is that members of underprivileged groups in society are hypersensitive to the possibility of discriminatory treatment. They are believed to over-estimate the occurrence of discrimination, and to complain of unequal treatment even when there is no reason to do so. Yet, empirical research shows that detecting discriminatory treatment is not self-evident, particularly given that prejudice and discrimination are rarely blatantly expressed (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a; 2005b). Indeed, contemporary societies uphold strong egalitarian values, which are inconsistent with overt expressions of prejudice (see Barreto & Ellemers, 2013, for a recent review). As such, people who hold prejudiced attitudes are unlikely to express them openly but can do so, instead, in more subtle ways. Subtle expressions of bias range from the use of biased language (e.g., describing the ideal candidate for a specific job in purely masculine terms, Stout & Dasgupta, 2011), to assumptions based on stereotypes (e.g., assuming that a judge is necessarily white, Czopp & Monteith, 2003, or that women are necessarily emotional in work contexts, Cihangir, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2010), to paternalistic behaviours (e.g., introducing restrictions on women's activities in order to protect them, Moya, Glick, Expósito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007), among others.

As a result of this ambiguity, discrimination claims can be easily questioned. Indeed, individuals do not always agree whether specific events involve discriminatory treatment. For example, those who identify with groups that tend to be targeted by prejudice are more likely to perceive prejudice against devalued groups than members of groups that do not tend to be

targeted by prejudice (e.g., Johnson, Simmons, Trawalter, Ferguson, & Reed, 2003). In addition, even when people acknowledge that their group is commonly a target of discrimination, they may or not be aware of being personally discriminated against. This tendency for people to report less discrimination against themselves personally than against the average member of their group has been observed in a variety of social groups and designated the “personal-group discrimination discrepancy” (Crosby, 1982; Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990).

Early research on this topic attempted to explain this discrepancy by establishing whether members of devalued groups are overly vigilant about discrimination targeting the group as a whole (artificially inflating ratings of group discrimination), or whether, alternatively, they tend to minimize the extent to which discrimination targets them personally. Current approaches emphasize the possibility that these discrepancies in perceptions of prejudicial treatment can be explained by cognitive and motivational factors that may affect perceptions of personal and group prejudice, and do so differently among members of different groups (Adams, Tormala, & O’Brien, 2006). Empirical research, however, does not necessarily provide clear evidence as to whether prejudice perceptions under- or over-estimate its actual occurrence. Indeed, the methodological characteristics of the great majority of studies in this area (e.g., correlational studies or studies where discrimination is plausible but not certain) make it hard to ascertain what would exactly qualify as overly vigilant responses or as an underestimation of exposure to prejudice. In addition, in the past, the tendency to under- or over-estimate discriminatory treatment has often been indirectly inferred from the *effects* of such perceptions. For example, negative effects of perceptions of discrimination on well-being have led to the inference that individuals should be motivated to minimize such perceptions so as to minimize threat (e.g., Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). By contrast, the finding that perceptions of discrimination can

also play a protective role has often led to the inference that, at times, individuals may be motivated to perceive themselves as targets of prejudice, potentially resulting in the over-estimation of such experiences (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002).

Recent research has started to examine this issue in a more direct and systematic fashion, for example by keeping exposure to prejudice or discrimination constant and varying a range of factors that affect the extent to which it is detected when it occurs. Below, we examine this research and discuss what it implies regarding devalued group members' tendency to over or under-estimate discriminatory treatment.

### **1.1. Base-rate expectations and information availability**

People are generally motivated to think of the world as an equal and just place, and strongly endorse individual mobility ideologies (Ellemers & Van Laar, 2010; see also Lerner, 1980). In fact, individuals tend to avoid expressing explicitly biased judgments, and even try to control relatively implicit biases, especially when the moral implications of doing so are made salient (Van Nunspeet, Derks, Ellemers, & Nieuwenhuis, in press; Van Nunspeet, Ellemers, Derks, & Nieuwenhuis, 2014). Yet, systematic differences in important societal outcomes remain—for instance between men and women in pay levels and career progress—that cannot be explained by legitimate causes for such differences, such as level of education or nature of employment (for an overview, see Ellemers, 2014). Nevertheless, members of advantaged groups as well as members of groups that suffer disadvantage often prefer not to interpret this as indicative of group-based discrimination. Instead, they persist in the belief that individual merit is the decisive explanatory variable for such differences (Stephens & Levine, 2011). Hence, they attribute diverging outcomes of themselves and others to differences in genetic make-up, diverging individual abilities, or personal choices, even if there is no evidence for such systematic differences, for instance between men and women in math ability (e.g., Ceci et al., 2014), leadership ambitions (Hyde, 2014), or 'hard wired'



behavioral tendencies (Fine, 2013). An important consequence of these meritocracy beliefs is that people have a strong tendency to expect to be treated fairly and equally, and this in itself can be an impediment to their ability and willingness to acknowledge instances of prejudice or discrimination, even when this causes them personal disadvantage (see Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009, for a more elaborate discussion of this issue).

Indeed, paradoxically, a first factor that makes it more difficult to detect prejudicial treatment is the ostensible presence of anti-discrimination measures. People's awareness that equal opportunity measures are in place, for instance in their work organization, makes them less vigilant for the possibility of bias, and the visible presence of members of undervalued groups (even if this is only a small minority) only makes this worse (Kaiser, Major, Jurcevic, Dover, Brady, & Shapiro, 2013). This so-called 'paradox of equality' can even cause individuals to display *more* bias, for instance leading managers to recommend more bonuses and promotions for men than for equally qualified women, when their organization more explicitly values and promotes an individual merit system (Castilla & Benard, 2010). What, then, are valid cues to detect unequal treatment, if the presence of anti-discrimination policies in itself does not imply fair treatment and can even elicit bias?

The general assumption is that people are able to recognize discrimination when it occurs. In fact, this is also reflected in legal definitions, assuming that discrimination claims can be evaluated on the basis of evidence that individuals are treated differently due to their group membership, despite equal abilities or qualifications (see also Rudman, Glick, & Phelan, 2008). In reality, however, the situation is almost never that clear. Those who are rejected in procedures for job vacancies or promotions often have only their own experience to go by. People need to actively search for aggregate information to be able to decide whether or not bias is likely. However, indicators of individual abilities are often ambiguous or incomparable, or information that would make it possible to systematically compare the

way members of different groups are treated is simply not available (Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, & Hemker, 1986).

Even if there is clear evidence of group-based disadvantage, individual group members do not necessarily detect its occurrence unless they also personally suffer from it (Stroebe, Ellemers, Barreto, & Mummendey, 2009). When individuals are themselves recipients of negative outcomes, they are more attentive to cues to discrimination (such as the disadvantage of the ingroup as a whole) so as to deflect personal responsibility for the negative outcome, and thereby protect their sense of competence (Crocker & Major, 1989). If individuals do not receive a negative outcome, however, they do not have this motivation and may, instead, fail to realize that the group as a whole is disadvantaged. We examined this in two studies where individual outcomes were evaluated in the presence versus absence of information about group disadvantage (Experiment 1) or where individual and group outcomes were congruent versus incongruent (Experiment 2). Female participants in both studies took part in a bogus selection procedure during which they were interviewed by a male interviewer. Participants knew that they were not applying for any concrete job, but were told that they were likely to experience similar procedures when applying for jobs in the future. In both experiments, half of the participants were told that, if the interview had been for a real job, the interviewer would have recommended that they would be accepted, whereas the remaining participants were told the interviewer would have recommended rejection. All participants then received some information about how prior applicants had done. In Experiment 1, orthogonally to the acceptance/rejection manipulation, half of the participants saw that the interviewer had accepted 4% of the female candidates and 60% of the male candidates; the remaining participants did not receive this information about group disadvantage. In Experiment 2, we modified this design slightly by providing all participants with information about group outcomes, but varying whether the group was said to be advantaged or disadvantaged, in

addition to again orthogonally manipulating whether participants themselves had been personally rejected or accepted. As such, in Experiment 2, we varied whether personal and group outcomes were congruent or incongruent.

Among other variables, we assessed the extent to which participants attributed their own outcome to group-based disadvantage and the extent to which they perceived the selection procedure, up to that point, to be fair or legitimate. The results of both studies showed that participants attributed their outcome to group-based disadvantage only when they were personally rejected and their group was clearly disadvantaged. Importantly, participants only questioned the legitimacy of the selection procedure when they had information about group disadvantage *and* they had been personally rejected, but not when they had been personally accepted (see Figure 1).

[insert Figure 1 about here]

These results suggest that personal rejection does not lead to enhanced attributions to discrimination if there is no evidence that the group has received discriminatory treatment. Likewise, when members of one's group are systematically disadvantaged, this will not be seen as evidence of discrimination by individuals who have been individually successful. As a result, only when they have personally experienced unwarranted rejection *and* there is evidence that members of one's group are treated less favorably than members of other groups do they conclude that members of their group are discriminated against. Thus, in cases where one of these conditions is not met, people will be inclined to under-estimate rather than over-estimate the occurrence of bias. Importantly, however, there are conditions that favor the detection of bias. Below we will consider some of the conditions that either facilitate or impede the detection of bias.

## **1.2. Typicality of prejudiced events**

People tend to think of prejudice as being characterized by intentional displays of hostility that members of advantaged groups direct towards members of disadvantaged groups. However, this 'prototype' of what prejudice is only covers some of the ways in which group-based unequal treatment appears (e.g., Inman & Baron, 1996; see Barreto, 2014, for a review). In fact, prejudice can take many shapes and forms. Prejudicial expectations can be positive, at least at the surface, can be endorsed by those who are the target of such expectations, and can lead to differential treatment even when this is not intended.

Blatant, 'old fashioned' forms of discrimination are easy to recognize. This is the case, for instance, when an employer refuses to promote women because they 'lack leadership skills,' or when migrant workers are not hired because 'they are lazy.' However, most people nowadays are aware that such blatant sexist or racist statements can be legally sanctioned, or at least are considered to be 'politically incorrect.' As a result, even those who hold prejudicial views have learned to express these in more veiled and subtle ways. For instance, rather than explicitly calling into question the leadership abilities of women, people may do this more implicitly: Emphasizing that men and women receive equal advancement opportunities at work, while observing that relatively few women hold leadership positions, implies that this must somehow be due to women's deficient leadership abilities, career ambitions, or personal life choices. Such 'denial of discrimination' has been identified as a form of 'modern' sexism (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Swim & Cohen, 1997), or 'neo-sexism' (Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995), which, though differently expressed, relates to more old-fashioned sexist and blatantly discriminatory views. Likewise, prejudicial views towards migrants in Europe and Americans from African descent nowadays tend to be expressed in more subtle and implicit ways (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995).

Importantly, however, when asked to evaluate these ‘modern’ expressions of discrimination, the targets of such views are unlikely to recognize them as expressing prejudice (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009). In one set of studies, we examined this by presenting participants with items from the old-fashioned or the modern sexism scales and describing these either as opinions held by the general public (Experiment 1) or as opinions held by a potential future supervisor (Experiments 2 and 3). Modern sexist ‘opinions’ expressed a denial that gender discrimination still exists whereas hostile sexist ‘opinions’ expressed an explicit belief in the inferiority of women. In all 3 studies, hostile sexism was clearly recognized as sexism (means between 5.16 and 5.72, across the 3 studies, on 7 point Likert-type scales). Modern sexism was perceived as significantly less sexist than hostile sexism in all studies, in some cases clearly below the scale mid-point, suggesting that it was not perceived as sexist at all (means between 2.93 and 3.93 across the 3 studies). This had important implications for the extent to which participants expressed a desire to protest against these opinions, with significantly greater intentions to protest, and actual protest behaviors, against hostile than against modern sexism. These results indicate that the movement towards more subtle and implicit expressions of bias contributes to the tendency to under-report versus over-report prejudice. The finding that people are unlikely to protest against modern types of prejudice also perpetuates their existence, since by remaining unchallenged, these forms of prejudice remain unrecognized as such.

Another development in the way prejudicial views are expressed relates to the way in which perceived differences between groups are characterized. At first sight, such expressions may seem harmless, for instance because they are presented in a positive form, masked as humor (LaFrance & Woodzicka, 1998) or even flattery (Cihangir et al., 2010). Nevertheless, to the extent that (a) such humor implicitly supports gender role differentiation or questions their change (sexist jokes), (b) flattery focuses on irrelevant characteristics (appearance in a

professional context), or (c) praise makes low expectations explicit, they still implicitly convey and maintain biased views. Indeed, instead of focusing on the negative expectations they have about the task abilities of women ('hostile' sexism), people may choose to emphasize the positive qualities that (allegedly) characterize women, for instance in the relational or moral domain ('benevolent' sexism; Glick & Fiske, 1996). At first consideration, such positive statements might not seem objectionable. Nevertheless, benevolent sexist views are not harmless: They are most likely to be observed in contexts characterized by gender inequality (Glick, Fiske, Mladinic, Saiz, Abrams, Masser, et al., 2000) and have been linked to negative attitudes towards women, for instance when they are victims of rape or domestic violence (Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreira, & Souza, 2002). Thus, the absence of explicitly negative views does not imply equal treatment. Indeed, it has been established that whereas white Americans have become less likely to express negative attitudes towards black Americans over the years, they have remained just as likely to display racial bias in (simulated) personnel selection decisions (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000). Thus, the decreased expression of negative attitudes or expectations by no means implies that discriminatory treatment is a thing of the past.

When discriminatory treatment is masked with positive views, however, it is less likely to be detected. For instance, women are generally disinclined to perceive benevolent sexist views as indicating discrimination, and in fact report they like the individuals expressing such views (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005b; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998; Swim, Mallet, Russo-Devosa, & Stangor, 2005). At the same time, exposure to benevolent sexist views—and the failure to detect this as a form of discrimination—elicits stereotype-confirming responses among women. For instance, women who are exposed to benevolent sexism are more likely to describe themselves in relational terms, and less inclined to emphasize their task-abilities, compared to women who are exposed to hostile sexist views or control conditions. Further,

women who anticipate a task-interaction with an individual endorsing benevolent sexism are less likely to express leadership ambitions (Barreto, Ellemers, Piebinga, & Moya, 2010). Thus, on the one hand, the absence of negative views does not prevent the occurrence of biased treatment, as we have seen above. On the other hand, stereotypical views that seem to emphasize positive group-based qualities cause targets to focus on their ability to demonstrate these positive qualities, instead of challenging the stereotypical expectations to which they are exposed. This is another mechanism through which contemporary expressions of bias induce people to accommodate to stereotypical views, rather than reporting group-based discrimination.

Finally, due to the ‘prototype’ people have of what prejudice is, the common belief remains that people are able to evaluate members of their own group without bias. As a result, including representatives of disadvantaged groups in organizational or legal decision making procedures is considered an effective strategy to prevent discriminatory treatment. Yet, to the extent that stereotypical expectations reflect social role relations (e.g., Eagly & Karau, 2002), they are likely to be widely shared by members of disadvantaged as well as advantaged groups. This does not mean these views are valid or accurate, nor does it imply that members of disadvantaged groups will not discriminate against their own group. In fact, there is now convincing evidence that individuals who belong to disadvantaged groups, but who achieve individual success by overcoming group-based discrimination, are more likely—instead of less likely—than members of advantaged groups to discriminate against other members of their ingroup, as we will explain in more detail below (for a more detailed review, see Ellemers, Rink, Derks, & Ryan, 2012). However, unless expressions of bias are very blatant and unambiguous, they are less likely to be recognized as indicating discrimination when they are voiced or endorsed by members of the disadvantaged group (Baron, Burgess, & Kao, 1991; Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a). For example, in a study comparing responses to modern

and to hostile sexism, we found that both male and female participants perceived any of these messages as more sexist when voiced by a male source than when it was voiced by a female source (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a). As a paradoxical result, the inclusion of target group representatives in decision making procedures (e.g., appointing African American judges, or including senior women in selection committees) may not—in itself—constitute an effective way to prevent bias. In fact, when such target group representatives endorse (subtle) bias, it is *less* likely to be recognized as a form of discrimination. This is another reason why the occurrence of discrimination in modern societies is likely to be under-estimated.

In sum, people generally are less likely to recognize modern (versus old-fashioned) forms of prejudice, because these are more subtle (e.g., denial of discrimination), are framed in a seemingly positive way (e.g., humor, flattery), or are endorsed by members of the disadvantaged group. The prevalence of such less prototypical expressions of bias contributes to the likelihood that the occurrence of discrimination is under-estimated, rather than over-estimated.

### **1.3. Contextual cues to discrimination**

Due to the implicit nature of many forms of bias, and the common conviction that equal opportunities can be warranted by formal guidelines, additional cues are needed to detect bias. As a counterpoint to our previous observation that people are less likely to detect implicit bias when this is expressed by members of the disadvantaged group, detection of prejudice is more likely when perpetrated by those who represent the advantaged group (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a; 2005b). We have argued above that this offers a more prototypical representation of a discriminatory event, in which members of an advantaged group display bias against members of disadvantaged groups. However, more recent evidence suggests there may be additional processes that contribute to this effect, which involve informational salience relating to power asymmetries.



Indeed, recent evidence suggests that power attracts scrutiny, which can ensure that when the powerful express prejudice, this is more easily detected than when prejudice is expressed by powerless individuals. When social power differences are present, this implies that people have asymmetrical control over each other's resources and outcomes (Fiske & Berdahl, 2006). However, those who have power can interpret and use this asymmetrical control in different ways, some of which may result in behaviors that favor powerless individuals, whereas others may favor other individuals with power (for an overview of different approaches to and the implications of power, see Sassenberg, Ellemers, Scheepers, & Scholl, 2014). As a result, it is very important for subordinates to pay close attention to the communications and actions of those in power, so as to interpret and anticipate how they are likely to invest the control they have. By contrast, individuals low in power lack such resource control, hence it may seem less important to interpret their actions or to detect their motives. As a result, expressions of prejudice should be relatively likely to be noticed, remembered, and detected when voiced by individuals in a position of power, whereas exposure to similarly prejudicial views may pass without notice when expressed by someone with low power.

Interestingly, research revealed that people generally expect those in power (e.g., supervisors at work) to feel responsible for equal treatment, and are more likely to anticipate bias from those without power (e.g., their co-workers; Barreto, Ellemers, & Fiske, 2010). However, when female team members were actually exposed to a man expressing a preference to work with 'guys,' they were less able to recall the source of the biased statement when it had been voiced by another member of their team (i.e., a relatively low power individual) than when it had been expressed by a team leader (someone with high power). It is perhaps natural that people should care about the views of their co-workers in the team, particularly with regard to ascertaining who might deliver biased treatment in the work context. Moreover, it might be expected that this attentiveness would be enhanced in

conditions of outcome dependency. However, this research did not find evidence that attention to biased statements was driven by outcome dependency. In fact, the increased attention to comments made by someone in power occurred regardless of whether or not individuals personally depended on that individual for their own outcomes (i.e., whether the source was the leader of their own team, or of another team; Barreto, Ellemers, & Fiske, 2010). Thus, the results of this research suggest that the *perceptual salience* of those in power is the decisive factor in noting whether bias occurs. Importantly, people appear less inclined to notice and remember prejudicial treatment by someone in a low power position, even if this is likely to be relevant to the self in further team interactions (Barreto, Ellemers, & Fiske, 2010).

Prior work has demonstrated that powerful individuals are more likely to rely on stereotypes and engage in more global and abstract information processing (Fiske, 1993; Guinote, 2007). The evidence reviewed above suggests that this is relatively likely to be noticed and detected. Furthermore, this seems to be the case regardless of whether this powerful individual has power over the self or over others. Crucially, this suggests that the tendency to notice and remember bias does not rely on a self-interested motivation due to asymmetrical dependency relations (Fiske & Berdahl, 2006). It also speaks against the possibility that people are prone to over-estimate the occurrence of perceived prejudice in order to explain negative outcomes they personally incur. Instead, the observed effects seem to be driven by the differential *perceptual salience* of behavior displayed by powerful versus powerless others, as a moderating factor that facilitates the detection of bias.

Importantly, this nuances the conclusion drawn above, namely that prejudicial views expressed by representatives of the advantaged group (e.g., men making negative comments about women) match the prototype of what discrimination is, which should facilitate the detection of bias. It seems that such intergroup power differentials may interact with

interpersonal power relations, so that relatively explicit prejudicial comments by outgroup members may pass unnoticed and remain unchallenged as long as they are made by individuals who are seen as having relatively low power. Overall, people more frequently encounter and interact with others who have relatively low power (such as co-workers) than high power (e.g., supervisors). All else being equal, this implies that people are likely to under-estimate the occurrence of bias occurring in the majority of their day-to-day interactions.

In addition to the position of those who express bias, the observations and responses of *others* present in the situation can also function as contextual cues that make it easier (or more difficult) to detect bias (see Major et al., 2002, for a review). In view of our discussion above, the added value of such social cues should be particularly salient when expressions of bias are subtle and ambiguous. This was examined in a series of studies in which female participants participated in a mock online job interview, where a male interviewer asked them about their appearance (Cihangir, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2014). While waiting for the interviewer's decision, candidates participated in a computer chat session with male or female confederates, who had ostensibly been exposed to the same procedure. The chat session either revealed that other candidates approved of the procedure and found the questions appropriate, or disapproved of the procedure and considered the questions inappropriate. Then participants learned the interviewer had rejected their application for the job.

After being exposed to views of others who questioned the validity of the selection procedure, participants were more likely to perceive discrimination, and less inclined to attribute their rejection to personal shortcomings. After being informed that others had found the procedure appropriate, participants were less inclined to perceive discrimination, and more likely to consider the rejection as indicating a lack of personal competence. The impact of the judgments of others on the tendency to perceive discrimination emerged regardless of whether

others who had questioned or approved the procedure were men or women (Cihangir et al., 2014). This is relevant to our previous conclusion that those who are subjected to subtly biased treatment are relatively disinclined to perceive this as discrimination, especially if others around them see no problem with the relevant procedures. When others indicate doubt about the validity of such procedures, however, people are more likely to recognize being subjected to biased treatment. On the one hand, this resonates with our prior observation that the joint occurrence of personal rejection and group-level discrimination increases the likelihood that bias is recognized (Stroebe et al., 2009). On the other hand, the impact of procedural judgments on people's ability to acknowledge subtle bias seems to occur regardless of whether procedures are called into question by members of the advantaged group or of the disadvantaged group. An important implication of the findings of the Cihangir et al. (2014) study is, thus, that people are more likely to perceive (subtle) discrimination after their treatment has been questioned by others.

#### **1.4. Individual needs and dispositions**

So far, we have considered situational features and contextual cues as external factors that may either help or hinder individuals to recognize the occurrence of discrimination. In addition, there are a number of individual-level needs and dispositions that may impact on the likelihood that people perceive biased treatment as stemming from group-based discrimination.

First, we consider the effects of individual differences in beliefs about the properties of the social system. Above, we have argued that the widely shared conviction that differential outcomes reflect differences in individual merit reduce the likelihood that people perceive or recognize group-based discrimination (Barreto et al., 2009). Arguably, the extent to which this is the case should depend on their willingness to actually endorse such meritocracy beliefs. Indeed, research has shown that personal meritocracy beliefs impede the recognition

of prejudice. For instance, the extent to which women personally endorse system justifying beliefs predicts their perceptions of pay entitlement (O'Brien, Major, & Gilbert, 2012). When individuals believe that women should earn less than men, they are less likely to perceive gender differences in pay levels as indicating discrimination. Likewise, a study among stay-at-home mothers established that individuals who viewed their current situation as resulting from personal choice were less inclined to perceive workplace barriers as indicating gender discrimination (Stephens & Levine, 2011). Conversely, individuals who think discrimination is widespread and believe it will occur on future occasions (i.e., perceive this as a pervasive phenomenon) are more likely to perceive unequal treatment as unfair and discriminatory (for an overview see Jetten, Iyer, Branscombe, & Zhang, 2013).

Second, the nature of personal goals can modify information processing and hence impacts on individual differences in sensitivity to evidence of discrimination. Thus, although personal beliefs about characteristics of the social system affect the way outcome differences are *interpreted*, personal goals may facilitate or impede the likelihood that such outcome differences are even *observed*. This has been established in different ways.

A first example of such an effect was observed in a series of studies in which female research participants were subjected to a simulated job selection procedure and were rejected by a male interviewer (Stroebe, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2010). They then received the opportunity to select and read information about the qualifications and outcomes of other male and female participants, which would allow them to discover that the selection decisions were systematically gender biased. That is, participants were able to see a matrix on the computer screen, the cells of which corresponded to other participants. If they clicked through those cells they would be able to see the other participants' characteristics (gender, age, study) and whether or not they had been selected. Since cells remained open as they were clicked, the more cells participants opened, the more they would be able to uncover that gender had

played a role in the selection decisions. The experimental procedure was used to induce interpersonal differences in the self-relevance of such information, by leading participants to think that the domain under investigation was predictive of their future outcomes in a range of situations (Study 1), or by making them believe that they would need this information for future reference (Study 2).

In both cases, participants who were led to believe that it would be self-relevant to learn more about the way their outcomes compared to those of others were more likely to search the available information. In turn, the amount of information they sought predicted the likelihood that they realized that the procedure had been gender-biased (Stroebe et al., 2010). Thus, this research reveals that the personal significance of specific performance or outcome domains can drive perceptions of prejudice, because individuals are more likely to search for information that might unveil prejudicial treatment when the domain is self-relevant than when it is not. Importantly, however, increased self-relevance enhanced information processing, but this only led to heightened perceptions of prejudice when prejudicial treatment had in fact been received. Indeed, we additionally varied whether or not the information contained in the matrix revealed discriminatory treatment and found that self-relevance led to increased information search but this only led to increased perceptions of prejudice when the matrix contained information about gender biased evaluations. Thus, there was no evidence that domain self-relevance as such raises self-serving tendencies that might lead people to over-estimate the occurrence of prejudicial treatment.

Another way in which personal goals can influence information processing and hence facilitate the detection of prejudice is through the self-regulatory strategies people adopt for goal achievement. In this context, a distinction can be made between individuals who focus on the achievement of ideal outcomes (promotion focus; Higgins, 1997), or on securing that obligations are met (prevention focus). The impact of such individual differences on

processing of social information was examined (Ståhl, Van Laar, Ellemers, & Derks, 2012) by assessing people's chronic tendencies to focus on promotion or prevention goals (Study 1) and by inducing situational differences in the adoption of these self-regulation goals (Study 2). Participants in this research were first exposed to a prospective interaction partner, who was said to endorse prejudicial views. In a subsequent information processing test, individuals with a chronic or situational focus on promotion goals attended more to subtle cues of social acceptance rather than rejection. This was evident in their response times to facial expressions of happiness rather than contempt (Study 1) and to subliminally presented words indicating respect rather than prejudice (Study 2). In this research, a focus on prevention goals did not affect the way social information was processed. Importantly, research has also revealed that a focus on social acceptance can undermine perceptions of discriminatory treatment (Carvallo & Pelham, 2006). Hence, taken together, these results suggest that a personal focus on promotion goals leads people to attend to cues of social acceptance (rather than rejection), which may cause them to under-estimate the occurrence of bias.

Finally, personal attitudes towards one's group membership and individual differences in the level of ingroup identification can enhance or impede perceptions of prejudice. Even though people can be categorized by others as interchangeable members of a particular social group, they are likely to differ from each other in the extent to which they internalize that specific group membership into their self-views (for an overview, see Barreto & Ellemers, 2003). Such differences in the salience of group-level identities relate to subjective beliefs about the inevitability of group membership due to the perceived permeability of group boundaries on the one hand, and emotional self-importance of the group on the other (Ellemers, 2012; Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). Importantly, the tendency to adopt a group-level conception of the self also affects the likelihood that people perceive unequal outcomes as indicative of bias (Jetten et al., 2013). Accordingly, those who identify most strongly with

their group are most likely to perceive ambiguous cues to unequal treatment as indicative of discrimination (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003).

#### **1.4. Conclusion**

The evidence reviewed in this section leads us to conclude that members of devalued groups often fail to recognize the discrimination that targets them, due to just world beliefs and the fact that contemporary expressions of bias tend to be subtle and implicit. Additional contextual cues or enhanced personal motivation are needed for them to perceive group-based unequal treatment. This suggests that in the absence of such factors that facilitate prejudice recognition, members of devalued groups will tend to under-estimate (rather than over-estimate) the extent to which they are targeted by discrimination, even if this goes against their self-interest.

## **2. Is Perceiving Discriminatory Treatment Self-Protective or Harmful to Individual Well-being?**

Relating to the previous discussion is the notion that people might perceive themselves to be targets of discriminatory treatment to avoid facing any personal shortcomings that may account for their disappointing outcomes. Again, empirical evidence does not offer straightforward support for this commonly held view, even though a vast body of research has examined whether or not perceiving prejudice or discriminatory treatment has a negative impact on individual well-being.

Early work suggested that prejudice should have a strong negative impact on the psychological well-being of its targets (Allport, 1979; Goffman, 1963; Tajfel, 1981). Later reflections focused on the fact that when comparing the self-reported psychological well-being of members of stigmatized and non-stigmatized groups, very few differences were found, and those often indicated better well-being among members of some stigmatized groups than among members of groups that do not tend to be stigmatized (Crocker & Major,



1989; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Over the years, research into whether or not perceiving prejudice or discriminatory treatment has a negative impact on individual well-being has accumulated, yielding seemingly inconclusive effects. Although some researchers found clear negative effects of prejudice on physical and psychological well-being, others demonstrated that perceiving oneself to be a target of prejudice can protect self-esteem (e.g., Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Major et al., 2002).

More recently, research has focused on reconciling these findings by identifying the individual and contextual factors that moderate these effects, and some of the mechanisms through which they occur (see also meta-analyses by Pascoe & Smart-Richman, 2009; Jones, Peddie, Gilrane, King, & Gray, 2013; and Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014). These reviews concluded that the effects of perceptions of discrimination on well-being depend on a number of moderating factors. Below we review the state of the art in this area, identifying the factors that influence how discrimination affects well-being and elaborating on the mechanisms through which this occurs.

### **2.1. It is not straightforward: Moderating variables**

Initial attempts to understand the effects of discrimination on well-being have tended to assume that these are driven by concerns that the application of group-based expectations leads to less favorable outcomes than people might expect to receive if they were judged on their individual merit alone (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Major et al., 2002). More recent research, however, clarified that category-based treatment in itself may undermine well-being, regardless of whether this results in desired or undesired outcomes. That is, well-being is not merely affected by the disadvantage that often results from bias, but—more generally—by the neglect of individual preferences regarding the identity on the basis of which one would like to be treated (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002, 2003). For example, in one study, we asked a representative sample of the Dutch adult population to recount an episode in which they had

been categorized by others. Participants described situations where categorization had led to either positive or negative expectations about the self. Positive categorizations were associated with more agreement and more positive emotions than negative categorization. However, positive categorizations were less easy to detect as over-generalizations and this, in turn, resulted in lower self-confidence, revealing a detrimental effect of imposed categorizations even when they appear to be positive (Ellemers & Barreto, 2006).

A second set of studies further clarified this effect (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010). In three experiments, we examined participants' responses to contextually inappropriate categorizations, i.e., categorizations that were both irrelevant to the task at hand and inconsistent with participants' own preferences. Participants in these studies were asked to proofread a series of texts, which were on topics that had been thoroughly pre-tested to be stereotypically male, female, or neutral, but of equal attractiveness. Participants were asked which texts they would prefer to proofread and were then allocated two texts to work on, allegedly by another participant. In all studies, participants, who were all female, were given the stereotypically female texts to proofread, irrespective of the preference they had stated. In the first two studies, we simply examined how participants felt when this happened, as a function of whether this task assignment had been made without any explanation or explicitly because 'you are a woman.' Results showed that agreement with the categorical treatment was never high across all studies and conditions, although female participants expressed less agreement and more anger when this allocation was made with an explicit reference to gender. In addition, this categorical treatment hurt participants' well-being, since it elicited negative self-directed emotions, particularly when this task allocation was made without any explicit justification. A final study demonstrated that these effects emerge even when the categorization results in advantageous treatment. In this study, we varied whether participants were allocated stereotypically female texts that had been previously rated in a pilot test as

either equally or *more attractive* than the male stereotypical and the neutral tasks. Despite the fact that, in this study, performing female stereotypical tasks would actually be more attractive, participants still rejected this categorization when it did not match their own stated preference, particularly when this was accompanied by the explicit reference to gender as the (contextually inappropriate) task allocation criterion. In addition, negative self-directed emotions were again revealed, especially when the categorization was not justified. In this study, we additionally measured personal state self-esteem and found parallel effects for this measure, i.e., negative effects of implicit and inappropriate categorizations on self-esteem, irrespective of whether or not this categorization actually gave participants an advantage in the form of more attractive task assignments.

Thus, on the one hand, exposure to prejudice can benefit well-being as it allows individuals to externalize the causes of their negative outcomes. Indeed, blaming others helps direct negative emotions away from the self and should be helpful as a self-protective strategy, at least in the short term. On the other hand, exposure to biased treatment also indicates lack of control over one's own fate or self-definition and implies that individual efforts or attributes are less likely to be acknowledged or rewarded. We now consider each of these possibilities in turn, aiming to identify the moderating variables that enhance the likelihood that beneficial or harmful effects for well-being emerge.

## **2.2 Externalization of negative affect**

Factors that contribute to externalization of blame for unequal treatment (reviewed in the prior section) should also facilitate the occurrence of positive effects of discrimination for well-being. To the extent that it is more obvious that procedures are unfair, it is easier to blame others instead of the self for disappointing outcomes, and this should protect well-being. Indeed, this is exactly what was observed in research that compared how different types of prejudice affect individual well-being (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b). For

example, in one study, we presented women with subtle or blatant sexist statements that allegedly represented societal attitudes. Subtle sexist statements were items from the modern sexism scale (denying the existence of discrimination), whereas blatant sexism consisted of items from the old-fashioned sexism scale (hostility towards women). Old-fashioned sexism was expected to be recognized as sexist and therefore to elicit anger. Denial of continued discrimination was expected to be more ambiguous, given that participants had no evidence against which to gauge the veracity of the claim that gender discrimination no longer affects women's social standing. At the same time, denying the existence of discrimination implies that existing gender inequalities are not caused by bias and raises the possibility that they may be caused, instead, by women's inadequacies. This, in turn, was expected to elicit anxiety, but not anger. As described in the prior section, we found that participants saw denial of gender discrimination as less sexist than hostility towards women. With regard to affective reactions, we found that whereas subtle expressions of prejudice elicited negative self-directed affect (such as anxiety and self-doubt), people responded to more blatant forms of prejudice by directing their negative affect towards the perpetrator (e.g., other-directed anger) (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a, 2005b).

Additional research further confirmed that this shift in the focus of negative affective responses depends on the ability to realize that others—not the self—are to be blamed for unfavorable outcomes, and the perceived likelihood that this indeed is the primary cause for current events. The research we reviewed above revealed that the ability of female job applicants to recognize subtle bias as a form of gender discrimination is enhanced when others around them suggest this is the case, regardless of whether these others are men or women (Cihangir et al., 2014). However, this same research revealed that whether such perceptions of discrimination were beneficial or harmful for well-being depended on *who* had suggested this was the case. To examine this, in a first experiment (Cihangir et al., 2014;

Experiment 1), we measured self-handicapping, i.e., provision of excuses in advance of a task (“I’m hungry”, “I have not slept well last night”), which is regarded as an indicator of poor self-confidence (Rhodewalt, 1990). To gain further insight into this process, we also measured self-stereotyping (using an adapted version of the Bem sex roles inventory; Bem, 1974). In the second study (Cihangir et al., 2014; Experiment 2), we additionally measured state performance self-esteem, task performance, and the extent to which participants wished to protest about the selection procedure. Across both studies, the pattern was consistent: When other women had suggested discrimination might have played a role, this elicited dysfunctional responses, that is, it lowered performance-related self-esteem and exacerbated self-handicapping and self-stereotyping tendencies, compared to when no suggestion of sexism had been made (see Table 1; see also Adams, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, & Steele, 2006). However, when the suggestion that sexism might have played a role had been made by other males present, this effectively protected well-being, as it led job candidates to report increased self-esteem and to display less self-handicapping and less self-stereotyping (Cihangir et al., 2014). Positive effects of suggestions of sexism made by male (but not by female) sources also extended to better task performance and more protest about the treatment received. This suggests that the willingness of those who represent the perpetrator group to acknowledge biased treatment is an important pre-condition for the beneficial effects of perceiving discrimination. If, by contrast, perceptions of bias are only shared among those who suffer from it, this may even exacerbate negative effects on well-being. These results complement explanations focusing on the importance of awareness raising and social support, as they suggest that the perceived credibility of externalizing blame—granted, in these studies, by the support of members of the perpetrator’s group—is an important precondition for such support to benefit individual well-being.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

Such preconditions may also be set by *institutional* practices and guidelines to which people are exposed. As already mentioned, the institutional endorsement of non-discriminatory practices has important effects on individuals' ability to detect discrimination (Castilla & Benard, 2010; Kaiser et al., 2013) and is likely to increase attributional uncertainty when discrimination does occur. Whether or not organizations are open to the possibility that discrimination occurs under ambiguous circumstances and tolerates uncertain attributions is an additional factor that affects how discrimination is experienced. This idea was examined by placing individuals in a setting in which uncertain attributions to discrimination were either seen as offering an opportunity for the organization to learn and develop, or were characterized as undermining trust and damaging for the organization. Comparing responses to subtle prejudice in these different contexts revealed that more negative self-directed affect was reported when uncertain claims of biased treatment were discouraged, whereas less self-blame was observed when individuals were led to believe that uncertain attributions would be tolerated in that context (Cihangir, Ellemers, & Barreto, in preparation; see also Barreto et al., 2009).

Thus, here too, as we have seen above (and countering common beliefs), it seems that people are disinclined to easily or automatically blame others for their own misfortunes as a standard response to protect their own well-being. Importantly, when they do so, it is not self-evident that this will be self-protective rather than increasing negative feelings about the self. Individuals only direct their negative emotional responses to discrimination towards others when unfair treatment is relatively identifiable because it is blatant, or when the possibility of unfair treatment is explicitly acknowledged by other individuals or institutional procedures.

### **2.3 Implications for the self**

Another class of moderating variables that has been examined encompasses conditions that increase the *implications* of discrimination for the self, either because of past experiences

or because of likely future implications of their current experience. Past experiences that make individuals' self-views more resilient, or future prospects that offer scope for change and improvement, contribute to the emergence of positive well-being effects in response to biased treatment.

When people work together on joint tasks, differences in the extent to which their contributions are valued impact on the likelihood that they feel respected and fully included as a team member (Ellemers, Sleebos, Stam, & De Gilder, 2013). When people with a different background or another perspective on the task enter a new work context, they are generally expected to adapt to existing practices. Even when the reason to involve them is to seek novel approaches or to enhance creativity, existing team members are reluctant to adapt to the needs of newcomers or to accommodate to their work preferences (for an overview, see Rink, Kane, Ellemers, & Van der Vegt, 2013). Being in an environment dominated by outgroup members makes people think it is unlikely that their group's characteristics are valued (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006; 2007). The prospect of working with others who are different from them leads them to expect that their work preferences are unlikely to be validated by others (Rink & Ellemers, 2006), and to the extent that this puts them in a position of low power, this is likely to raise physiological threat (Scheepers, De Wit, Ellemers, & Sassenberg, 2012).

Thus, when members of devalued groups first gain access to work contexts or job levels in which they are underrepresented, or perform tasks that they are not (stereotypically) expected to be good at, there are a number of factors that elicit uncertainty and undermine feelings of self-esteem and efficacy. In turn, this uncertainty elicits maladaptive forms of physiological stress, as was established for instance among women during a car parking task (Derks, Scheepers, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2011). Performing under such conditions tends to raise threat and a focus on preventing negative outcomes, which may temporarily result in

performance enhancement, but over time induces cognitive depletion and impairs performance (Ståhl, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2012).

As a result, individuals who are devalued because of their group membership—such as young Muslim women in the Netherlands—feel discouraged by the way they are treated and report reduced ambitions for education and work (Van Laar, Derks, Ellemers, & Bleeker, 2010; Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2013). Prior experiences that have this effect make people particularly vulnerable to the effects of subtle prejudice, which—due to its ambiguous nature—directs attention to the possibility of being personally inadequate. Indeed, research established that individual well-being is reduced under these circumstances as exposure to subtle prejudice or implicit stereotypes raises feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, and lowers task performance (Cihangir et al., 2010; Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2009). By contrast, people are more resilient to these negative effects of subtle discrimination when prior experiences help them buffer their self-esteem or induce them to affirm their self-worth (Cihangir et al., 2010; Derks et al., 2009).

Specifically, low self-esteem is a source of vulnerability in situations where individuals are unable to externalize blame, such as contexts where they encounter subtle discrimination. We examined this reasoning in two experiments where we manipulated participants' self-esteem and subsequently examined how they responded to rejection associated with subtle or blatant prejudice (Cihangir et al., 2010). Participants underwent a bogus job interview, which included gender biased questions, indirectly referring to stereotypes about women (e.g., “Do you think it will be hard to combine your family with your career?”; “Do you often get emotional at work because of something you have not managed to do?”). After this interview, while participants waited for the interviewer's decision, self-esteem was manipulated by giving participants a general knowledge test that was either very difficult and impossible to solve within the allocated time (eliciting low self-esteem) or very easy and perfectly possible



to complete with the time allocated (eliciting high self-esteem). At this point, participants were informed that the interviewer thought that they were not suitable for the position for which they had been interviewed. To manipulate ambiguity of discrimination, participants in the blatant (but not in the subtle) condition also read that the interviewer generally thought that women were not suitable for this kind of job and explicitly linked the participant's gender to their decision. In Experiment 1, we then measured both self-directed and other-directed negative emotions, reasoning that self-esteem should moderate effects only on *self-directed* emotions. Manipulation checks confirmed that both manipulations had been successful. More importantly, results showed that participants reported more negative self-directed emotions when they had encountered subtle discrimination, but only when they had low self-esteem, and not when their self-esteem was high (see Table 2). In addition, self-esteem did not moderate effects on negative other-directed emotions, which were higher in the blatant than in the subtle conditions. Responses in the blatant condition were unaffected by self-esteem.

[Insert Table 2 around here]

A second experiment (Cihangir et al., 2010; Experiment 2) replicated these findings and extended them to measures of self-concern, self-stereotyping, and task performance. We found that low self-esteem made individuals vulnerable to subtle discrimination, in that individuals with low self-esteem expressed more negative self-directed emotions, more self-concern, and more self-stereotyping than individuals with high self-esteem when they encountered subtle discrimination. In addition, individuals with low self-esteem underperformed when they encountered subtle relative to blatant discrimination, whereas the task performance of individuals with high self-esteem was not affected by the way they were treated. Once more, no parallel effects of self-esteem were revealed when participants encountered blatant discrimination, again demonstrating how the ability to externalize blame can be protective, even for individuals with low self-esteem.

Just as prior experiences may raise levels of uncertainty and make people more vulnerable to the effects of subtle discrimination, future prospects may have similar effects. It is generally more difficult to ignore or discount experiences with discrimination if these have more far-reaching implications for the self (see also Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). As a result, exposure to prejudice is more damaging to well-being when the party holding such views has power over the self (Barreto et al., 2010), or when one expects to encounter it again in the future because one believes prejudice to be pervasive (Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John, 2011). Conversely, well-being effects are mitigated when low power individuals hold prejudicial views, or when encountering prejudice seems an exceptional experience (Schmitt et al., 2003; Stroebe et al., 2011).

Thus, adding to prior work showing that exposure to implicit prejudice may lower task ability and performance outcomes (e.g., due to stereotype threat, for an overview see Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008), we note that such motivation and performance deficits are complemented, or perhaps even preceded, by a number of mechanisms that reduce well-being and self-confidence and elicit self-defeating performance strategies.

#### **2.4 Social implications**

As we have noted above, responses to prejudice and discrimination are not driven only by self-protective concerns or by the desire to explain away one's disappointing outcomes. Instead, people who acknowledge that bias persists may also suffer in terms of well-being out of concern for the broader social implications of this fact. Arguably, the well-being effects of such concerns should be intensified to the extent that prejudice against one's group is seen as more persistent and pervasive, both because this implies the self is more likely to suffer future discrimination and because the realization that bias persists undermines fundamental just world beliefs.

Evidence to this effect was observed in two studies where perceived pervasiveness of prejudice against one's group was manipulated (Stroebe et al., 2011). In the first experiment, participants imagined taking part in a selection procedure for a very attractive job. To give participants the opportunity to attribute a subsequent rejection to discrimination, the interviewer was described as politically conservative, holding traditional beliefs, and having selected 80% men and 20% women in prior selection procedures. We manipulated perceived pervasiveness of gender discrimination by providing participants with information about the likelihood of encountering someone like this particular interviewer in future job interview procedures (unlikely versus likely). Participants then imagined that the interviewer had rated them as unsuitable for the job and completed manipulation checks, attributions to prejudice, and measures of well-being (emotions, self-esteem). Results revealed that well-being was protected when the prejudice participants encountered seemed rare, instead of pervasive. Specifically, when gender discrimination was perceived as pervasive, attributions to discrimination were significantly and negatively related to well-being. When, however, discrimination was perceived as rare, attributions to discrimination were unrelated to indicators of well-being.

This protective effect of perceiving discrimination as rare may emerge because this mitigates future consequences for the self. However, evidence suggests that the negative effects may emerge, at least in part, because of their broader societal implications, that is, because of the implications they have for one's beliefs in the world as a just place. In a second experiment (Stroebe et al., 2011; Experiment 2), after participants imagined receiving the negative feedback, a third of the participants were given the chance to affirm their belief in the world as a just place, whereas the remaining participants were not. Participants who had their beliefs in a just world affirmed read about a victim of a tragic accident who was characterized as having brutally murdered a young woman but had avoided a life prison

sentence due to a technicality. A second third of the participants had their beliefs in a just world threatened by hearing a similar story about a surgeon who had recently miraculously saved the life of a young woman; a final set of participants where in the control condition, where there was no mention of any accident or victim. Results showed that when discrimination was perceived as rare, attributions to discrimination were, as in the first study, unrelated to negative affect (see Figure 2). However, when discrimination was perceived to be pervasive, attributions to discrimination were negatively related to well-being—but only when participants had no chance to re-affirm their belief in the world as a just place. Indeed, even when research participants were led to believe that prejudice was pervasive (hence, they were likely to encounter it in the future), their well-being was protected when their just world beliefs were re-asserted in another way (Stroebe et al., 2011). Taken together, this evidence speaks for the notion that the negative effects of experiencing discrimination for well-being stem at least in part from a consideration of the broader implications this has for one's beliefs about the world, not the self.

[insert Figure 2 about here]

The important role that broader social arrangements have for individual well-being is further illustrated by studies that addressed physiological markers of dysfunctional (threat) vs. functional (challenge) cardiovascular responses to stress (see also Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996). Here, we see that the prospect of continued social inequality elicits a physiological stress response, but the possibility of change in how the group is evaluated decreases these negative effects of devaluation. That is, the dysfunctional physiological stress typically experienced by members of groups with low social status is relieved by the prospect that the devalued standing of the group is unstable and might improve in the future (Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). Likewise, the negative effects of group-based exclusion on physiological stress are alleviated when the possibility of future inclusion is made salient. This is the case,

for instance, when individuals are challenged to meet the standard for inclusion, instead of pointing out how their group membership prevents them from gaining acceptance (Cihangir, Scheepers, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2013). Thus, exposure to prejudice has less negative effects on physical well-being when there is scope for future improvement.

In sum, when social implications are more severe and pervasive, this is more harmful for well-being. This is at least in part due to broader concerns about social justice and stability of existing social relations, instead of merely reflecting self-relevant considerations about the likelihood of encountering future disadvantage. Indeed, unless discrimination is quite blatant and explicit, people are unlikely to engage in efforts to redress it, such as through collective action (Ellemers & Barreto, 2009).

### **2.5. The role of group identification**

A specific question that has arisen in this literature is whether identification with a devalued group is likely to function as a source of resilience or as a source of vulnerability to the effects of prejudice. It makes sense to assume that the more an individual identifies with a group that is devalued in society at large, the more negatively their well-being should be affected. In fact, this might be why one of the strategies members of devalued groups can use to achieve a positive identity is to reduce the extent to which they identify with this group (Ellemers, 1993). Research shows that identification can indeed constitute a source of vulnerability by increasing exposure to prejudice (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009), enhancing detection of ambiguous prejudice (Major et al., 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001), promoting self-stereotyping and assimilation to prejudiced beliefs (Schmader, 2002), and intensifying the negative effects of prejudice on well-being (McCoy & Major, 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

More recently, evidence has also accumulated for the protective role of group identification and, importantly, for the mechanisms through which this occurs (e.g., Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012). Individuals draw closer

to their group when they encounter prejudice or discrimination (Branscombe et al., 1999; Jetten, Barnscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001; Knowles & Gardner, 2008), and this has been shown to protect self-esteem (Bourguignon, Seron, Yzerbyt, & Herman, 2006), prevent depression (Sani, Herrera, Wakefield, Boroch, & Gulyas, 2012), and reduce destructive behavior in response to exclusion (Stock, Gibbons, Walsh, & Gerrard, 2011). Importantly, individuals only increase group identification after encountering prejudice if they are already highly identified with their group (Wann & Branscombe, 1990; McCoy & Major, 2003), clarifying that identification is better seen as a resource than as a coping strategy (Leach, Rodriguez Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, 2010). Recent knowledge regarding some of the mechanisms underlying this protective effect clarifies that group identification promotes social support seeking (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005) and exposure to a positive definition of the group from the 'inside,' which helps combat more external negative views (Crabtree, Haslam, Postmes, & Haslam, 2010). Also, group identification attenuates depressive attribution styles, which are strongly responsible for depression symptoms (Cruwys, South, Greenaway, & Haslam, in press).

## **2.6. Conclusions**

In sum, the evidence reviewed in this section clarifies that the effects of discrimination on individual well-being systematically depend on factors that determine the concrete *implications* of discrimination for the (social) self. To the extent that moderating factors make it more likely that factors outside the self are to blame for unequal outcomes, they facilitate self-protective responses and benefit well-being. However, when the self is more strongly implicated, due to the accumulation of past or the anticipation of future experiences, when individuals consider broader group-level and social outcomes of discrimination, or when they do not have the opportunity to seek support from others like them, experiencing discrimination has quite negative effects on well-being.

### 3. Are Concealable Stigmas Less Problematic Than Visible Stigmas?

A third issue we address is whether those with socially devalued identities that are immediately apparent to others are more vulnerable than people who can conceal their devalued identity. Goffman (1963) theorized that individuals whose stigmatized identities are visible are *discredited* in the eyes of others, whereas individuals whose stigmatized identities are concealable are *discreditable*, that is, only discredited if they choose to reveal their identity to others. Examples of identities that are often both stigmatized and concealable are mental illness (Corrigan & Mathews, 2003; Link, 1987), physical illness (Cole, Kemeny, & Taylor, 1997), facial features (or disfigurement; Frable, Blackstone, & Scherbaum, 1990), and homosexual orientation (Croteau, 1996). It is important to note that identity concealment differs from individual mobility. Whereas individual mobility consists of ‘passing into’ a more positively evaluated group, identity concealment consists of ‘passing as’ a member of that group. By concealing a stigmatized identity, members of stigmatized groups do not necessarily leave the group, either physically or psychologically (Hebl, Tickle, & Heatherton, 2000). Although the more important a specific identity is to the self-concept the less likely the individual is to hide that identity (Griffith & Hebl, 2002; Ragins, 2008), a person may have reasons to hide an identity that are unrelated to identification, such as to escape bodily harm (Clair, Beatty, & MacLean, 2005).

Concealing a socially stigmatized identity has clear benefits. Indeed, whereas people with visible social stigmas are often vulnerable to others’ negative views of them, and the implications these may have, individuals with concealed stigmas are not so easily or frequently treated on the basis of their socially stigmatized identity (Farina, Gliha, Boudreau, Allen, & Sherman, 1971; Jones et al., 1984). As a consequence, those who belong to a socially stigmatized group that is not immediately apparent should be less worried about

others having negative expectations of them (Barreto, Ellemers, & Banal, 2006) and, therefore, should also be less vulnerable to the effects of these negative expectations on their performance (Quinn, Kahng, & Crocker, 2004).

Individuals with concealable stigmas often hide these identities from others precisely because they anticipate such benefits of secrecy. We examined this in two experimental studies (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Studies 1a,  $N = 49$ , and 1b,  $N = 105$ ). In the first experiment (Study 1a), participants indicated whether or not they had any of a range of concealable social stigmas, and then imagined a social interaction in the workplace context where they had to decide whether they would hide or reveal this identity. As expected, the results showed that participants were more likely to indicate that they would hide, rather than reveal, their stigmatized identity in the imagined context. Participants in this study were also asked to indicate the extent to which they thought that each strategy (i.e., hiding or revealing) would have positive effects on their relationships at work. Participants reported believing that revealing their stigmatized identity would have negative effects on their work relationships, whereas hiding it would have no effect on their relationships at work. A second experiment (Study 1b) placed participants in the same situation, but then manipulated whether participants imagined hiding or revealing their identity to their coworkers. Participants in each condition then indicated how positive they anticipated their interaction with coworkers would be. Participants who imagined concealing their identity rated their interpersonal experience as more positive than participants who imagined revealing this identity. Participants in both conditions were subsequently asked what they would actually choose to do if they experienced this situation. In all conditions, participants stated a clear preference for hiding the stigmatized identity, relative to revealing it. These patterns were revealed also when we adjusted for general openness about the identity, identification with the concealable group, and perceived coworker bias against that identity. Taken together, these studies suggest that



people expect that they would benefit from hiding, instead of revealing, a stigmatized identity and report a preference for keeping a stigmatized identity hidden during interpersonal interactions.

Despite the benefits anticipated, evidence has accumulated that the effects of this identity management strategy are not as positive as might be expected, even when balanced against the expectation that the consequences of revealing are likely to be quite severe (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). Indeed, research has revealed that stigmatized identities do not cease to be problematic just because they are out of the sight of others (see also Pachankis, 2007). Below, we review evidence for the effects of concealing stigmatized identities, highlighting some of the aspects that characterize the unique predicament of individuals with concealable identities.

### **3.1. Identity concealment and psychological well-being**

Because the negative effects of stigmatization on well-being are typically associated with the negative group-based treatment received, and because this type of treatment is less frequent when stigma is concealed, individuals with concealable stigmas could be expected to endure fewer psychological costs than individuals with visible stigmas. However, individuals with concealable identities face a range of problems that are detrimental to their well-being, some of which are unique to concealable stigmas.

First, although they may not as easily incur the costs of being personally treated on the basis of their devalued group membership, individuals with concealable stigmas still suffer from the broader societal devaluation of their identity. Indeed, just like individuals with visible stigmas, individuals with concealable stigmas are highly aware of the poor regard others have for their identity (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). These negative views are often culturally prevalent and, in the case of acquired stigmas, often internalized before the stigmatized characteristic is acquired (e.g., Link, 1987). In addition, those who hide a stigmatized identity can actually be more easily exposed to disparaging remarks about their

group, because others do not feel the need to monitor expressions of prejudice around them (Wahl, 1999). These disparaging views of one's social identity are, in themselves, damaging to well-being, even if individuals are not the direct target of group-based treatment as long as they conceal their identity (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002).

Second, individuals with concealable stigmas must additionally contend with the burden of having to choose whether to hide or reveal their identity in each new encounter (Beals, Peplau, & Gable, 2009; Major & Gramzow, 1999; Pachankis, 2007). Indeed, choosing to hide or reveal a stigmatized identity is generally not a one-off 'coming out' event, but an act that must be reconsidered and reenacted in each new situation. Having the choice of whether to reveal the stigmatized identity has some advantages, primarily because this allows individuals with social stigmas to choose to reveal their stigmatized identity only when they feel comfortable doing so (Kelly & McKillop, 1996). Often, individuals choose to conceal their stigmatized identity in public contexts, such as in the workplace, and to reveal it in private contexts, such as among friends and family (D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Goffman, 1959). The opposite also occurs, such as when homosexual individuals hide their sexuality from their family but not from their co-workers, or when individuals with HIV join public support groups (Pachankis, Goldfried, & Ramrattan, 2008). Individuals who decide to conceal their stigmatized identity in an initial social encounter may need to revisit this decision as the relationship progresses. This is a difficult dilemma that entails both revealing a devalued identity and acknowledging the initial deceit to someone who may have, in the meantime, become a significant other. The fact that individuals with concealable identities need to make deliberate decisions as to whether, when, and how they reveal their identity across multiple settings represents a significant psychological burden—a burden individuals with immediately visible stigmas, as well as non-stigmatized individuals, are spared.

Once they have made the decision to hide their identity, individuals with concealable stigmas also incur significant costs. Akin to what happens with other secrets, the more individuals attempt to keep an identity concealed, the more salient it becomes in their mind, so that whereas visible identities are more salient to observers, hidden identities can be more salient to the individual who hides it than identities that are not hidden (Smart & Wegner, 1999). In this regard it is important to distinguish situations when the stigmatized identity is simply not known to others (as researched, for example, by Quinn et al., 2004) from active efforts made by individuals to misrepresent their identity ('passing,' as researched, for example, by Major & Gramzow, 1999). Whereas the former situation might efficiently protect from stigmatization, individuals in such circumstances might be unaware that they are misrepresenting their identity, so this is unlikely to increase stigma salience. By contrast, actively passing is a strategy used to respond to stigmatization and involves a deliberate act of deceit. It is this active deceit that involves a persistent effort to maintain secrecy, which is associated with thought intrusion that, in turn, increases the salience of the stigmatized identity (Smart & Wegner, 1999).

Identity concealment is also associated with negative affect. For example, compared to revealing the stigmatized identity, hiding elicits self-concern (Santuzzi & Ruscher, 2002) and generalized psychological distress (Beals et al., 2009; Frable et al., 1990; Link, Mirotznik, & Cullen, 1991; Meyer, 2008). We examined this in two experimental studies ( $N = 145$  and  $N = 110$ ) where we induced a stigmatized identity and led participants to either hide or reveal this identity during a dyadic task with another participant (Barreto et al., 2006). Participants were asked to perform, in a dyad, a task associated with Art History, although they did not study this subject. Participants were then allegedly paired with a student who was the same gender and age as themselves, but who was either studying the same subject as themselves or studying Art History. In both cases, to ensure that participants' identity was devalued in all

contexts, participants heard that their dyad partner had stated a preference to work with someone who studied Art History. At this point, we explained to participants that, unfortunately, we did not have enough Art History students present in the lab at that moment, and introduced the manipulation of hiding versus revealing the stigmatized identity. In the hiding condition, we suggested to participants that they pretend that they were students of Art History, whereas in the reveal condition they received the suggestion to reveal their actual study major. In both cases, participants were asked to indicate whether they agreed with this suggestion, ensuring that although they did not self-select into conditions—essential for the examination of causal relations—participants still had some responsibility for the choice to either hide or reveal their identity, mirroring experiences with hiding or revealing stigma in real life contexts. After indicating their agreement with this procedure, participants sent the corresponding information about themselves to their alleged partner, so they actually hid or revealed their stigmatized identity. In both experiments, participants then estimated how well their partner expected them to perform and indicated their performance-related self-confidence. In Experiment 2, participants additionally indicated the extent to which they felt guilt and shame and performed a simple task (i.e., listing the similarities and differences between two paintings).

As displayed in Table 3, the results showed that when participants hid the stigmatized identity, they estimated that their partner would have more positive expectations of them than when they revealed the stigmatized identity. Importantly, however, participants who hid their identity reported lower performance-related self-confidence than participants who hid their real identity. Correlational analyses showed that whereas anticipated partner expectations and self-confidence were *positively* related when participants revealed their identity, these were, instead, *negatively* related when participants hid their identity. That is, although hiding may protect individuals from stereotypical expectations, it can actually lower their self-confidence,

and it can do so to the extent that it increases perceived partner expectations. Experiment 2 clarified that these effects emerge because hiding elicits guilt and shame, which, in turn, lower self-confidence. Indeed, as in Experiment 1, participants' self-confidence suffered when they hid their identity, and this was mediated by feelings of guilt and shame. Interestingly, Experiment 2 also revealed that, despite protecting from negative partner expectations, hiding did not improve individual performance. Indeed, task performance was unaffected by the manipulation of hiding/revealing, and it was positively correlated with partner expectations when participants revealed their identity, but only positively correlated with self-confidence when participants hid their identity, suggesting that improved partner expectations when hiding do not benefit performance. In both studies, we also varied whether or not the alleged interaction partner shared the group membership of the participant, but this factor did not interact with hiding versus revealing to predict any of the dependent measures—its only effect was that participants perceived the outgroup partner to have lower expectations of them than the ingroup partner, irrespective of whether they hid or revealed their identity.

[insert Table 3 around here]

Thus, despite expectations to the contrary, hiding a stigmatized identity can actually have negative effects. One might wonder whether these negative effects are absent when the need to hide the identity is greater, such as when one feels that revealing might make one vulnerable to specific threats. However, somewhat paradoxically, research shows that psychological distress is greater when individuals expect that revealing might be more consequential—even though this is exactly when hiding is more protective, it is also when individuals are more worried about being exposed (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009). Also, greater psychological distress occurs when the concealed identity is more important to the self, as well as when it is more salient in the social environment (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009).

These affective costs emerge from the increased salience of the stigmatized identity, when concealed, as well as from the inadequacy felt concerning the act of deceit involved in identity concealment. In addition, feelings of depression can emerge due to a cognitive separation between the private and the public self, elicited by the frequent adaptation of self-presentation to what is deemed acceptable in each context (Sedlovskaya et al., 2013). Finally, psychological distress among individuals with concealable stigmas might be worsened due to difficulties in accessing social support from similar others (Frable, Pratt, & Hoey, 1998), which further increases their sense of isolation and difference (Frable, 1993).

Identity concealment can also negatively affect physical health. Even though concealment might protect the physical health of those individuals who are particularly vulnerable to social rejection (Cole et al., 1997), it has detrimental health effects on others (Cole, Kemeny, Taylor, & Visscher, 1996). Furthermore, concealment has indirect negative health effects by making it harder to access valuable resources such as health care and social support (Chesney & Smith, 1999; Link et al., 1991; Major, Richards, Cooper, Cozzarelli, & Zubek, 1998). For example, to ensure that their identity remains secret, a considerable percentage of individuals with mental health problems do not seek help—or, when they do, fail to comply with treatment prescriptions if doing so might risk outing their problem (Corrigan, 2004).

Taken together, the evidence reviewed in this section clarifies that individuals with concealable social stigmas contend with a series of predicaments that create psychological distress and damage their physical health. The question remains as to whether these costs are worth enduring. Because identity concealment primarily addresses the problem of social rejection, the answer to this question would seem to hinge on whether identity concealment successfully increases the social acceptance of individuals with a social stigma.

### **3.2. The myth of social acceptance through identity concealment**

When individuals choose to hide a stigmatized identity, they tend to do so to increase the likelihood that they are accepted by others (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiments 1a and 1b). Indeed, social acceptance often hinges on initial impressions, which are colored by pre-existing prejudices and expectations (Fiske & Taylor, 2013). These prejudices may even prevent interactions from taking place, such as when people avoid interacting with socially stigmatized individuals (Kleck & Strenta, 1980; Houston & Bull, 1994). Members of socially stigmatized groups anticipate these negative attitudes and often engage in strategies to combat them (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005), such as choosing to conceal the stigmatized identity when it is concealable (Goffman, 1963; Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Studies 1a and 1b). In this sense, concealing a social stigma has the benefit of allowing stigmatized individuals to initiate interactions with non-stigmatized others that might otherwise not have been possible. Once members of stigmatized and non-stigmatized groups interact, however, social acceptance will depend on how they behave towards one another. At this stage, identity concealment may become problematic.

Identity concealment can damage social interactions for at least two reasons. First, it is accompanied by concerns about being exposed as untruthful (Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007) and with careful monitoring of one's behavior to avoid being "found out" (Frable et al., 1990). This motivates individuals to limit the amount of information they offer about themselves, so as not to risk revealing information that unmasks their deceit. This is damaging to social interactions because lack of self-disclosure is associated with awkward social interactions (Herek, 1996), and self-disclosure is critical for the development of intimacy in social relationships (e.g., Collins & Miller, 1994). Second, the act of deceit involved in identity concealment restricts the extent to which one experiences a sense of authenticity, or of being true to oneself (Major & Gramzow, 1999; Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliouis, & Joseph, 2008). Indeed, identity concealment compromises one's self-image as moral (Barreto

et al., 2006), and because morality plays a crucial role in self-definition (Schwartz, 1992; Van Lange & Sedikides, 1998), concealing a stigmatized identity is an obstacle to one's sense of authenticity.

To examine this reasoning, we carried out two experiments in which participants underwent a social interaction with a non-stigmatized individual while either hiding or revealing their stigmatized identity (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiments 2 and 3). First, we aimed to demonstrate that hiding a stigmatized identity from an interaction partner has negative social consequences and that this happens, in part, because hiding one's identity limits one's sense of authenticity and degree of self-disclosure. Participants were university students who were randomly assigned to either hide or reveal an identity that was experimentally devalued (i.e., a study major described as contextually low status). Participants were told that they would interact with another participant, and that they would be randomly assigned to the role of interviewer or interviewee. In reality, all participants performed the role of interviewee and interacted with a confederate (blind to the study design and hypotheses) who performed the role of interviewer. Participants were told that their alleged interaction partner had stated a preference to interact with a medical student (of the participants' age and gender) and ranked the participants' study major as the second-to-least preferred. As in Barreto et al. (2006), participants then received the suggestion that they should hide or reveal their identity during the interaction and were asked to express agreement with this suggest before proceeding.

Prior to the interaction, we measured the extent to which participants felt a sense of authenticity (e.g., "I worry that during the interaction I won't be able to be myself") and acceptance (e.g., "At this moment, I feel accepted"). The interaction was video recorded and subsequently coded by independent observers, who were blind to the study's design and hypotheses and unaware that the participant possessed a contextually devalued identity.



Observers coded the extent to which the participant disclosed information about themselves (not limited to information about the devalued identity), evaluated the interaction (e.g., “overall, this interaction seemed pleasant”), and gave their opinion about the participant (e.g., “to what extent would you like to meet the participant?”). After making these ratings, external observers also measured the duration of the interaction and how long the participant and the confederate talked during the interaction.

As displayed in Table 4, results showed that participants who hid a stigmatized identity during the interaction reported greater authenticity concerns and a lower sense of acceptance than participants who revealed a stigmatized identity. We also observed that authenticity concerns mediated the effect of hiding versus revealing on participants’ sense of acceptance. Thus, although revealing a stigmatized identity is expected to reduce social acceptance, our results indicate that, instead, individuals *feel less accepted* when they hide than when they reveal a stigmatized identity, due to authenticity concerns.

[Insert Table 4 about here]

We subsequently examined the impact that hiding or revealing a social stigma might have for the actual social interaction. Interactions were significantly shorter when participants hid their identity than when they revealed their identity (see Table 4). Participants also talked less when they hid than when they revealed their identity, but confederates talked a similar amount across both conditions (an average of 51 seconds,  $SD = 10$  s). The total interaction time was almost perfectly correlated with the amount of time participants talked, but not significantly correlated with the amount of time confederates talked ( $r(46) = .99, p < .001$ ). That is, consistent with the idea that hiding a stigmatized identity curbs self-disclosure, participants who hid their identity talked less during the interaction, and this led to shorter interactions, compared to participants who revealed their identity.

Observers also rated participants who were hiding their identity as disclosing less about themselves than participants who revealed their identity. In addition, observers had a (marginally significant) less positive impression of participants who hid their identity, compared to participants who revealed, and a less positive impression of the interactions involving participants who were hiding their identity than of the interactions involving participants who revealed their stigmatized identity. In addition, observers' ratings of participants' self-disclosure mediated their impression of the participant and their impression of the interaction (see Figure 3). In sum, ironically, although individuals hide stigmatized identities to increase their feelings of belonging and the extent to which they are actually accepted, our results show that participants who hid their identity not only experienced a weaker sense of belonging, but were also less positively evaluated, talked less, and had less positive interactions than participants who revealed their identity.

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

A subsequent study examined these processes with a culturally devalued identity: a history of mental illness (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiment 3). Revealing a history of mental illness is highly threatening and severely stigmatizing (Link, 1987; Sibicky & Dovidio, 1986). As such, it is possible that hiding is a more effective strategy in social interactions involving this identity than we have so far revealed for experimentally created stigmas, although research showing that the severity of the expected consequences of revealing does not reduce the negative effects of hiding led us to expect similar effects to those we obtained with experimental stigmas. In addition, this time, in line with the idea that the dynamics of interpersonal interactions cannot be fully understood without taking into account the interdependent perspectives of all interaction partners, we focused on the interaction partners' perceptions of the social interaction, rather than on the impressions of external observers. We employed a similar method as in the prior study, but whereas

Experiment 2 used confederates as interaction partners (guaranteeing that interaction partners behaved in a standardized manner across conditions), we now examined face-to-face interactions between a non-stigmatized and a stigmatized participant (and, consequently, analyses treat dyads as the unit of analysis). The stigmatized participant either hid or revealed their identity, whereas non-stigmatized participants did not receive such instructions. We sought to examine whether hiding would limit stigmatized participants' feelings of authenticity and whether this would, in turn, impair their partner's interaction experience. Authenticity was, this time, measured after the interaction, and the partner's experience of the interaction was gauged by assessing the extent to which the non-stigmatized partner experienced intimacy with their stigmatized partner during the interaction.

As in the prior studies (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiments 1a and 1b), stigmatized participants revealed more negative expectations about the interaction when they expected to reveal than when they expected to hide their identity. However, in line with Experiment 2, stigmatized participants felt less authentic during the interaction when they hid, rather than revealed, their identity. As expected, non-stigmatized participants felt equally authentic across conditions. When it came to experiences of intimacy, and adjusting for both participants' negative expectations and authenticity concerns—since these worked in opposite directions across the two conditions—non-stigmatized participants experienced less intimacy with their partner during the interaction when their stigmatized partner hid, rather than revealed, their identity (see Figure 4). Intimacy did not vary across conditions for stigmatized participants.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

This research suggests that hiding a stigmatized social identity can lead those who hide to behave in ways that prevent them from reaping its potential to secure social inclusion. The question becomes whether there are circumstances under which hiding a stigmatized identity

is less detrimental to social interactions. We examined this possibility in an experimental study in which participants without a social stigma interacted with stigmatized participants who hid their stigmatized identity in different ways (Newheiser, Barreto, Ellemers, Derks, & Scheepers, in press).

Hiding a stigmatized identity involves both preventing exposure as stigmatized and promoting a more positive image of oneself (Goffman, 1963). When seeking to hide a stigmatized identity, one may focus primarily on either of these aspects of concealment (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003, 2009; Shih, Young, & Bucher, 2013). The costs of concealment appear to be particularly related to efforts to prevent exposure, raising the question of whether those who hide can incur less negative effects of hiding stigma by focusing on the act of positive self-presentation. A focus on preventing exposure seems akin to a prevention focus, as theorized by regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998), under which people primarily seek to secure the absence of negative outcomes. By contrast, a focus on promoting a more positive image of oneself is similar to a promotion focus, under which people primarily seek to secure the presence of positive outcomes. Framing social relationships in prevention or promotion terms can affect social performance. For example, social performance is enhanced when relationships are viewed as opportunities (akin to promotion focus) rather than risks (akin to prevention focus; Anthony, Wood, & Holmes, 2007). We examined whether framing social interactions as opportunities rather than risks can improve the social performance of individuals who conceal a stigmatized identity (Newheiser et al., in press). That is, individuals who conceal a devalued identity may typically focus on preventing exposure as stigmatized, a possibility that may help explain why concealment might impair intimacy-building during social interactions (Newheiser & Barreto, 2014). However, promotion focus may alleviate the negative interpersonal consequences of hiding a devalued identity, because it allows one to

concentrate on the opportunities the interaction provides to attain positive outcomes (Higgins, 1997; see also Miller & Myers, 1998).

To examine this, we recruited participants for a study on analytical performance in dyads. We experimentally manipulated stigma by providing bogus information about the analytical abilities of students of the same study major as the participant: stigmatized participants were described as the second-to-worst performers, while non-stigmatized participants were described as the second-to-best. In addition, we again told stigmatized participants that their partner had stated a preference to work with students of other majors and had indicated the participants' own study major as their second-to-last preference. At this point, stigmatized participants received the suggestion that they hide their identity and were randomly assigned to a prevention focus, promotion focus, or control condition. Instructions in the Prevention and Promotion Focus conditions first stated that because students from participants' own discipline do not perform well on the analytical task, their partner might have low expectations about their performance. This statement was included to explain the purpose of concealing the devalued identity (i.e., to reduce these negative expectations).

In the Prevention Focus condition ( $N=20$  dyads), stigmatized participants received the following information: "To prevent your partner from having low expectations for you and to prevent your interaction from not being optimal, it is important that you avoid making a negative impression on your partner. To achieve this, we suggest that you avoid revealing your study major when you talk with your partner and that you conceal information that may result in a negative impression. This way you can prevent your partner from thinking negatively about you, and can conceal the fact that you are a [stigmatized discipline] student." Each sentence was focused on precluding the negative outcome (a hallmark of prevention focus) of revealing the identity. In the Promotion Focus condition ( $N=23$  dyads), instead, the focus was on achieving the positive outcome of hiding the identity (positive expectations, a

positive impression), in line with promotion goals. In the Control condition ( $N=20$  dyads), we did not explicitly mention negative expectations in order not to strengthen the prevention focus that may be induced by stigma (Oyserman, Uskul, Yoder, Nesse, & Williams, 2007). Instead, in the Control condition, stigmatized participants read: “Given previous research showing that students from your discipline do not perform well on this task, your partner may have certain expectations regarding your performance. In order to take those expectations and their possible effects into account, we suggest that you do not reveal your study major but rather conceal it while talking with your partner.” Thus, in the control condition, neither positive nor negative outcomes were emphasized.

Importantly, non-stigmatized participants did not receive instructions about regulatory focus or their own identities. At this point, dyads composed of one stigmatized and one non-stigmatized participant were brought together in a separate room to get acquainted with one another. Interactions were unstructured, could focus on any topic and last as long as participants wanted, and were videotaped. Participants tended to discuss topics one would expect from previously unacquainted students (e.g., student life, hobbies). Interaction duration did not vary across conditions and lasted on average around 6 minutes.

After the interaction, both stigmatized and non-stigmatized participants indicated their perceived interaction positivity (e.g., “The interaction was awkward”). Videotaped interactions were coded by external observers, blind to the study design and hypotheses. Separate cameras were focused on each of the dyad members, and they were coded individually. We assessed the extent to which participants appeared to be hiding information (e.g., “To what extent did the participant seem to be hiding information?”), as well as participants’ perceived engagement with the interaction (e.g., “To what extent did the participant seem engaged in the conversation?”).

Analyses were again conducted with dyad as the unit of analysis. Results showed that regulatory focus did not affect stigmatized participants' ratings of interaction positivity, but they did affect non-stigmatized participants' judgments. Non-stigmatized participants rated the interaction as more positive in the promotion focus condition than in the prevention or control conditions (Table 5, top panel). External observers rated stigmatized participants as hiding more information than non-stigmatized participants and stigmatized participants as hiding less information in the promotion than in the prevention or control conditions (Table 5, bottom panel). Finally, all participants—that is, both stigmatized and non-stigmatized participants—were judged as more engaged in the interaction when the stigmatized participant had received promotion rather than prevention or control instructions.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

In sum, stigmatized individuals who hide their identity can show enhanced social performance if they approach social interactions with a promotion focus (i.e., as an opportunity to make a positive impression) rather than a prevention focus (i.e., as a risk of exposure). More research is needed to provide evidence for the precise mechanisms underlying these processes, as well as to identify further conditions under which socially stigmatized individuals who feel the need to hide their identity might do so without the costs typically associated with this strategy.

### **3.3. Conclusions**

Concealable stigmas are problematic in many ways. Although concealable stigmas allow individuals to control when they reveal their stigma to others, this choice is often made on the basis of false expectations. Individuals with a stigmatized identity expect that concealing their identity will protect their well-being and promote positive relationships with others, but evidence suggests that this is not the case. It would appear important both to continue creating contexts where stigmatized individuals feel comfortable revealing their

identity and to continue developing our understanding of when hiding might be associated with the benefits that it is expected to have.

#### **4. Is Individual Success Helpful or Harmful for the Disadvantaged Group?**

Individual success among members of groups that are otherwise disadvantaged is often perceived as incompatible with group loyalty. For example, members of disadvantaged groups often perceive other ingroup members who attain economic success and gain residence in more privileged areas as disloyal to the group (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002). This is problematic because disadvantaged groups have much to gain from their more successful group members. Indeed, the success of members of disadvantaged groups can, in itself, disconfirm negative stereotypes and expectations about the disadvantaged group, thereby contributing to the improvement of the group's status in the eyes of outgroup (Hewstone, 1989) and ingroup members (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004). In addition, successful members of disadvantaged groups can function as powerful role models and mentors to other members of the disadvantaged group who also seek success, improving their aspirations and performance in domains where they are typically negatively stereotyped (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997; Marx & Roman, 2002).

However, this potential for successful members of disadvantaged groups to benefit their group is often not realized. First, instead of their success disproving negative stereotypes and expectations, successful group members are often subtyped by observers as unrepresentative of the group, which contributes to stereotype maintenance (see Richards & Hewstone, 2001, for a review). In addition, the potential of successful members of the disadvantaged group to function as role models is likely to be thwarted when they are perceived as disloyal to the group, because this creates psychological distance between more and less successful group members, which inhibits being a role model or mentoring (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002).



The sections that follow elaborate on these and other conditions under which disadvantaged groups are (un)likely to benefit from the individual success of their members.

#### **4.1. Coping with multiple identities**

When members of disadvantaged groups pursue individual success, they often encounter the problem that self-preferred identities do not necessarily align with the way one is viewed by others (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003; Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). Because success is relatively infrequent among members of disadvantaged groups, successful individuals who belong to disadvantaged groups often constitute a numerical minority, among a majority of individuals who represent a more advantaged group (Kanter, 1977). This renders their disadvantaged group membership (if visible) highly salient to others (Fiske & Taylor, 2013), even if this is not necessarily how they prefer to see themselves in this context. The resulting discrepancy between preferred self-views and treatment by others is a potential source of tension and distress (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003). This is the case, for instance, when members of disadvantaged groups enter domains where they are under-represented (e.g., women in managerial positions): although their identity as a member of the disadvantaged group may be salient to others (e.g., gender), their own sense of identity might, instead, be more strongly based on belongingness to the group they have newly entered (e.g., manager).

One way to resolve this state of affairs is to try to bring in line external treatment with preferred self-views. For instance, successful members of disadvantaged groups may lower their identification with the disadvantaged group (Ellemers, 1993) or seek other ways to affirm their preferred identity if it is not recognized by others (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002). They may do this by publicly favoring the desired group, to demonstrate one's suitability as a proper group member (Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995; see also Ellemers & Jetten, 2013). Unfortunately, such displays of bias in favor of the aspired group are easily interpreted as signs of disloyalty to the group of origin (Van Laar, Bleeker, Ellemers, & Meijer, 2014).

Thus, when trying to succeed against the odds, individuals are placed in a double bind. They must emphasize how they are different from other members of their group to overcome bias and realize their personal ambitions. However, by doing this, they easily forfeit the support of others like them, instead of being seen as leading the way (Ellemers et al., 2012).

After having succeeded to achieve their desired position, members of the disadvantaged group find themselves in a minority position, which not only curbs their opportunities for further development, but also limits the likelihood that they are seen as attractive role models. First, this minority position enhances the discrepancy between internal and externally imposed identities as outlined above, which can be damaging to self-views (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010). In addition, the perceptual salience associated with being in a numerical minority activates social stereotypes associated with the minority group (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2000). Although these stereotypes may not refer to the category that is most important for the successful individual, the awareness that these stereotypes are salient to others is sufficient to impair individual performance (Derks et al., 2009; Steele & Aronson, 1995; see Schmader, Hall, & Croft, 2014, for a recent review). Additionally, the high status positions offered to members of disadvantaged groups tend to offer less favorable conditions, making failure more likely, as has been extensively documented for women in leadership positions (Ellemers et al., 2012). At the same time, the salience of their minority status makes any performance deficiencies highly visible. Because the effectiveness of role models for improving aspirations and performance of disadvantaged individuals relies on their visible success, this constitutes a significant obstacle to the extent to which they can be helpful to the group.

Another obstacle to the extent to which successful members of a disadvantaged group can benefit their group is that individuals who are personally successful - when their group is not - often fail to perceive discrimination against their group as a whole (Stroebe et al., 2009;

see also Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar, & de Groot, 2011). Because the self-relevance of a particular outcome is crucial in motivating the search for information that might uncover discriminatory treatment (Stroebe, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2010), if individuals are not personally rejected, they can easily remain unaware that others in their group are targets of discrimination, which constitutes an additional reason why they may fail to display solidarity towards less fortunate group members.

#### **4.2. Achieving success against the odds**

Individual success is often seen as a first step—or even the royal road—towards broader change in relations between social groups (Duguid, 2011). However, there is by now overwhelming evidence that such change will not be realised as long as broader group-based expectations remain in place (for an overview, see Ellemers et al., 2012). As long as individual successes are regarded (also by those who succeed) as exceptions to stereotypical expectations, they will tend to legitimate and stabilize existing differences between groups, instead of changing them. This has been examined quite extensively among women aiming to achieve career success in male-dominated work contexts. For instance, Ellemers, Van den Heuvel, De Gilder, Maass, and Bonvini (2004) examined this by comparing self-reported career ambitions of junior male and female academics (PhD students), with the way they were perceived by more senior male and female faculty (full professors). Results obtained in the Netherlands and Italy consistently revealed no reliable differences in self-reported career commitment, nor were objective differences visible in the academic performance of male and female PhD students. If anything, female postgraduate students tended to report being more committed to their career than male students; this difference was not significant in Study 1 (the Netherlands), but was statistically reliable in Study 2 (Italy). Male faculty members accordingly perceived male and female PhD students to be equally committed to advancement in their academic careers. However, perceptions of female professors revealed that they

judged female PhD students to be significantly less committed to their career than male students. Thus, female faculty members were most inclined to under-estimate the career ambitions of more junior academics. Whereas this so-called 'Queen Bee' effect has been cited as indicating that women are to blame for holding back other women (Sheppard & Aquino, 2013), Ellemers et al. (2004) conducted additional analyses which established that the tendency of senior academics to under-estimate the ambitions of more junior scholars did not represent such a generic tendency. When distinguishing between different age cohorts, it became evident that the Queen Bee response was most clearly visible among the older generation of female professors. These were the individuals who were most likely to have encountered gender bias in their own careers and who presented themselves as different from other women to overcome this.

Further research among senior women in a range of different organizations confirmed that the tendency to distance the self from other members of one's group is used as a strategy to achieve individual success when encountering prejudicial expectations (Derks, Ellemers et al., 2011), in particular by those who do not see their gender identity as relevant in a professional context. Women who reported low gender identification at the start of their career and encountered gender discrimination during their career described themselves in highly masculine terms. The discrepancy between their self-views and the discriminatory treatment they received also caused them to emphasize differences between themselves and other women and to endorse stereotypical views of those other women. This pattern was not observed for low gender identified women who had not encountered gender discrimination in their careers, nor for women who reported high gender identification, regardless of their own career experiences (Derks, Ellemers, et al., 2011).

A follow up study, in which senior women in the police were induced to consider career experiences in which they had experienced gender bias, or to consider how they had been

evaluated in terms of their personal qualifications, revealed converging results (Derks, Van Laar, et al., 2011). That is, when senior police women who were disinclined to identify with their gender group were prompted to consider their experiences with gender bias, they indicated highly masculine self-descriptions, engaged in ingroup distancing, and indicated gender discrimination was no longer a problem. When low gender identified women considered their experiences with being evaluated in terms of their personal qualifications, they did not display these 'Queen Bee' responses. Senior police women who were strongly gender identified responded differently when prompted to think of their experiences with gender bias. This made them more inclined to endorse equal opportunity programs in the police force and increased their willingness to make an effort to help other women advance (Derks, Van Laar, et al., 2011). Thus, this research again confirms that 'Queen Bee' responses do not represent a generic inclination of women being competitive towards each other. Instead, it is a consequence of the self-group distancing strategy followed by women who are disinclined to identify with their gender group, yet are treated on the basis of their gender at work. In other words, past experiences with gender discrimination caused these women to emphasize their own ambitions and commitment to their career as a way to convince others they should not just be considered as representatives of their gender group. As a by-effect of the way they coped with the gender bias they encountered, these women simultaneously considered junior women to be relatively less motivated and ambitious (Derks, Van Laar, et al., 2011).

Thus, the tendency of successful individuals to distance the self from other group members reflects the discrepancy between preferred self-views and treatment by others and stems from attempts to individually escape group-based discrimination, in order to succeed against the odds. Indeed, similar self-distancing responses to cope with negative group-based expectations were observed among Hindustani workers in the Netherlands. When individuals

who reported low ethnic identification were confronted with ethnic bias at work, they were more inclined to self-present in terms of stereotypically Dutch features and reported negative affect towards other members of their group (Derks, Van Laar, Ellemers, & Raghoe, in press).

#### **4.3. Becoming a mentor or role model**

Taken together, this evidence suggests that successful members of disadvantaged groups often fail to benefit their group, despite their potential to do so. First, their minority position in the advantaged group makes it more difficult for them to demonstrate their ability to perform well. Additionally, their desire to overcome any prejudice they encounter causes them to distance themselves from other group members and to underestimate their fellow members' potential instead of helping them advance. Finally, their own successes make it less likely that either they or those around them realize that other members of their group continue to suffer disadvantage. For all these reasons, success often remains associated with the advantaged group, perpetuating social inequalities.

Importantly, however, individual success is not *necessarily* accompanied by dis-identification and disaffection from the group. Indeed, individual success is not the same as individual mobility, as conceptualized within social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Whereas individual mobility necessarily involves psychological distancing from the ingroup, members of disadvantaged groups can be individually successful while remaining psychologically committed to their group. Research suggests that when this happens, individual success can indeed be beneficial for the disadvantaged group. Specifically, individuals who are successful but remain highly identified with their group show strong ingroup loyalty (Derks, Ellemers, et al., 2011; Derks, Van Laar, et al., 2011). Importantly, successful individuals are less likely to dis-identify with their group when their new social environment values the areas in which their group excels (Van Laar et al., 2010). This is the case, for instance, when ethnic minority representatives are recruited by companies who wish

to cater to a more diverse group of clients, or when women are sought out for leadership positions because of their social-emotional skills. Even though the drawback of such developments is that stereotypical expectations of the group's characteristic features or abilities are maintained, the advantage is in the fact that these are now more explicitly seen as being of *value* in a professional context. As a result, in cases such as these, the success of individual group representatives can make it easier for other group members to envision ways to achieve professional success as well. Additionally, the disadvantaged group can prevent successful individuals from turning away from the group when they refrain from considering behavioral adaptations people make (e.g., in their way of speech, dress, or lifestyle) to achieve professional success as a sign of disloyalty. Indeed, when the group explicitly endorses and supports individual advancement efforts, and does not question people's sense of emotional involvement in the group when they make behavioral changes, individuals are less likely to turn away from the group, which makes it easier for others who follow to do the same (Van Laar et al., 2014). Remaining identified with the group thus seems to be an important requirement for others to regard the successful individual as a role model. Indeed, successful members of devalued groups can only function as positive role models when they are seen as characteristic for the group they represent (Asgari, Dasgupta, & Stout, 2012).

#### **4.4. Conclusions**

In sum, a range of cognitive and motivational processes may prevent successful members of disadvantaged groups from helping the disadvantaged group to improve its status, or from assisting other group members to achieve similar levels of success. Research shows that successful group members can provide this type of help, but this hinges on maintaining a strong psychological connection to the disadvantaged group. Doing so is not self-evident, as revealed by the research reviewed in this section. The challenge for future research, therefore,

is to elaborate on the conditions under which this is likely to happen and investigate different ways to achieve it.

## **5. Is Confronting Prejudice Socially Costly or Socially Beneficial?**

Confronting prejudice is an assertive form of coping that involves directly addressing the source of prejudice to express displeasure at, or disagreement with, the treatment received (Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006). Individuals confront on behalf of their group when they express their belief that a particular prejudiced view inaccurately reflects the group. Alternatively, individuals can confront on behalf of themselves alone, such as when they state that they are different from the typical ingroup member (e.g., Becker, Barreto, Kahn, & de Oliveira Laux, 2014; Garcia, Schmitt, Branscombe, & Ellemers, 2010).

Research in this area has revealed that confronting prejudice is accompanied by social costs, that is, negative evaluations by those who witness the confrontation (see Kaiser & Major, 2006, for a review). This finding is highly salient in the literature and has strongly influenced current understandings of how individuals cope with prejudice. However, these theoretical developments have paid less attention to the finding that confrontation also has clear social benefits. In this section, we aim to provide a more complete view of the social effects of confrontation by reviewing evidence for both the social costs and the social benefits of confronting prejudice, as well as the factors that modify how confrontation is evaluated.

### **5.1. The infrequency of confrontation**

The idea that confrontation might have social costs was raised to explain the finding that targets of prejudice or discrimination rarely confront it (Kaiser & Major, 2006). When asked in private, or when asked to respond to a hypothetical situation, individuals often indicate that if they were to face prejudice, they would readily confront the perpetrator (Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). However, in reality, these



estimated responses are not often borne out in public behavior. A striking example is provided by Fitzgerald, Swan, and Fischer (1995), who showed that even though 65% of female participants indicated that they would confront sexism in a particular scenario, when they encountered that situation in reality, in a separate study, none of the participants confronted the sexist treatment.

Subsequent research uncovered that concerns about how others might react to confrontation—that is, the anticipated social costs of confronting—play a crucial role in motivating targets of prejudice to refrain from confronting. Indeed, targets are less likely to confront prejudice when they expect more social costs to accrue from confrontation (Shelton & Stewart, 2004), and they prefer to retaliate indirectly, rather than to directly confront (Lee, Soto, Swim, & Bernstein, 2012). Research also suggests that targets of prejudice expect different social costs from confronting in the presence of different audiences. For example, individuals make fewer attributions of the negative outcomes they receive to discrimination in front of an audience made out of members of the perpetrator's group than in front of an ingroup audience, presumably because the latter might be less likely to respond negatively to these attributions (Stangor, Van Allen, Swim, & Sechrist, 2002). People seem particularly concerned about making public attributions to discrimination for their own outcomes and are more likely to publicly attribute a negative outcome to discrimination if this outcome pertains to another individual than if it pertains to themselves (Sechrist, Swim, & Stangor, 2004). This suggests that there is something specific about making attributions to discrimination for one's own outcomes that individuals expect might render them particularly vulnerable to social sanction. As a result of these concerns about the social costs of confrontation, individuals are less likely to blame biased behavior (from specific individuals) than biased institutions or policies for negative outcomes (Sechrist & Delmar, 2006).

This research strongly suggests that individuals anticipate social costs for confronting prejudice or discrimination and that their concern about these costs helps explain why confrontation is not more prevalent. However, these findings beg the question of whether or not these concerns are justified. That is, do people really frown upon individuals who claim to be targets of discrimination, or who confront perpetrators for expressing prejudice? And do these social costs vary in the ways people expect them to vary, with, for example, greater costs accruing from outgroup than from ingroup evaluations?

### **5. 2. The social costs of confrontation**

Individuals who report being a target of prejudice or discrimination in the workplace often suffer interpersonal and institutional retaliation (Bergman, Langhout, Palmieri, Cortina, & Fitzgerald, 2002; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Stockdale, 1998).

Experimental research has shown that those who claim to be a target of prejudice, or who confront prejudice perpetrators, are seen as over-sensitive or as complainers, irrespective of the likelihood that this claim was in fact justified (e.g., Dodd, Giuliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). It thus appears that claiming to have received discriminatory treatment is indeed accompanied by social costs, as anticipated by targets.

The social costs of confrontation are more pronounced when the specific issue being confronted is subject to stronger social regulation. For example, individuals more readily confront racism than they confront sexism, reflecting the fact that social norms against racism are stronger than social norms against sexism (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Steentjes, Kurz, Barreto, & Morton, 2014). Confrontation is also accompanied by heavier social costs when individuals confront on behalf of themselves than when they confront on behalf of others (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). This is in line with what individuals appear to expect, claiming discriminatory treatment more frequently on behalf of others than on behalf of themselves (Sechrist et al., 2004). However, not all expectations are borne out. For example, whereas

confrontation is more negatively evaluated by members of the outgroup than by ingroup members (Dodd et al., 2001), as targets appear to expect, confronters can also be derogated by members of their own group (Garcia, Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005).

Research has also clarified why claims of discriminatory treatment are associated with social costs. Attributing a negative outcome to discrimination threatens fundamental beliefs in a just world, according to which negative outcomes should be attributed to lack of deservingness, not to unfair treatment (Kaiser, Dyrenforth, & Hagiwara, 2006). Threats to beliefs in a just world, such as discriminatory treatment, are highly aversive and actively avoided (Lerner, 1980). Individuals will do what they can to avert these threats, going so far as to blame victims, if that helps maintain the view that the world is a just place. Claiming to be a target of discrimination threatens this belief and can thus motivate derogation of the claimant (Kaiser et al., 2006). In addition, targets who claim discriminatory treatment can be seen as avoiding personal responsibility for the negative outcome they received. In contexts dominated by strong beliefs in merit, avoidance of personal responsibility is strongly sanctioned and can damage the reputation of the target and of the target's group as a whole. This might explain why individuals who attribute others' outcomes to discrimination incur fewer social costs than individuals who attribute their own outcomes to discrimination, because only the latter can be considered to be avoiding their personal responsibility for the negative outcome. This might also explain why confronters can also be derogated by members of their own group, who might endorse beliefs in a just world as much as members of the perpetrator's group (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

### **5.3. The social benefits of confrontation**

Since being uncovered, the social costs of confrontation documented in the research reviewed above have become well known in the field, are commonly cited, and are often used to make a variety of theoretical inferences (see Kaiser & Major, 2006, for a more detailed

review). This research has been very valuable, for example, in clarifying that the fear of social costs might explain why individuals often fail to confront when they encounter prejudice. However, despite supporting evidence, less emphasis has been placed on the fact that confrontation also has important *social benefits*.

It is clear that confrontation has personal (or intrapsychic) benefits, such as increasing feelings of closure (Hyers, 2007), self-esteem (Crosby, 1993; Gervais, Hillard, & Vescio, 2010), and empowerment (Haslett & Lipman, 1997). This would appear relatively easy to integrate with the finding that confrontation has social costs, given that these costs and benefits occur on different spheres of experience. Perhaps harder to integrate, however, is evidence that confrontation also has social benefits, that is, that confrontation can have benefits in the social sphere. Two kinds of evidence demonstrate these social benefits: First, confronting prejudice seems to be an important prejudice reduction strategy, benefiting social relations between members of different groups, potentially including between the perpetrator and the target. Second, confronters are not always negatively evaluated, and even when they are negatively evaluated, this is often restricted to some specific impression domains, while at the same time they are positively evaluated in others.

Regarding the first point, it is important to stress the value of confrontation as a prejudice reduction strategy and a mechanism for social change. Confrontation can motivate perpetrators to avoid making prejudiced remarks (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). It can elicit apologies from perpetrators, who can become motivated to compensate the victim for the prejudice expressed, which, in turn, might result in a more positive interaction than if they had not been confronted (Mallett & Wagner, 2011). In addition, whereas people tend to disapprove of those who protest against biased treatment when this is seen as rare, this is not the case when discrimination is seen as pervasive. These different perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination might stem from actual differences in the incidence and

visibility of discriminatory treatment (e.g., of women in strongly male-dominated jobs). However, they may also reflect differences in the inclination to acknowledge and perceive that subtle and implicit displays of bias persist and represent systematic occurrences of unequal treatment (Schmitt, Ellemers, & Branscombe, 2003). Such differential awareness of the continued pervasiveness of biased treatment and systematic discrimination may stem from individual differences in past exposure to discrimination, from differences in knowledge or information availability regarding its prevalence, or from social influence attempts from others who may either emphasize or downplay the incidence of bias.

When discrimination is believed to be pervasive, confronting prejudice is seen as more appropriate and desirable than failing to protest against unfair treatment (Garcia et al., 2010). Indeed, when prejudice is confronted, it is perceived as more problematic compared to when individuals fail to clearly express their displeasure to perpetrators, causing bias to pass undetected (e.g., Henry & Meltzoff, 1998; Hunter & McClelland, 1991). Confrontation also has positive effects on others: It reduces prejudice in observers and it increases the likelihood that they will also confront, either at that same moment, or in the future (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Importantly, the prospect of prejudice reduction appears to motivate confrontation. Indeed, individuals are more likely to confront when they are optimistic that confrontation is likely to change the prejudicial views of the perpetrator (Rattan & Dweck, 2010; see also Kaiser, Major, & McCoy, 2004, for effects of general optimism).

Regarding the second point, that is, that confronters are not only or always negatively evaluated, research documenting the social costs of claiming discriminatory treatment has also specified a range of positive effects that have been less frequently acknowledged. For example, in their original work on this topic, Kaiser and Miller (2001) showed that although individuals who attributed a negative outcome to discrimination were seen as more over-

sensitive than individuals who attributed the negative outcome to poor performance, the former were, at the same time, also seen as more honest, or true to themselves. Given the importance of morality in impression formation (Wojciszke, 2005), this might be taken to suggest that those who claim discriminatory treatment might have had a significant social benefit. In addition, Dodd et al. (2001) showed that women who confronted sexism were less liked but more respected than women who did not confront sexism. Given that respect is closely linked to social status (Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999), this again suggests that confronters may accrue significant social benefits. Importantly, recent research demonstrates that women might be aware of this trade-off between being liked and being respected when choosing whether or not to confront. Specifically, women only refrain from confronting when their goal for the specific interaction is to be liked, but they are more likely to choose to confront when their goal is, instead, to be respected (Mallett & Melchiori, 2014). Taken together, this re-examination of evidence from early work on the social costs of attributions to discrimination suggests that confrontation can be simultaneously associated with costs and with benefits, and the extent to which this might constrain coping responses is likely to depend on the particular goal individuals have in a specific context.

Besides revealing simultaneous social costs and benefits of confrontation, research has also uncovered that individual and situational factors can affect how confronters are evaluated. For example, confronters are more positively evaluated by highly identified than by weakly identified ingroup members, presumably because prejudice is more self-relevant for the former, who therefore see a greater need for confrontation (Kaiser, Hagiwara, Malahy, & Wilkins, 2009). At times, group members may place so much value on ensuring that the prejudicial treatment does not pass unnoticed that they may approve of forms of confrontation that could appear particularly costly in terms of the group's reputation as over-sensitive. We examined this in a study where men and women evaluated a female target who confronted

sexism aggressively (expressing displeasure and slapping the perpetrator in the face) or non-aggressively (merely expressing displeasure), or who did not confront at all in a scenario participants were asked to read (Becker & Barreto, in press). Participants were asked to what extent they perceived each reaction as threatening for men and for women (e.g., “To what extent do you think that the woman’s reaction harms the image of men [women] as a group?”), their impression of the target (along warmth and competence attributes), their feelings towards the target (e.g., hostility, anger), and the extent to which they supported the target’s response (e.g., “how much do you agree with the woman’s reaction?”). Gender identification was assessed before participants read the scenario and again at the end of the study.

The results showed that how the female target was evaluated depended on the precise nature of her behavior, as well as on participants’ gender identification. Participants indicated that non-aggressive confrontations were the least threatening for women, with aggressive confrontation being judged as equally threatening as no confrontation—indeed, female participants revealed a tendency to perceive no confrontation as more threatening to women than aggressive confrontation. Evaluations of the target mirrored this perceived threat: overall, participants tended to evaluate the female target who confronted non-aggressively more positively than the aggressive confronter and the no confronter. However, these evaluations also largely depended on participants’ gender and their gender identification (see Figure 5 for an example). For women, weak identifiers showed generally more negative responses towards the female target who confronted aggressively than towards the target who responded non-aggressively, whereas high identifiers tended not to differentiate between these two targets. For men, on the other hand, it was high identifiers who differentiated between the aggressive and the non-aggressive confronters, showing greater negativity towards the former.

[insert Figure 5 about here]

Results also revealed that reading about an ingroup member who confronted sexism aggressively led weakly identified women to further distance themselves from the group, relative to when they read about a non-aggressive target, whereas highly identified women maintained their level of identification irrespective of the target's reaction (see Figure 6). Men did not show such a tendency—although, interestingly, there was a non-significant tendency for weakly identified men to increase their gender identification when reading about a female target who confronted a male sexist perpetrator aggressively. In sum, this study shows that whether confronters incur social costs depends on the precise nature of their confrontation and the extent to which their audience identifies with the group targeted by prejudice. The study also stresses that confrontation can be costly for the group too, if it alienates its less identified members and mobilizes weakly identified outgroup members.

[Insert Figure 6 about here]

Ingroup members are particularly positive about ingroup confronters when they believe that discrimination against their group is pervasive, relative to when they believe that discrimination is rare (Garcia et al., 2010; Kahn, Barreto, Kaiser, & Silva Rego, in press). This was examined by in a study by Garcia et al. (2010), assessing how people who differed in the extent to which they thought gender discrimination was pervasive evaluated a female lawyer who was passed over for promotion at her law firm, despite being clearly better qualified than her male contestant. Research participants were asked to respond to different scenarios, one in which the female lawyer complained that her superior individual qualifications had not been taken into account, one in which she complained that the law firm did not fairly consider the abilities of women, and one in which she indicated disagreement with the outcome but decided not to complain. Research participants received one of these three scenarios and were asked to report their emotional responses towards the female lawyer (anger), their evaluation of her as a person, and the appropriateness of her response. They



were also asked to rate the unfairness of the decision that had been made. For all these dependent variables, participants' responses to the action taken by the female lawyer depended on how pervasive they thought gender discrimination to be, despite the fact that they all considered the decision that had been made to be equally unfair and discriminatory. Specifically, those who thought of gender discrimination as being pervasive expressed most anger against the female lawyer when she decided *not* to protest the way she had been treated. Additionally, those who considered discrimination to be pervasive were more inclined to like the female lawyer when she protested against her treatment than when she refrained from doing so, and saw either form of protest as more appropriate than no protest as a response to the way she had been treated. Mediation analyses further revealed that the tendency to report anger and dislike towards the target was mediated by the perceived appropriateness of the response displayed by female lawyer, in view of the perceived pervasiveness of gender discrimination (Garcia et al., 2010). Thus, results of this study showed that individuals who considered gender discrimination to be a pervasive problem in society thought that any form of protest constitutes a more appropriate response to the treatment the female lawyer had received than no protest. Because individuals who considered discrimination to be pervasive approved of the appropriateness of protest in response to the treatment received, they refrained from expressing anger or dislike towards the complainant.

A separate set of studies replicated this pattern and demonstrated that it is reversed when confronters are evaluated by members of the perpetrator's group (Kahn et al., in press; Experiment 1). This may be because the perceived pervasiveness of sexism has very different implications for men and for women. For women, perceiving sexism as pervasive might award the motivation needed to support confrontation of what might otherwise appear to be a relatively unimportant statement or behavior that does not justify the costs that might be accrued through confrontation. For men, perceiving sexism as pervasive implies that

confrontations might be encountered more frequently and that social change, if it is to occur, might be more drastic, than when sexism is believed to be rare. In fact, perceiving sexism to be rare allows men to project an egalitarian image by supporting confrontations of sexism, without loss of social advantage. To examine this reasoning, we provided male and female participants with information regarding the pervasiveness of sexism (rare versus pervasive, as in Garcia et al., 2010) and subsequently asked them to respond to a scenario of a female target who either confronted or did not confront sexism. The pattern of responses obtained for women was similar to that revealed by Garcia et al. (2010): women were more supportive of confrontation by female targets when they perceived sexism to be pervasive than when they perceived sexism to be rare. However, we found the reverse pattern for men: men were less supportive of female confronters of sexism when they were made aware of the pervasiveness of discrimination against women than when they believed that discrimination against women was rare.

A subsequent study replicated these findings and revealed that this pattern was modified when participants were initially self-affirmed (Kahn et al., in press; Experiment 2). Self-affirmation theory proposes that individuals can protect their self-image from threat by affirming an unrelated aspect of their identity (Steele, 1988; for a review, see Sherman & Cohen, 2006). As such, by examining effects of self-affirmation, it is possible to shed light on the specific threats driving participants' responses. In our study, self-affirmation affected female participants' support for confrontation only when sexism was rare. That is, women who believed sexism was rare were more supportive of confrontation when they were self-affirmed than when they were not, but their support when sexism was pervasive remained high across self-affirmation conditions. This suggests that women who were not self-affirmed experienced a threat that dampened their support in the rare conditions—possibly the threat of appearing over-sensitive. Men's responses were also affected by self-affirmation only in the

rare conditions, where they reported greater support for confrontation when *not* self-affirmed than when self-affirmed. Self-affirmation did not affect men's responses when they believed that sexism was pervasive—this remained relatively low in all conditions. This suggests that men who were not self-affirmed experienced a threat that heightened support in the rare conditions—possibly the threat of appearing sexist.

Internalized norms or ideologies, and their match with what is confronted, can also affect whether confrontation is positively or negatively evaluated. For example, women who score low on benevolent sexism are more likely than women high in benevolent sexism to express positive attitudes towards another woman who confronts a sexist decision (Kahn, Barreto, & Kaiser, in preparation). However, women low in benevolent sexism are actually less likely than women high in benevolent sexism to express positive attitudes towards a woman who confronts a decision supporting traditional gender roles, suggesting that evaluations of the confronter do not necessarily hinge on the assertive act of confrontation in itself, but on the specific goal of this behavior (Kahn et al., in preparation). Importantly, internalized ideologies have also been shown to motivate confrontation, which is more likely when it does not conflict with these ideologies. For example, women who endorsed traditional gender norms prescribing submission were more likely to remain silent in the face of sexist remarks (Swim, Eysell, Quilivan, & Ferguson, 2010).

#### **5.4. Conclusions**

Taken together, the evidence reviewed in this section clarifies that confronting prejudice can have both social costs and social benefits, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes in different contexts. It also clarifies that people appear to be reasonably aware of both the potential costs and the potential benefits of confrontation, for example choosing to confront when they seek to be respected, but refraining from doing so when they primarily seek to be liked. This more complete analysis of the costs and benefits of confrontation therefore

advances our understanding of when and why individuals are likely to confront. People appear to confront prejudice when they expect confrontation's social benefits to accrue (e.g., when they are optimistic about thereby improving the perpetrator's attitudes, Rattan & Dweck, 2010) and are more likely to do so when they perceive these benefits to be particularly important (e.g., when they perceive prejudice against their group to be pervasive, Kahn et al., in press, or self-relevant, Kaiser et al., 2009). Future research should more completely acknowledge these costs and benefits and the decision process involved when individuals consider whether or not to respond to prejudice by engaging in confrontation.

## **6. Overall Conclusions**

We have reviewed work that illuminates various facets of how prejudice and discrimination are experienced in modern societies. This is an area of research that has been highly productive, with developments spanning traditional areas of enquiry as well as new areas that had been overlooked before. We therefore felt that it was now time to galvanize evidence to answer specific questions and address public or academic debates around the experience of disadvantage in modern societies. In doing so, we revisited old studies and cast their findings in a new light, such as highlighting findings that did not seem sufficiently striking to stick in our memory when they were first published, but which have become more important as our knowledge has progressed. But for the most part, we reviewed recent evidence from our labs, as well as recent work carried out by other experts in this field. Our aim was to move the field forward by identifying core answers we are now able to provide, as well as questions that remain to be answered.

This analysis has important implications for how we think about prejudice and its effects. The conclusions we draw all relate, in some way, to a central idea: that modern societies are characterized by strong illusions of meritocracy, where apparent improvements

often do not only hide but actually sustain social inequalities, and they do so through various processes (see also Barreto et al., 2009; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009). Although some of these apparent improvements reflect genuine attempts at suppressing biases and might have some benefits in the short term, the evidence reviewed here suggests that they can backfire in unexpected ways or in their long term effects.

First, we clarified that individuals tend to under-estimate (rather than over-estimate) the extent to which they encounter prejudice or discrimination. This is often due to lack of information needed to infer prejudicial treatment, but it can also emerge due to a range of cognitive and motivational processes that impair detection of discrimination. Beliefs in meritocracy are not only one of the core factors influencing this blindness to injustice, but are also, in turn, reinforced by the failure to detect discrimination.

Second, we showed that though blaming one's negative outcomes on discrimination may offer some protection, usually of one's sense of competence, this only occurs while individuals are able to maintain the belief that society is generally just and meritocratic. Inequalities thus remain unaddressed not only because they are undetected but also because the perception of unequal treatment may serve important psychological functions, such as the need to maintain the perilous illusion that society is perfectly meritocratic. In the long run, however, as these experiences are repeated, these beliefs are challenged. As discrimination comes to be perceived as more pervasive, it becomes most damaging to well-being, but it is also then that affective and behavioral responses start to raise the possibility of change, underlining the importance of personal experiences with discrimination in this process.

Our third focus was on the circumstances under which individual success can or cannot be helpful for a disadvantaged group. Again, the answer here is complex, but can be narrowed down to the idea that individual success can only benefit the group when it is not seen to demonstrate the legitimate and meritocratic nature of the social system. It is only when

members of disadvantaged groups succeed while remaining aware of disadvantage that they can truly offer the group a helping hand and have their hand accepted by less successful members of the disadvantaged group.

We then discussed the unique problem of having a stigmatized identity that is concealable. The issue here is whether the opportunity to conceal a devalued identity offers individuals protection from the damaging effects of stigma. This is a misrepresentation held by the very individuals who use this strategy, who do so in the anticipation that it will offer them protection and ensure social acceptance. Unfortunately, this is not what evidence suggests. Even when the costs of revealing are great, individuals suffer from actively concealing a socially stigmatized identity. Thus, social stigma creates social inequalities in everyday lives, even when the stigmatized identity is not visible, and therefore in the absence of direct stigmatization. Recent research offers promising insights by identifying some circumstances under which this may be improved, but more work is needed in this area.

The final aspect we addressed was whether confrontation of prejudice is uniquely associated with social costs and, if not, why exactly confrontation remains so rare. The evidence here clarifies that confrontation is associated both with social costs and with social benefits, along slightly different domains, and that whether individuals choose to confront or not depends on the goals they prioritize in any given interaction (e.g., to be liked vs. to be respected). Future research might wish to elaborate on this finding to understand why confrontation tends to be so rare, despite its benefits and the importance of perceived competence and respect in modern societies. An intriguing possibility is that members of disadvantaged groups, who tend to be stereotyped as relatively incompetent but warm (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002), might find it difficult to behave in ways that jeopardize positive evaluation in the very dimension in which they are seen as superior (i.e., warmth), even when this might function so as to enhance their social status by eliciting competence judgments.

Although this review was structured around separate questions, which were answered on the basis of different studies, some recurring themes emerge. The importance of beliefs in merit in exacerbating the negative effects of discrimination is a central theme, as already mentioned, and these beliefs are stronger when prejudice is subtle, when it is perceived as rare, and when group inequalities are perceived to be entirely justified. By contrast, perceiving discrimination has beneficial effects when individuals engage in a group-level analysis of the treatment they have received, thereby resorting to the group as a resource, when power holders (including members of the advantaged group) acknowledge discrimination, and when the contribution of each group is recognized, such as when a diversity climate is encouraged. Paradoxically, however, diversity measures can promote beliefs in meritocracy, by leading individuals and organizations to assume that group membership cannot continue to affect how individuals are treated (Kaiser et al., 2013). More research is needed, therefore, to specify how these assumptions can be curtailed in environments where diversity is encouraged and valued.

Aside from contributing to theory and research by advancing knowledge on the perception and experience of social disadvantage, our analysis has some practical implications. The finding that many discriminatory experiences remain undetected, even by targets themselves, further underlines the need to develop better procedures to monitor discrimination and its effects. Indeed, societal and organizational statistics regarding the prevalence of discrimination tend to rely on self-reports by targets themselves that do not take into account what scientific evidence suggests about detection of discrimination. Broad scale social surveys, as well as smaller scale workplace surveys, strongly under-estimate discriminatory experiences by using old-fashioned measures of blatant prejudice or discrimination that require individuals to label their experiences as discriminatory, even though this can be done only in a minority of cases. In other cases, surveys ask participants to

indicate the extent to which they feel they are treated differently from their peers, neglecting the fact that to respond to this question, individuals need to have access to information they often do not have. Although more sensitive measures have been developed (e.g., for sexual harassment see Fitzgerald et al., 1995), they are rarely used in these broader contexts. More evidence-based procedures need to be encouraged, and it is the role of experts in this area to mobilize non-academics to develop and implement such practices.

Given the multiple and ever changing ways in which ‘difference’ is expressed and experienced, it would also seem important to remain attentive to narratives of experiences, as well as to monitor broad patterns and distributions at a level in which aggregate information can be considered. In this context, it would also seem important for organizations to remain attentive and continue monitoring their procedures in an effort to uncover (unintended) biases. Nevertheless, given the pervasiveness and unconscious nature of these biases, we believe that it is unreasonable to expect that they might go away altogether any time soon, which we further believe underscores the need to use proactive (affirmative) actions to correct for disadvantage (Crosby, 2004). Such proactive measures would be unlikely to have the same detrimental effects found for measures aimed at reducing biases in recruitment and selection, because the problem identified with the latter is that they lead individuals and organizations to assume these biases no longer take place (Kaiser et al., 2013). Although bias reduction strategies should continue to be encouraged, organizations need to promote equality and diversity strategies while at the same time acknowledging that they are unlikely to completely eliminate bias and endorsing measures that successfully correct for this possibility.

Another implication of these findings, in our opinion, is that, to achieve equality in domains that are dominated by one specific social group, it is necessary to use measures that achieve this quite rapidly, overcoming as quickly as possible skewed or minority representations. Indeed, we reviewed evidence demonstrating that minority representations



elicit a range of detrimental effects that result in under-performance and limit the extent to which members of disadvantaged groups who succeed can effectively benefit their group as a whole. Unsubstantial increases in the representation of disadvantaged groups are problematic also because they overload minority group members with the responsibility of representing their group and send discouraging signs of token representation (Barreto, Ellemers, & Palacios, 2004).

All in all, the knowledge accumulated in this area has provided some answers to old questions, but new questions continually emerge. This review highlighted some of these new questions, for example, with regard to gaining a deeper understanding of the experience of concealed identities and the conditions under which individuals might conceal their identity with truly protective effects. Another area for further inquiry is the somewhat paradoxical finding that confronting prejudicial statements or behavior has at least as many benefits as it has costs, but it is nevertheless a behavior that is rarely displayed. These two areas of research have in common their rare attention to the effectiveness of the strategies that members of devalued groups might use to cope with discrimination. Further research is clearly needed, in this and other areas, to continue improving our understanding of the experience of disadvantage in modern societies. We hope this review contributes to organizing our thoughts in preparation for these exciting next steps.

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*Table 1.* Affective and behavioural outcomes of a suggestion of sexism made by male or female sources

Suggestion of sexism:	Yes		No	
Gender of source:	Male	Female	Male	Female
	N = 22	N = 23	N = 22	N = 23
Self-handicapping				
Experiment 1	2.44 <sup>b</sup> (.80)	2.95 <sup>a</sup> (.95)	2.99 <sup>a</sup> (.74)	2.46 <sup>b</sup> (.63)
Experiment 2	2.34 <sup>b</sup> (.63)	2.84 <sup>a*</sup> (1.02)	2.63 <sup>ab</sup> (.89)	2.39 <sup>b*</sup> (.86)
Performance self-esteem	5.63 <sup>a</sup> (.74)	5.00 <sup>c</sup> (.83)	5.27 <sup>b</sup> (.94)	5.43 <sup>b</sup> (.97)
Self-stereotyping				
Experiment 1	4.19 <sup>b*</sup> (.48)	4.67 <sup>a†</sup> (.81)	4.59 <sup>a*</sup> (.58)	4.29 <sup>b†</sup> (.59)
Experiment 2	4.21 <sup>b</sup> (.64)	4.75 <sup>a*</sup> (.62)	4.47 <sup>ab</sup> (.77)	4.44 <sup>b*</sup> (.53)
Task performance	11.23 <sup>a</sup> (2.33)	9.78 <sup>b</sup> (2.54)	9.55 <sup>b</sup> (2.46)	10.30 <sup>ab</sup> (1.94)
Filing complaint	15 (68.18% <sup>a</sup> )	7 (30.44% <sup>b*</sup> )	9 (40.91% <sup>b*</sup> )	11 (47.83% <sup>b</sup> )

Note. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses beside each mean. Scores range from 1 to 7 except for task performance (0 to 15) and protest (0-cell N or to 100%). Means with different superscripts within each row differ reliably from each other at  $p < .05$ . Means that share \* or † differ from each other at  $.05 < p < .12$ . (Adapted from Cihangir et al., 2014.)

*Table 2.* How self-esteem moderates affective and behavioral outcomes of subtle (but not blatant) prejudice

Ambiguity of sexism:	Blatant		Subtle	
Self-esteem:	Low	High	Low	High
Self-directed				
negative emotions				
Experiment 1	1.73 <sup>b</sup> (.77)	1.79 <sup>b</sup> (.73)	2.43 <sup>a</sup> (1.18)	1.80 <sup>b</sup> (.89)
Experiment 2	2.51 <sup>a</sup> (.59)	2.77 <sup>ab</sup> (.93)	2.80 <sup>a</sup> (.92)	2.39 <sup>b</sup> (.76)
Self-concern	2.99 <sup>a</sup> (1.05)	3.16 <sup>ab</sup> (.93)	3.33 <sup>a</sup> (1.15)	2.72 <sup>b</sup> (.98)
Self-stereotyping	4.64 <sup>a</sup> (.58)	4.83 <sup>ab</sup> (.48)	4.94 <sup>a</sup> (.60)	4.60 <sup>b</sup> (.48)
Performance	11.76 <sup>a</sup> (2.28)	11.17 <sup>ab</sup> (3.02)	10.80 <sup>b*</sup> (2.27)	12.14 (2.62)

Note. Standard deviations are reported in parentheses beside each mean. Scores range from 1 to 7 except for task performance (0 to 15). Means with different superscripts within each row differ reliably from each other at  $p < .05$ . (Adapted from Cihangir et al., 2010.)

*Table 3.* Perceived partner expectations, self-confidence, and guilt/shame as a function of hiding or revealing a stigmatized identity

	Hide	Reveal
<b>Experiment 1</b>		
Perceived partner expectations	5.36 (1)	4.11 (1.02)
Self-confidence	3.96 (0.87)	4.22 (0.96)
<b>Experiment 2</b>		
Perceived partner expectations	5.36 (1.17)	4.14 (0.98)
Self-confidence	3.89 (0.92)	4.31 (0.92)
Guilt/shame	2.29 (1.27)	1.73 (1.05)

Note. Scores range from 1 to 7, with high values indicating higher expectations, higher self-confidence, and more guilt and shame. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. All means differ significantly between columns. (From Barreto et al., 2006, with permission.)

*Table 4.* Participant and observer ratings of as a function of hiding versus revealing a stigmatized identity

	Hide	Reveal
<b>Participants' ratings</b>		
Expected authenticity	4.28 (1.59)	2.39 (1.12)
Expected acceptance	4.02 (0.97)	4.72 (1.08)
<b>Observers' ratings</b>		
Self-disclosure	3.35 (0.81)	3.96 (1.32)
Evaluation of participant	4.16 (0.69)	4.57 (0.90)
Evaluation of interaction	4.04 (0.76)	4.48 (0.78)
Duration of interaction	172 s (51 s)	212 s (81 s)
Participant talk time	68 s (44 s)	104 s (72 s)

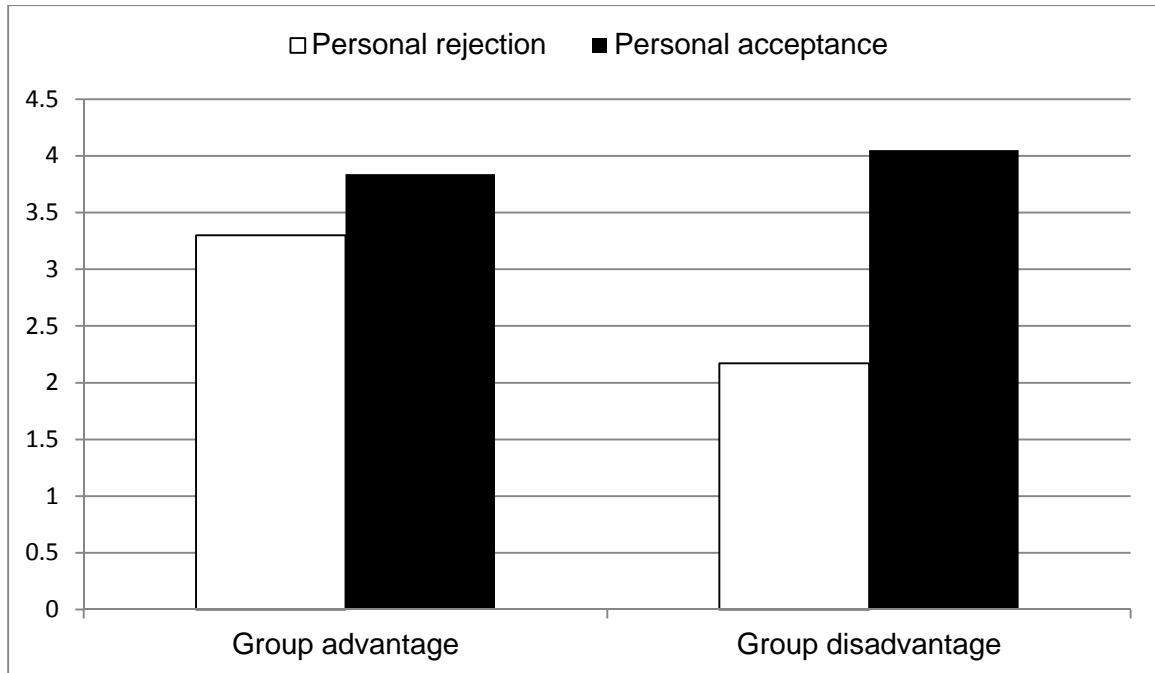
Note. Scores range from 1 to 7, with high values indicating higher authenticity, acceptance and more positive observer ratings, with the exception of time measurements, which are made in seconds. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. All means differ significantly between columns, with the exception of evaluation of participant, for which means are marginally significantly different. (From Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiment 2, with permission.)

*Table 5.* Positivity of the interaction (rated by participants) and perceived extent of hiding (rated by observers) as a function of regulatory focus

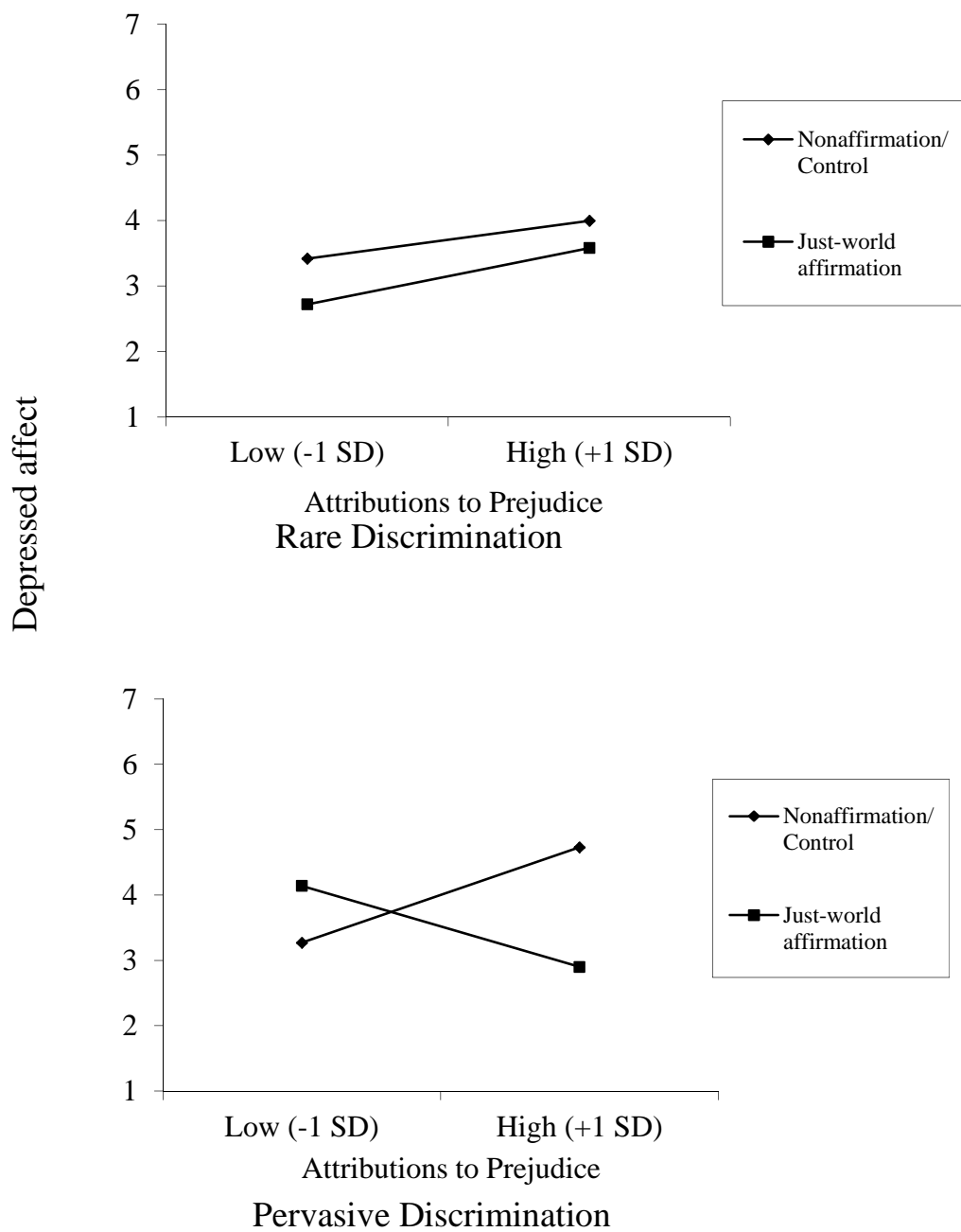
Positivity of the interaction (Participants)		<i>M (SD)</i>
Stigmatized participants	Promotion condition	4.22 (1.42)
	Prevention condition	4.48 (1.31)
	Control condition	4.69 (1.25)
Non-stigmatized participants	Promotion condition	4.90a (1.35)
	Prevention condition	4.37b (1.59)
	Control condition	3.99b (1.24)
Extent of hiding information (Observers)		<i>M (SD)</i>
Stigmatized participants	Promotion condition	2.94b (0.99)
	Prevention condition	3.43a (0.95)
	Control condition	3.66a (1.03)
Non-stigmatized participants	Promotion condition	2.64b (0.81)
	Prevention condition	2.78b (1.07)
	Control condition	2.50b (0.63)

Note. Scores range from 1 to 7, with high values indicating more positivity and more perceived hiding of information. Standard deviations are presented in parentheses. Within each measure, means with different subscripts differ at  $p < .05$ . (Adapted from Newheiser et al., in press.)

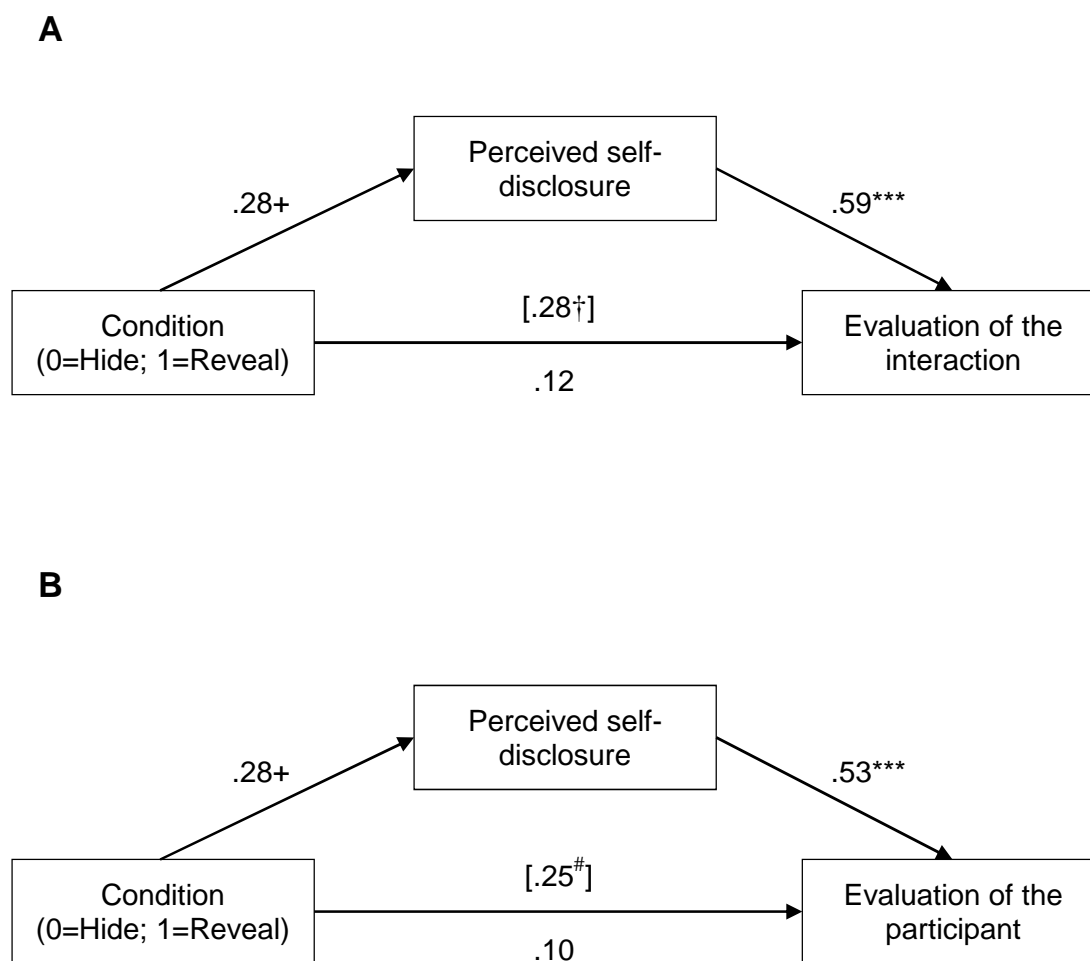




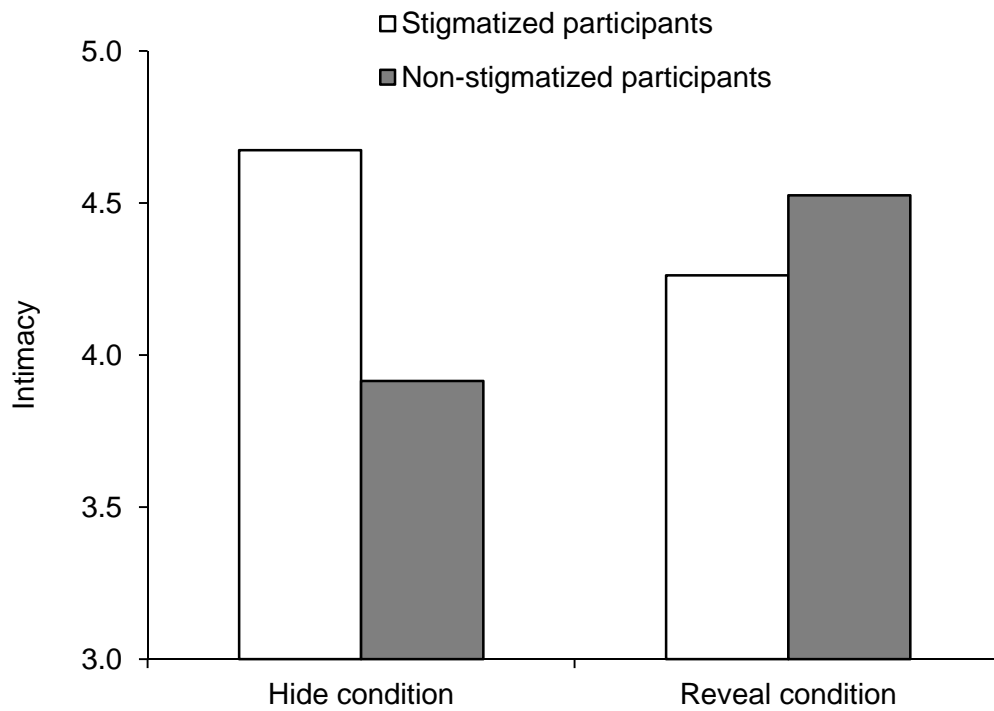
*Figure 1.* Perceived legitimacy of the system as a function of personal outcome (rejection vs. acceptance) and information about group outcomes (advantage vs. disadvantage). Scale range: 1-7; higher scores indicate more legitimacy. Only the third bar from the left differs significantly from all others. (Adapted from Stroebe et al., 2011, Experiment 2.)



*Figure 2.* Depressed affect as a function of attributions to discrimination, perceived pervasiveness of discrimination, and opportunity to re-affirm beliefs in a just world. (From Stroebe et al., 2011, Experiment 2, with permission.)



*Figure 3.* The effect of hiding versus revealing a contextually stigmatized identity during a social interaction on external observers' evaluations of (A) the interaction and (B) the participant, mediated by perceived self-disclosure. (From Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiment 2, with permission.) Standardized coefficients. # $p=.085$ ; † $p=.056$ ; + $p=.057$ ; \*\*\* $p<.001$



*Figure 4.* The effect of a stigmatized interaction partner's hiding versus revealing their stigmatized identity on stigmatized and non-stigmatized participants' intimacy with their interaction partner, adjusting for participants' negative expectations prior to and authenticity during the interaction. (From Newheiser & Barreto, 2014, Experiment 3, with permission.) Scale range: 1-7; higher scores indicate more intimacy.

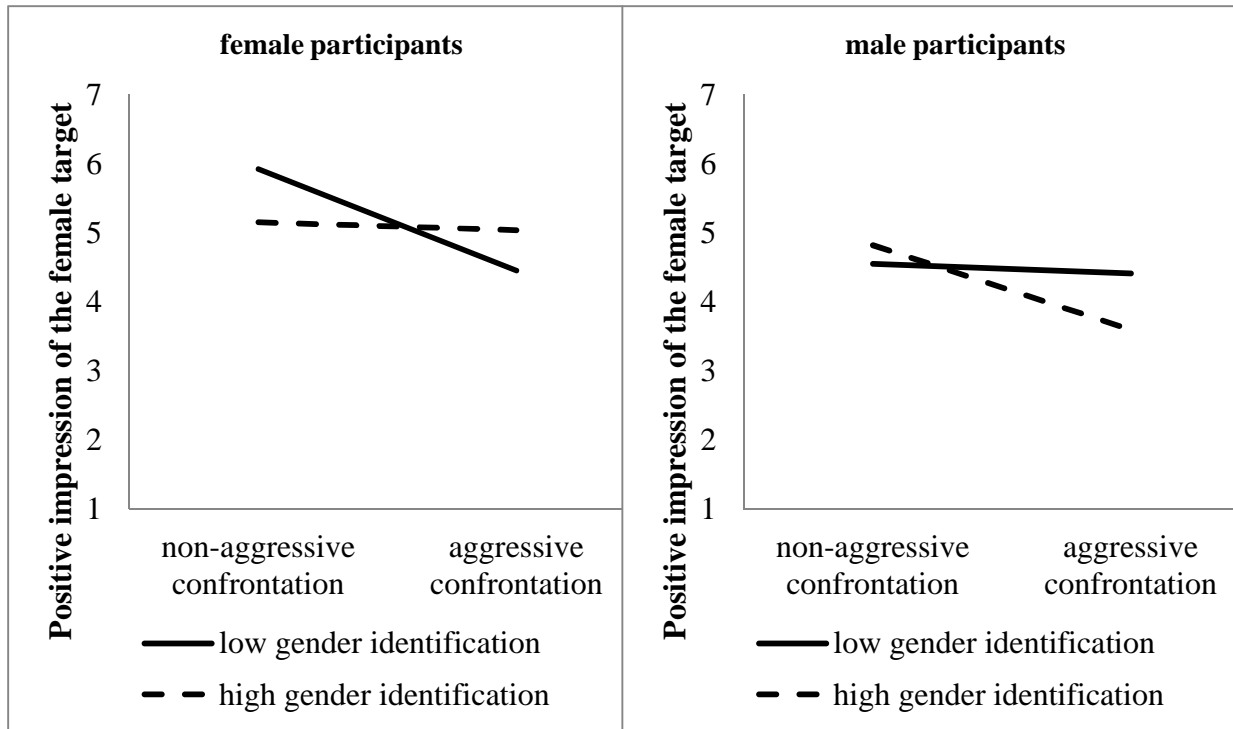
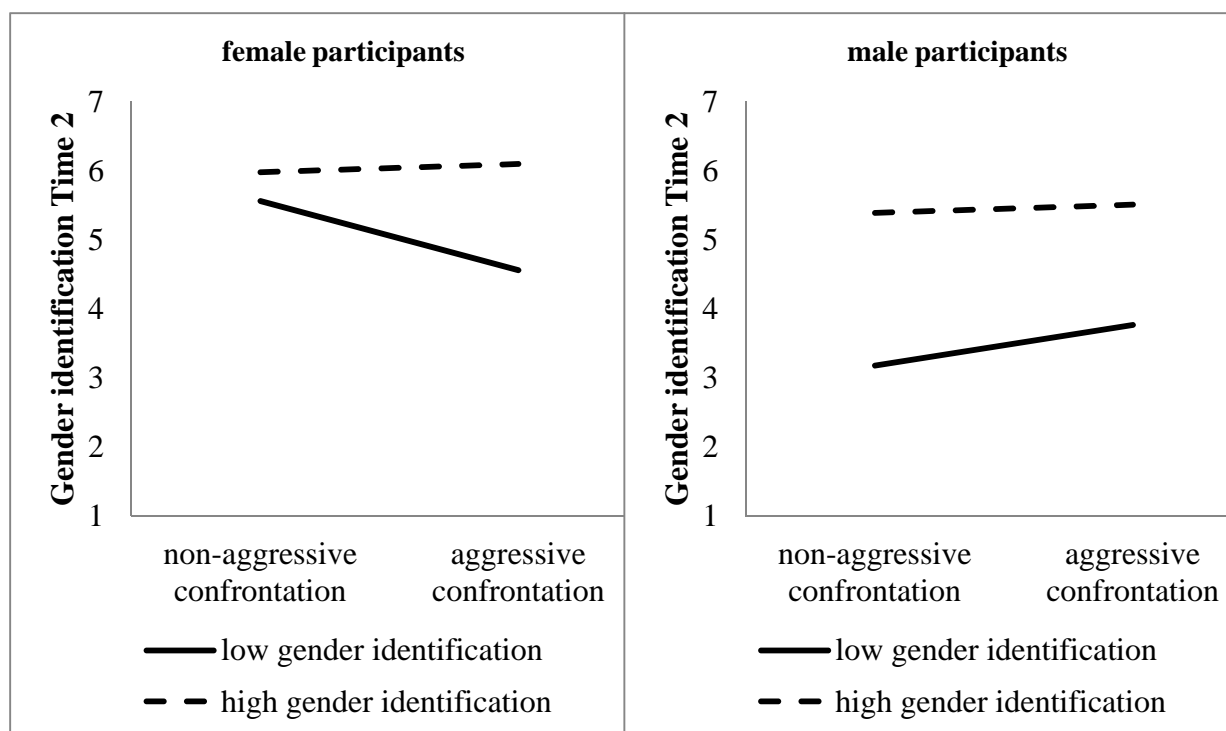


Figure 5. Positive impression of the female target as a function of her behavior among female and male participants. (Adapted from Becker & Barreto, in press, Figure 1.)



*Figure 6.* Gender identification at Time 2 as a function of the target's behavior among female and male participants. (Adapted from Becker & Barreto, in press, Figure 2.)