Current Issues in the Study of Social Stigma: Some Controversies and Unresolved Issues

Manuela Barreto* and Naomi Ellemers
Leiden University

This contribution identifies some of the major themes and controversies in current research on stigma and social disadvantage, paying particular attention to the perspective of the stigmatized. We examine the social contextual and interactive nature of stigmatization that determines its impact and consequences for those who are stigmatized. We outline some areas of research where different findings seem incompatible or have remained unresolved. Specifically, we identify moderators of the consequences of social stigma for the self, of the role of identification with the stigmatized group as a source of vulnerability or of resilience, as well as of how stigma affects task performance. In this way, we provide a thematic framework outlining the different ways in which the articles in this special issue contribute to the resolution of current controversies and debates in the literature on social stigma.

In the first lines of his well-known text, Goffman (1963) defined *stigma* as "the situation of the individual who is disqualified from full social acceptance." Despite this early definition and the theoretical work this text stimulated, until the late 1990s research examining social stigma from the target's perspective was scarce to such an extent that the most common practice was to take the "outsiders' perspective" (Oyserman & Swim, 2001). That is, researchers concerned with social stigma and its pernicious consequences would approach members of majority groups to study the circumstances that made them express prejudice, examine the reasons why they expressed prejudice, document the ways in which prejudice was expressed, and develop strategies that could be used to reduce such

expressions (Brewer & Brown, 1998; Fiske, 1998). The need to take into account the perspective of those who are stigmatized was recognized before that time, but this had not been reflected in systematic empirical research. From the 1990s on, however, there was a surge of work in this area. Researchers have since examined a variety of topics and offered empirical evidence to contribute to a number of core scientific debates. This article aims to introduce some of the controversies and debates that characterize this literature at this point in time, with the aim to provide a thematic framework that connects the different contributions to this special issue.

We identify the main points of concern in this area and point out some of the as-yet-unanswered questions to explain why we think this collection can help advance knowledge on this topic. We organized the special issue in different sections that combine sets of articles that share the same primary focus. Nevertheless, articles from different sections provide evidence bearing on the broader cross-cutting themes that are addressed in this special issue. Below we briefly outline the main themes guiding recent research in this area, before we provide an overview of the different articles in this volume, and indicate how they relate to each other and to the central topic of this special issue.

Although it is possible to take different theoretical and methodological approaches to the central topic of this issue, we think some common themes stand out in this area of research. First, an important aim of this special issue is to complement prior work that tends to examine the origins of prejudice by focusing on factors internal to individual perpetrators. We do this by addressing both macro- and microsocial contextual aspects that may affect both perpetrators and targets of prejudice. This links to our primary interest in the targets' perspective because by paying attention to how the social context modifies the activation and expression of prejudice, we can further our understanding of the impact different contexts can have on the targets of such prejudice, or of how to alleviate this impact.

A second central theme addressed in this special issue is the interactive nature of social stigma and its effects on the stigmatized. Although researchers have for some time agreed that to understand social stigma it is necessary to examine both the perspective of the stigmatized and the perspective of the perpetrator, these two perspectives were until recently mainly studied separately. In contrast, some of the research presented here explicitly focuses on how perpetrators and targets interactively determine the activation and the expression of prejudice. This work leads to important novel insights that seem crucial to understand the effects of stigma outside the "social vacuum."

A third broader theme underlying a number of contributions to this issue is how social stigma affects the self. Even though this is one of the most researched questions in this field, so far this has resulted in disparate findings, which seem hard to reconcile. Work in this issue contributes to this discussion by providing

some concrete attempts to combine and integrate these findings, for example, by showing that different effects emerge at different levels of self-definition.

The fourth theme also reflects a source of current debate in the literature, as it addresses the question whether group identification should be seen as a source of vulnerability or as a source of resilience for members of stigmatized groups. Work in this issue contributes also to answering this question, for example, by distinguishing between the public and private functions of group identification.

A final theme connecting different contributions in this issue is the question of how social stigma affects task performance. Although research on stereotype threat has established that salience of a negative stereotype can create performance decrements, the psychological processes underlying this phenomenon have not been specified so far. The contributions in this special issue offer some scope for advancement, by aiming to examine this underlying process more explicitly, and by identifying the circumstances under which social stigma can result in performance improvement instead of causing those who are stigmatized to underperform. Below, we elaborate on each of these themes.

Prejudice in Context

The majority of current research with a focus on the perpetrator examines how aspects of the social context modify the activation and expression of prejudice. In this line, researchers examined the role of a range of intergroup factors, such as how prejudice depends on the social status of the group to which the perpetrator belongs, or how structural characteristics of the status relation between the social groups in question increase or decrease discriminatory treatment (Ellemers, 1993; Fiske, 2001). The role of factors at a more macro- or a more microlevel has been less researched. However, relations between members of different groups are always defined against the background of macrocontextual factors, such as the broader characteristics of the society in which these different groups are embedded. Also, relations between members of different groups are often influenced by microfactors, such as the particular characteristics of the individuals in the interaction. We propose that it is important to take into account these different types of contextual variables, as these are likely to determine when and why perpetrators express prejudice.

Two articles in this volume address this issue. As an example of a relevant macrolevel contextual variable, King, Knight, and Hebl (this issue) examine how economic threat can increase stereotyping and stigmatization. *Economic threat* refers to a broad societal condition that can be seen to justify exclusion and disadvantage for members of certain groups. This type of macrocontextual variable thus does not directly refer to specific characteristics or (imagined) shortcomings of the disadvantaged group. Nevertheless, feelings of economic threat still can seem to provide a legitimate justification for exclusion. Importantly, as a result, exclusion

and group-based disadvantage are less likely to be recognized as discriminatory when considered in the context of such more macrolevel societal developments. For instance, people can maintain to "have nothing against foreigners but there are simply not enough jobs available at the moment to go round." Thus, both for theoretical and for more applied reasons, a further examination of these and related processed, as well as empirical work demonstrating that such perceptions and expressions are not innocuous but in fact increase prejudice, are timely and important.

Although the idea that economic threat is often at the root of prejudicial attitudes is not new in itself—in fact it dates back to the origins of realistic conflict theory (LeVine & Campbell, 1972)—no direct evidence was available demonstrating the direction of causality in this link. King et al. (this issue) show that the induction of perceived economic threat can indeed increase prejudice and decrease the support for measures that help reduce social inequalities. At a practical level, the knowledge thus gained also helps understand which types of programs and measures aiming to redress social injustices are most likely to be supported or opposed in times of economic hardship. This work also points to the mobilizing but potentially destructive political potential of statements that frame intergroup contexts in terms of economic threat.

The article by Kaiser and Wilkins (this issue) also focuses on the perpetrator's perspective but examines processes that unfold at a microcontextual level. This work builds on the finding that members of stigmatized groups who identify strongly with their group tend to report more personal discrimination than their less identified counterparts. This is most commonly seen as a perceptual bias on the part of highly identified members of stigmatized groups. Kaiser and Wilkins present evidence in support of the idea that perpetrators are actually more likely to target highly identified members of stigmatized groups than low identifiers. In sum, group identification might function as a source of resilience for stigmatized group members but can also make targets more vulnerable to actual experiences of stigmatization, at least when targets' degree of identification can be inferred.

An Interactive Analysis of Social Stigma

Until recently, researchers interested in understanding social stigma would either examine the psychological processes underlying prejudiced beliefs and their expression, or they would focus on how targets of prejudice perceive and react to this experience. The realization that perpetrators and targets can jointly determine the activation and the expression of prejudice is currently emerging due to work that takes into account the interactive nature of intergroup encounters. Work by social psychologists such as Nicole Shelton, Jennifer Richeson, Jackie Vorauer, Michelle Hebl, and Jack Dovidio, to name but a few, has placed naïve members of

stigmatized and members of nonstigmatized groups into contact with each other and observed these interactions under controlled conditions (Shelton & Richeson, 2006 for a review). This work has done a great deal to advance our knowledge of how intergroup differences and social stigma are actually experienced, by both the stigmatized and the nonstigmatized. At the same time, it is clear that a number of questions relating to the interactive nature of social stigmatization processes remain to be answered. Several articles in this volume aim to further advance our understanding of these issues.

First, individual group members are likely to differ in the extent to which they see themselves and behave as group members, and this in turn affects the likelihood that they are stigmatized by others. Thus, a first aspect of the interactive nature of social stigmatization is that changes in the characteristics of the target as well as changes in the views held by the perpetrators can modify how and when prejudice is expressed (Kaiser & Wilkins, this issue). This also implies that the examination of the way perpetrators perceive members of stigmatized groups informs and is informed by a further understanding of the factors that increase targets' vulnerability to prejudice and its consequences.

Considering social stigmatization as an interactive process also implies taking into account the particular nature of the relationship between targets and perpetrators. Targets and perpetrators do not only relate in one-shot episodes, but also often develop relationships that are regulated by specific norms and expectations. This suggests that, apart from the question of how the different groups relate to each other, it is important to take into consideration the relationship between the specific individuals involved in the interaction. For instance, in most if not all work situations, people working together do so in the context of formalized relations, associated with specific roles, expectations, and responsibilities toward each other. Additionally, at the interpersonal level, the desire to maintain positive relations with specific others may govern specific interactions. Both these formal and these more interpersonal aspects of how the relationship between two individuals are defined are likely to affect how social stigma is expressed and experienced.

This complex issue is addressed by several contributions in this volume. Barreto, Ellemers, and Fiske (this issue) explicitly examine whether formal power differences between individuals affect how prejudice is experienced by its targets. Although powerful people tend to stereotype their subordinates, Barreto et al. (this issue) show that people do not expect the powerful to be particularly prejudiced. When, despite this expectation, people do encounter prejudice from powerful (vs. powerless) sources, this is likely to be clearly noticed and recalled. Whether targets are anxious about future interactions with the source and are emotionally affected by this event is shown to rely on whether the target is personally dependent on the source—not on whether the source is powerful in itself. These findings also remind us that cognitive and affective responses to prejudice can differ, with similar perceptions being associated with negative affect only among those most

directly affected by the discriminatory behavior (see also Barreto & Ellemers, 2005).

Swim, Eyssell, Murdoch, and Ferguson (this issue) illustrate how more informal views regarding the nature of interpersonal relationships also determine how targets of stigmatization interpret and respond to social stigmatization. Whereas previous work pointed out that targets do not always report the prejudice they perceive, in the past this has most often been seen as a product of external pressures (such as the threat of sanctions from others). Swim et al. examine how internalized beliefs held by targets of sexism regarding the way they should behave within particular relationships can affect whether they confront sexist perpetrators. Specifically, women exposed to sexist remarks tend to remain silent about this when they think it will help them preserve social relations that are important to them.

A final contribution relevant here highlights the possibility that members of socially stigmatized groups can often choose how they wish to present themselves and relate to nonstigmatized others, by revealing or instead concealing their stigmatized identity in particular social or interpersonal encounters. Chaudoir and Quinn (this issue) focus on when the stigmatized choose to conceal or disclose their stigma and examine the consequences of this relational option for individual well-being. Past research in this area has yielded conflicting findings, with some suggesting that concealing a social stigma is beneficial and some revealing the negative effects of this strategy. The results of the research presented by Chaudoir and Quinn indicate that the benefits of stigma disclosure can outweigh its disadvantages, but that this will strongly depend on the particular audience to whom the stigma is disclosed. In sum, even though an analysis that takes into account formal and informal relations between individual targets and perpetrators is more complex than an analysis that focuses on social group memberships only, it also yields important additional insights that help understand the social interactive nature of stigmatization experiences.

The Impact of Social Stigma on the Self

One of the most researched topics in this field is the impact of social stigma on the self, and the question of whether perceiving one's group as devalued has a negative impact on self-esteem. Despite the quantity and quality of work produced in this area, disparate findings abound and remain hard to reconcile. Much work in this area has demonstrated that social stigma can have a negative impact on self-esteem, as well as psychological and physical well-being (e.g., Landrine & Klonoff, 1997). Indeed, social stigma not only directly affects the self by implying devaluation of an important part of the self-concept (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), but it also has indirect effects on self-views by limiting opportunities and outcomes that could afford a

positive sense of self. However, other work in this area suggests that members of socially stigmatized groups do not necessarily have poorer psychological well-being than members of nonstigmatized groups (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1989; Major & O'Brien, 2005). The general idea here is that members of stigmatized groups have access to various sources of resilience that either protect them from such negative effects or assist them in recovering from the damage caused by social stigmatization.

Much evidence has been reported in support of both perspectives, but many questions remain unanswered. One of these questions is precisely what aspects of the self are negatively affected by social stigma and what aspects of the self are instead positively affected by identity devaluation. Past research has tended to treat the self as a unitary construct—even when multiple indicators are used, conclusions are often drawn regarding an overall impact on the self, rather than a more nuanced description of precisely what aspects of the individual self or the collective self are affected in each particular context. A related question that has not been the focus of much research is how the stigmatized actively engage with various internal and external views of the self. It has been extensively debated whether external identity devaluation is internalized by the stigmatized, and under what conditions people try to convince others of the worth of their group. Nevertheless, these processes have most often been looked at in isolation, as if they are alternative to each other and cannot simply constitute part of an ongoing internal and external process of identity negotiation (see also Barreto & Ellemers, 2003). Thus, results of empirical research in this domain are often contradictory, and theoretical views on this subject are often hard to reconcile, making research providing novel insights into this issue generally welcome.

The work by Ashburn-Nardo (this issue) addresses how stigmatization impacts on the self by examining this process with implicit measures of self and group association and evaluation among African American and White participants. These measures differ from the more explicit measures used in prior research in this area because they indicate people's uncontrolled associations, for example, between their group and positive words. As such, knowledge obtained with these measures complements prior work by indicating how people think about their group when they do not have the chance to carefully consider and control their responses. Importantly, this work shows that even though there are no differences between Whites and African Americans in implicit self-esteem, these groups do differ in the extent to which their members cognitively associate themselves with the group as well as in the extent to which they display evaluative in-group bias. In particular, African Americans showed weaker implicit associations between themselves and their group than Whites. Interestingly, African Americans actually revealed no bias in group evaluation, evaluating the in-group and out-group equally, whereas Whites clearly displayed such evaluative bias. This research provides valuable information regarding the particular and nuanced ways in which group-based

information can affect group members' self-concept. That is, this study shows that stigma can at the same time leave in-group and self-evaluation undamaged, although it can modify the content of identity.

Another way to more fully capture the impact of stigma on the self-concept is to take into account both private and public components of self-views, that is, both the way people think they are seen by others as well as the way they manage their public reputation. An example of this approach is provided by Jahoda, Wilson, Stalker, and Cairney (this issue) who examine members of a chronically stigmatized group: the intellectually disabled. This work shows how individuals with intellectual disabilities struggle to keep a sense of self-value as they simultaneously accept and reject the stigma attached to their identity. This research also makes a strong point in favor of the nuancing of positions regarding the impact of stigma on the self, as it shows that the acceptance and rejection of social stigma are not mutually exclusive or alternative but can coexist, as people struggle to define themselves by reference to what they think they are, as well as to what others think of them. It also points to the importance of going further than disputing what people's real selves are all about, and how stigma impacts thereon, to consider what people want to be, and how they think they can achieve those self-images.

Group Identification as a Source of Vulnerability or as a Source of Resilience

A related question that has been the focus of much debate in this area is the extent to which identification with a socially stigmatized group is self-protective or damaging for stigmatized group members. This question is clearly connected to the prior question—indeed, insofar as we can defend that social stigma has a negative impact on the self one could infer that identification with a stigmatized group would exacerbate such negative effects. At the same time, insofar as one could conclude that social stigma can have positive consequences for the self, one would be inclined to defend that identification with a stigmatized group would increase the extent to which the stigmatized experience such positive effects. Researchers have found that identification with a stigmatized group increases the extent to which the stigmatized indicate being targets of prejudice (e.g., Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Sellers & Shelton, 2000), that increased awareness of prejudice against one's group strengthens in-group identification (Branscombe et al., 1999), and that high identifiers tend to be more negatively affected by in-group devaluation (Major et al., 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001).

However, here too several questions remain unanswered. First, prior findings have not clearly established whether group identification is a source of resilience or of vulnerability to prejudice. Although Kaiser and Wilkins (this issue) show that high identifiers are more often discriminated against than low identifiers, this does

not mean that group identification cannot constitute a source of resilience when people do become targets of discrimination. Second, just as it is unclear which specific aspects of the self should be seen as negatively or positively affected by stigmatization, it is also unclear precisely what aspects of group identification should be seen as positively or negatively affected by stigma and as having a positive or negative effect on how individuals cope with stigma. Indeed, identification has been defined as including various components, and these components not only respond differently to various aspects of the social context, but also have quite different and specific effects on a variety of (coping) responses (Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Leach et al., 2008).

In this issue, Leach, Rodriguez-Mosquera, Vliek, and Hirt examine which aspects of identity are affected by identity devaluation, and when, whereas Chaudoir and Quinn (this issue) and Crabtree, Haslam, Postmes, and Haslam (this issue) specify when and how (public) identification with a stigmatized group can be self-protective or instead psychologically damaging to stigmatized group members. Thus, the focus here is not on identity in itself but on (public) group identification as a resource to cope with stigmatization.

Specifically, Leach et al. (this issue) argue that in-group identification is a source of resilience among the stigmatized. These authors propose that in-group identification exists prior to group devaluation but is reasserted when devaluation is encountered, and enables group members to draw on their positive group evaluations to resist stigmatization. Importantly, this work also seeks to specify what aspects of identity can serve this identity reassertion function. The authors show that it is satisfaction with group membership, and not, for example, solidarity with the in-group or perceived in-group homogeneity, that is increased after group devaluation and that functions as a source of resilience against identity threat.

Whereas the article by Leach and colleagues specifies which aspects of identity are affected by social stigma and when, the contribution by Crabtree et al. (this issue) specifies how in-group identification can provide self-protection. This research demonstrates that in-group identification provides resources that buffer the individual from stress, such as stereotype rejection, stigma resistance, and social support. Importantly, however, the results of this study also suggest that in-group identification can only provide this self-protective effect when the group provides access to stress buffering mechanisms. However, groups do not always provide such resources. When groups do not provide such resources, members of stigmatized groups are actually worse off by identifying with their stigmatized group. This evidence again points to the need to change the questions we ask if we want to progress in our understanding of the impact of social stigma: this article demonstrates that we gain more from asking when in-group identification can protect group members and how, than from asking whether identification can be self-protective.

The Effect of Social Stigma on Performance

One of the main reasons why the effects of social stigma have such a lasting impact on a broad variety of outcomes is that stigmatization can cause individuals to systematically underperform in educational and work settings, making it harder for members of stigmatized groups to gain access to valued resources and outcomes relating to educational and career success. This, in itself, might create and perpetuate negative effects on other aspects of individual functioning. A large body of research has therefore examined how social stigma is associated with poor performance in the domains in which the stereotyped group is believed to underperform. Research within this area has mainly been inspired by the concept of stereotype threat and associated research paradigms (see, e.g., Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002 for a review). A crucial problem in this area, however, has been to understand exactly how social stigma results in performance decrements. The role of anxiety, arousal, insecurity, and stereotype endorsement have all been examined, but results have been largely inconclusive (see also Shapiro & Neuberg, 2007). Thus, here too the question is not so much whether social stigma has a negative effect on performance—by now, it is quite consensual that this is often the case—but more what is the precise psychological process through which this occurs. It is important to gain further insight into this process, as it might help answer another important question, namely what are the conditions under which members of socially stigmatized groups do not suffer such performance decrements? Although many studies demonstrate that contexts where social identities are not salient do not lead to poor performance among members of stigmatized groups, the fact is that for minority group members social identities are often highly salient either chronically or contextually. Thus, attempts to prevent or redress motivational and/or performance decrements among members of stigmatized groups should take into account that salience of the stigmatized identity tends to be a given, and forms the background against which the effectiveness of any interventions has to be judged. This important issue is addressed in some of the contributions in this issue.

Kang, Inzlicht, and Derks (this issue) make use of neuroscience methods in their research as well as of existing knowledge of the neurological underpinnings of human behavior to examine how social stigma affects basic processes of human cognition and pin down exactly how it impairs performance (e.g., by leading to underregulation and misregulation of cognitive systems). This research also demonstrates that psychological variables—such as the particular way in which the stigmatized emotionally handle their situation—can modify the effects of social stigma on neurological functioning as well as on performance. This research thus illustrates how combining insights from multiple disciplines and various levels of analyses—that is, the neurological, the psychological and the intergroup—can help further our understanding of social stigma and its

consequences for task performance, which can help provide insights into how the pernicious consequences of stigmatization can be prevented.

Van Laar, Derks, Ellemers, and Bleeker (this issue) examine one important strategy through which the negative effects of social stigma on motivation and performance can be averted, given the likelihood that the stigmatized identity is highly salient. Specifically, these authors demonstrate that valuing core aspects of the identity of members of groups that are otherwise considered low in status can increase their motivation and improve their performance. Importantly, this strategy not only improves motivation and performance in domains that are typically associated with the stigmatized group (so-called alternative domains of social value), but in fact can also dramatically improve motivation and performance in domains in which they are stereotypically expected to underperform (i.e., the status-defining domains). In this way, while taking into account one's membership in a stigmatized group as an important and salient aspect of the individual's identity, measures that value minority identities can help improve individual as well as group outcomes, and thereby contribute to the reduction of social inequalities. In sum, with the insights thus provided the contributions in this volume not only advance theoretical knowledge of the specific processes determining the performance consequences of stigmatization, but also point to some concrete avenues for interventions that may help members of various stigmatized groups cope with their plight and improve their fate.

Overview of the Issue

This issue includes recent and yet unpublished empirical research providing exciting and novel insights into the ongoing debates outlined above. The theoretical approaches in this issue are varied and not always in complete agreement with each other. Such is the nature of scientific debate. It is our belief that these perspectives complement each other in informing us about the impact of social stigma, as can be seen in the overview we provide below. Some of the research included in this volume uses traditional methods and focuses on traditional topics in this area, such as explicit self-report measures, but follows new and promising ways of thinking about a particular issue. This special issue also includes research which makes use of novel methodologies—that is, methods that are typically used in other areas of inquiry but that are now starting to help gain insights into how the social stigmatized respond to stigmatization, such as ethnographic methods, implicit measures, and neuroscientific techniques. As to types of stigma examined, the research reported in this volume covers a wide variety of social stigmas, from experimentally created stigmas, to ethnic minorities, the intellectually disabled, or the mentally ill, among others. In sum, the articles selected for this special issue are varied in their theoretical and methodological approach, the research questions they examine, as well as the types of stigmas they focus on, but they all have in

common the novelty of their approach, the quality of the work, as well as the potential to advance knowledge of how social stigma affects the stigmatized and contributes toward the creation and maintenance of social disadvantage.

There are certainly several topics of much interest in this area that this issue does not cover. For example, the specification of various strategies that can be used to cope with stigma and when (e.g., Miller & Kaiser, 2001), and the role of ideologies in determining the impact of social stigma (e.g., Crandall, 2000; Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007) are all important topics that we do not cover. But in setting up this special issue, our choice was to solicit contributions that would provide insights that allow for a thorough discussion of each of the central debates outlined in this introductory article, instead of providing a more comprehensive (but likely more superficial) overview of the broad range of topics addressed in this field. Our aim thus is to offer contributions coming from different perspectives and using different techniques, to allow for a deeper understanding of the processes in question. In line with the need for a more interactive analysis advocated in this introductory article, the contributions presented here address both the perspective of the perpetrator and the perspective of targets of prejudice.

The issue starts by considering how macro- and microcontextual features can affect the extent to which prejudice is expressed (first section). We then go on to examine how characteristics of perpetrators determine how prejudice is experienced by its targets (second section). The issue continues by providing recent insights into two of the core debates in this area, that is, the impact of stigma on the self-concept (third section), and the role of group identification as a source of vulnerability or resilience, leading up to an analysis of the dynamics of identity endorsement or disaffection (fourth section). The fifth and final section includes two contributions that provide new and valuable insights into the impact of stigma on motivation and performance. The overall movement in this issue, as we go from the first to the last article, is thus from perpetrators to targets of prejudice, and from perceptions of others to self-perception and behavior. On the way we consider several ways through which perpetrators and targets interact, as well as ways in which targets play an active role in establishing their place in the world (e.g., by monitoring their psychological allegiances to social groups). The issue ends with a reflection on current themes and future prospects in this domain, offered by a team led by one of the scholars whose work has most contributed toward a paradigm change in this area, Nicole Shelton.

Conclusions

Even though research on the consequences of stigmatization has been prolific, advancement of scientific knowledge into these issues has been steady in some areas but more mixed in others. The aim of this article, and of the special issue it introduces, is to highlight a number of central issues and debates that have

characterized this area of research, in the hope to provide novel perspectives and alternative views to these issues that may help contribute to scientific advancement in this area. As a central point of concern, we have joined our voices to those of others who have recently argued for a more interactive and contextual analysis of the effects of stigmatization. Additionally, we have posited that by now it is no longer necessary to ask whether specific effects of stigmatization can occur, but to start specifying the conditions under which these effects are most likely to be expected. We refer to the work presented in this volume to illustrate some important moderators of the effects of stigmatization that are also highly relevant to any interventions or policy measures that aim to address, support, or advance those with a stigmatized identity. The phenomena and mechanisms thus cover a broad range of questions and issues, and specify how social stigma affects well-being, identity, and self-views, as well as motivation and performance in task settings.

Hopefully the research reported in this special issue will provide some important answers to some of the core questions in this area. We hope as well that this research helps raise new questions—questions that may be the focus of future research and special issues.

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MANUELA BARRETO has a PhD in Social Psychology from the Free University, Amsterdam, was an Assistant and Associate Professor at Leiden University, The Netherlands, and is now a researcher at the Centre for Social Research and Intervention, Lisbon, Portugal. Her research interests are on the psychology of the disadvantaged, exemplified by her work on identity respect, reactions to prejudice and discrimination, and the psychology of concealed identities.

NAOMI ELLEMERS has a PhD from the University of Groningen and is currently a Full Professor in social and organizational psychology at Leiden University, The Netherlands. Her research focuses on group processes and intergroup relations, and their effects on social behavior in organizations. Dr. Ellemers has published extensively on this topic, for which she received several substantial research grants.