Experiencing Discrimination: How Members of Disadvantaged Groups Can Be Helped to Cope with Discrimination

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Instances of discriminatory treatment are often ambiguous. Nevertheless, for policy makers to effectively combat discrimination, its targets first need to see that it takes place. Different motives determine whether or not targets see their negative outcomes as resulting from discrimination: to see the world as a just place where people are treated fairly, and to maintain a positive view of the self. We argue that the type of policy needed to combat discrimination is different, depending on which of these motives plays a role. Based on relevant literature and our own recent research, we develop a framework that specifies how different types of threat and different motives are raised when discrimination is perceived as rare or pervasive. We describe the pitfalls associated with each type of threat and the coping strategies people use to deal with rare versus pervasive discrimination. We also outline how policy makers can take advantage of this knowledge to tailor specific measures to the different motives we distinguish, to optimize the effectiveness of their interventions designed to combat discrimination.

A friend of mine who wears a headscarf was looking for a work experience place. After her interview she was called and told they were not taking her on. Later

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on she found out that a classmate of hers who had followed the same education but was male and not of an ethnic minority group had been offered the position (Stroebe & Ellemers, 2010).

In January 2009, Harvard professor Henry Gates had trouble unlocking the door to his house after coming home from a trip to China. A burglary call was made, resulting in a visit by the police, who arrested Gates when he refused to step out of the house, and asked the police officer to show his identification. Gates accused the police of racial discrimination, claiming that he was arrested because he was Black and the police officer was White (http://edition.cnn.com/2009/US/07/22/gates.arrest.reaction/index.html).

These examples testify to the continued existence of discrimination, but also illustrate the ambiguity of discriminatory behaviors. Members of disadvantaged groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, women, persons with a handicap) still have less access to important tangible resources such as health care, employment opportunities, housing, and education (see Penner, Albrecht, Coleman, & Norton, 2007; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Zick & Pettigrew, 2008). For example, a recent study of the Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics and the Social and Cultural Planning Agency (Merens & Hermans, 2008), which focused on gender differences, indicated that only 7% of the top managerial positions are held by women, and after correcting for differences in age, education, and experience, women earn 3–6% less than men doing the same job.

There is also evidence indicating that discriminatory behavior has taken on more subtle forms that are less easily detected by targets of discrimination (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009). Expressions of these more subtle and ambiguous forms of prejudice in, for example, interpersonal communication can range from less eye contact, uneasiness, and greater physical distance on the side of the perpetrator (Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980; Plant, 2004). Alternately, as the above examples illustrate, it can simply manifest itself in an "ambiguous" negative outcome such as not being invited for a job interview, or being scrutinized by police or security officers. Nevertheless, legal procedures and antidiscrimination policies tend to assume that discrimination stems from illegitimate acts and unfair decisions, and may even require that targets can and will identify how discriminatory treatment has affected their outcomes or opportunities. Because modern discrimination is subtle and ambiguous instead of being blatant and explicit, those who wish to combat discrimination need to understand when targets are likely to recognize they are discriminated against—or why they may fail to do so, due to the psychological costs associated with the experience of discrimination.

In the present article we consider the psychological consequences of experiencing discrimination for targets of discrimination. Specifically we will discuss how the experience of personal failure that can be attributed to discrimination may not only be threatening for targets because of implications for them personally

(e.g., awareness of personal failure, less access to important resources), but also because it communicates that society may not be as just and fair as people in general like to believe. We make clear that this induces differential foci for policy makers. Policy makers need to recognize that some instances of discrimination may focus targets on themselves (i.e., personal implications of discrimination) to such an extent that they may not recognize their treatment as due to the prejudice of another against their group (see Figure 1, "pitfalls"). Another implication of this self-focus can be that targets are not aware of the fact that they need to take action to address the disadvantaged status of their group (Wright & Lubensky, 2009). On the other hand, the realization that discrimination may be a pervasive part of a potentially unjust society raises different needs. Here policy makers need to help targets cope with the debilitating emotions they experience in response to discrimination and aim at re-establishing trust in society and the feeling that equity and justice can be attained. Social policies need to be geared toward addressing these differential responses to discrimination. In the present article we outline possible policy approaches to these problems.

The development of expressions of discrimination from blatant to more subtle means that for members of stigmatized groups it can be very unclear whether to attribute negative personal outcomes to lack of personal deservingness (i.e., lack of personal ability, interpersonal disliking of one's behavior) or to the social prejudices that others have against one's group, which negatively reflect upon the self (Crocker & Major, 1989). Targets' responses to this kind of situation are likely to be motivated by, on the one hand, the need to cope with possible personal failure and its implications and, on the other hand, the implications of being disadvantaged on the basis of one's group membership. Perhaps not surprisingly, targets' responses to subtle discrimination can be very varied, and the consequences of these subtle forms of prejudice for targets' psychological well-being are unclear (see Major & O'Brien, 2005). Note that the research we report here on subtle discrimination focuses on well-being in the form of affective measures and self-esteem (but see Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Roesch, 2006; Nazroo, Jackson, Karlsen, & Torres, 2007, for health-related outcomes of discrimination).

Perceptions of discrimination can sometimes protect psychological well-being (i.e., affect; self-esteem) by allowing targets to attribute negative personal treatment and outcomes (e.g., job-related rejection) more externally (i.e., to another's prejudice) than internally (e.g., self-blame for lack of ability) (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003a). Yet there is also evidence that perceiving discrimination can be negatively related to well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt**,** Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002c).

How can these seemingly conflicting responses to discrimination be understood? We suggest that one of the key determinants of targets' responses to discrimination may be the perceived pervasiveness of one's personal discrimination.
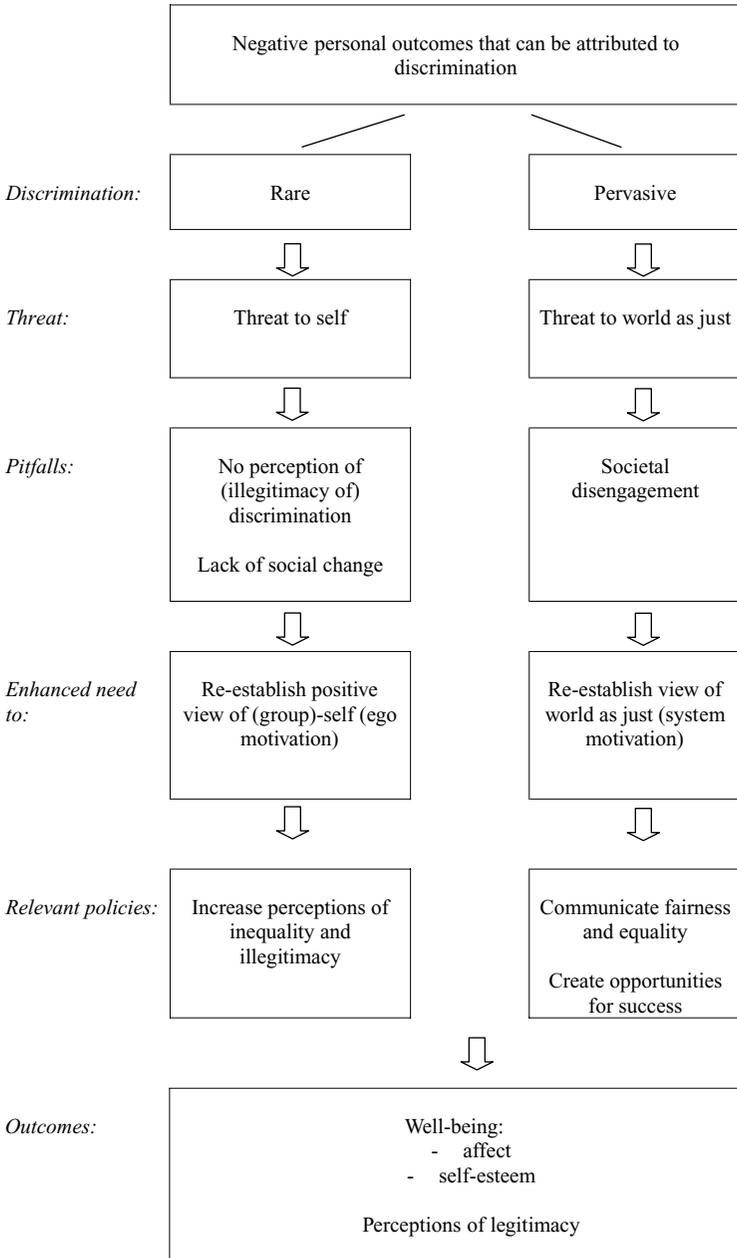
Fig. 1. Ego and system motivation in responses to rare versus pervasive discrimination.

Discrimination that is perceived as more incidental and seen as a "one-off" occurrence has the potential to be self-protective. By contrast, discrimination that is perceived to be pervasive may have very negative consequences for well-being, because it can occur to oneself and others both in the present and in the future. The realization that disadvantaged groups may differ in the extent to which they perceive their personal discrimination within society as relatively more incidental or pervasive can have important policy implications. As we will argue, determining perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination can help focus policy makers on effective policies directed more specifically at the individual needs of both disadvantaged groups and/or their individual group members.

Discrimination that is perceived as incidental may serve self-protective needs by buffering the individual self. In designing policies for targets who experience discrimination as incidental it may therefore be less important to focus on protecting their psychological well-being from the experience of discrimination—than to raise targets' awareness that they themselves need to address the source of discrimination in particular and their disadvantaged status in general.

By contrast, when discrimination is perceived as pervasive the self-protective potential may be undermined. Prior research has focused on how pervasive discrimination is harmful to the individual self because it indicates that the attainment of future personal goals may be more difficult due to one's group membership (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). In addition, people identify strongly with the groups of which they are a part, so that their group membership determines their own identity or group self, how they define and feel about themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, being discriminated against as a woman may also be experienced as painful because one identifies with women as a group and finds it important that people have positive attitudes about women. Discrimination, by implying that the group one is a member of is consistently devalued by others, may therefore be experienced as very harmful and threatening to one's identity as a group member (Branscombe et al., 1999).

In the present article we propose that discrimination that is perceived as pervasive, and thus recurrent within our society, may also threaten a different need, the fundamental need to view society as a place in which people are treated on the basis of principles of equality and justice (Folger, 1977; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Research in the area of just world beliefs indicates that individuals have the fundamental need to believe in a world in which people generally get what they deserve. This basic need determines how people interpret and respond to situations, such as the experience of pervasive discrimination that may threaten their view of the world as a just place (Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Policy makers need to focus on reinforcing this belief, for example, by providing a long-term perspective on individual success (i.e., training opportunities, work experience places) and also by communicating to members of disadvantaged

groups that they are valued within society (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2007; Van Laar, Derks, Ellemers, & Bleeker, in press).

We therefore argue that in studying responses to discrimination it may be important to distinguish among different underlying motives to be able to design policies tailored to the individual needs of targets of discrimination. Prior research has largely focused on ego motives—the need to have a positive view of one-self and the groups to which one belongs. Yet as we will show (see also Foster, Sloto, & Ruby, 2006; Foster & Tsarfati, 2005; Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007), in studying perceptions of discrimination, and specifically discrimination that is perceived to be pervasive, it is important to not only focus on self-related (ego) motivations but to also consider individuals' system motivations—in particular, the need to see the world as a place in which people are treated fairly and justly.

The distinction between ego- and system motivation allows us to understand not only how discrimination affects individuals' views of themselves but also at a more abstract level, how discrimination influences the way members of disadvantaged groups view the society of which they are a part. After all, these larger-scale perceptions of society and its problems are an important reason for policy makers to induce attempts for social change and for the general public to endorse the measures they propose (see also Terwel, Harinck, Ellemers, & Daamen, 2010).

In considering the societal consequences of being a member of a disadvantaged group, research has largely focused on the achievement domain, revealing that the awareness of being a member of a disadvantaged and stigmatized group may influence performance in domains such as educational achievement (Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008), as well as work motivation and career performance (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006). Moving beyond these more self-directed measures, we believe that it is important to also consider how stigmatization influences attitudes of the stigmatized toward society. We live in a time in which certain members of disadvantaged groups no longer pursue success or position improvement, and even seem to have disengaged from society (Derks et al., 2007; Van Laar et al., in press). Their responses to social disadvantage may range from relatively mild (school dropout) to more extreme forms of disengagement indicating lack of concern for the society they live in, which may even include involvement in terrorist activities (Newman, 2006). We note that our ideas and research do not aim to address the origins of terrorism. Nevertheless, this ultimate consequence of discrimination, stigmatization, and marginalization illustrates the importance of considering how the experience and perception of disadvantage influences societal attitudes. That is, the origins of disengagement from society may not only lie in the nature of disadvantaged individuals but also in the (perceived) treatment they receive from members of the majority group in the society they live in (Moghaddam, 2005; see also Ellemers & Jetten, 2010).

In the present article we propose a model (see Figure 1) that can help explain when and how targets will respond to personal outcomes that can be attributed to the prejudice of another—such as discovering you have not been invited for a job interview because of the group of which you are a member. We propose that in predicting the extent to which targets will suffer from discrimination (well-being) it is important to consider not only how discrimination is perceived (i.e., pervasiveness of discrimination), but also how these perceptions play into the underlying motives (ego versus system) that targets may have. In the following section we elaborate the steps of this model by reviewing research conducted both inside and outside our lab. We conclude by discussing these findings in terms of the importance of reconciling the need to retain a positive view of the self (e.g., by attributing personal failure to discrimination) with the desire to believe the world is just and fair. We consider how to increase awareness of discrimination to empower and engage members of stigmatized groups to confront and protest against unfair treatment, while retaining the belief or hope that eventually they can and will be treated fairly by the society in which they live. The present account can help policy makers focus their resources on how to increase societal engagement of disadvantaged group members as well as the responsibility felt by these groups to address their disadvantage (e.g., by reporting discrimination).

Discrimination and the Self

Over the years, manifestations of discrimination have shifted from being fairly blatant to substantially more subtle. Whereas halfway through the last century it would have been acceptable to treat members of ethnic minorities or women as lesser beings and deny them access to important resources, this kind of treatment is no longer socially condoned. Consider education policies. In the past educational policies promoted racial segregation at schools, and emphasized the importance of furthering White talent. Indeed, until 1954 when Brown v. Board of Education (1954) deemed racial inequality unconstitutional, racial segregation and inequality of education was not only legal but common practice (see also Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008). In the meantime these policies have become focused on racial integration and increasing the potential of disadvantaged Black students (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

This does not mean that racial prejudice has disappeared; it has taken on different forms that are more subtle and difficult for targets to detect. An interracial interaction may be characterized by increased anxiety (Pearson, West, Dovidio, Renfro Power, Buck, & Henning, 2008) and/or different body language (i.e., someone's face drops when seeing a young Black female manager, see Sue, Capodilupo, & Holder, 2008), even in the absence of blatantly racist comments. As the opening examples illustrates, even concrete acts or decisions may be ambiguous, as a job rejection may be explained by lack of education rather than

group membership, and close scrutiny by police officers can be rationalized on the basis of crime statistics and security needs rather than indicating racial profiling.

Although historically the situation of disadvantaged group members has improved, subtle discrimination is more problematic than it might seem at first sight. For one it is very unclear for members of stigmatized groups how to explain their personal outcomes (such as rejection from a job). Crocker and Major (1989) have defined this attributional ambiguity as the uncertainty as to whether the cause of one's personal outcomes can be attributed to personal deservingness (i.e., lack of personal ability, another's disliking of oneself) or to the social prejudices that others have against one's group more generally.

Not only is such ambiguity an unpleasant emotional state to be in (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990; Kagan, 1972), it can also impair the individual's ability to perceive that he or she has been discriminated against. As our initial examples illustrate, Professor Gates interpreted his arrest as stemming from racial discrimination, but the ethnic minority student who applied for a work experience place might never have realized that her failure to obtain this place was not due to her level of education but rather due to her group membership if she had not heard about her classmate getting the position. Situations of discrimination contain different elements that directly threaten the self by, on the one hand, indicating lack of sufficient education or even personal ability while, on the other hand, implying that women in general are, and thus oneself as a group member is, devalued.

The idea that responses to discrimination might pose a threat to the self was raised in early studies by Kenneth Dion (Dion, 1975; Dion & Earn, 1975). In an influential study (Dion & Earn, 1975) Jewish participants objectively had the same personal failure experience yet the extent to which this failure could be attributed to prejudice was varied. This study revealed that those participants who experienced failure that could be attributed to discrimination experienced significantly more negative affect, and what Dion and Earn referred to as "stress related symptoms" compared to those who could not attribute their failure to discrimination. In line with research on stress and coping (Lazarus, 1964), the authors proposed a stress model of discrimination in which the same event (personal failure) may differ not only on the basis of its intrinsic qualities (i.e., being objectively different) but also on the basis of the appraisals individuals make of this situation (i.e., subjective interpretation): The same situation of personal failure will be experienced as more threatening when it is appraised as being due to prejudice against one's group membership. In terms of a stress and coping approach, the presence of prejudice is a stressor that made the experience of failure subjectively more threatening.

Interestingly, in discussing the implications of their model, Dion and Earn (1975) mention that one way of coping with discrimination may be to deny the actual existence of bias, in other words, to not even enter the discrimination appraisal stage (but to instead attribute personal failure to lack of personal qualities). Therefore, from an ego-motivated perspective in which targets want to protect

themselves from stressful life events, not perceiving or even denying the experience of discrimination may be adaptive. Indeed it has been suggested that targets may be motivated to minimize the experience of discrimination (Crosby, 1984; Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994), rather than complaining about unfair treatment or exposing prejudicial treatment (Kaiser & Miller, 2001, 2003). For policy makers and practitioners who aim to address prejudice it is important to realize that there may be situations in which targets are unlikely to attribute personal outcomes to prejudice. Knowledge of determinants of this "oversight" can help policy makers increase awareness that discrimination may be present in the absence of formal complaints, or even when members of disadvantaged groups explicitly deny that prejudice may have played a role.

Research by Branscombe and colleagues similarly revealed that perceiving oneself to be the target of discrimination can have very negative consequences for well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002b; Schmitt et al., 2002c). Taking a social identity approach, Branscombe and colleagues argue that discrimination is harmful for well-being because it communicates that part of the self (one's group self) is devalued when individuals experience prejudice against their group. African–Americans who experienced discrimination as pervasive reported lower levels of personal and collective (i.e., with regard to their group) well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999).

In 1989 Crocker and Major proposed the somewhat controversial and counter-intuitive idea that being able to attribute a negative personal outcome to the prejudice of another may be self-protective because it buffers targets' personal self-esteem from the experience of personal failure. This idea originated from research revealing that despite the experience of discrimination, members of disadvantaged groups overall do not experience lower levels, rather sometimes even higher levels, of global self-esteem (Hoelter, 1983; Porter & Washington, 1979). Major and colleagues (2002) took a stress and coping perspective but, in contrast to Dion and Earn (1975), they considered the experience of a negative life event (i.e., personal failure) as the stressor, and the possibility of attributing this event to discrimination as a potential coping strategy. A number of studies provided support for the idea that being able to attribute incidents of personal failure to discrimination rather than personal failure can protect targets' personal well-being (Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a). This type of response to discrimination seems more self- than group focused: Targets may be preoccupied with maintaining a positive view of themselves rather than focusing on the (low) status of their group. Although here targets well-being may suffer less in the face of discrimination, this type of situation is also unlikely to induce actions directed at the source of discrimination or at improving one's disadvantaged group status.

In line with the idea that discrimination may induce a self rather than group focus, we studied to what extent individuals who witnessed the disadvantage of fellow group members were concerned with this disadvantaged status of their

group. In this research, we varied the extent to which group members themselves experienced positive or negative personal outcomes. Whereas discrimination by nature implies that negative personal outcomes are linked to the disadvantage of one's group, this design allowed us to consider situations in which individuals did not personally suffer negative outcomes due to their group's status. We found that when targets knew about the disadvantage of their group they felt even better about their own (positive) personal achievements. Therefore having information about group disadvantage is not necessarily harmful for well-being but rather may help discount personal responsibility for failure and enhance the experience of personal success (Stroebe, Ellemers, Barreto, & Mummendey, 2009).

Although clearly one would not want to discourage the individual success of members of disadvantaged groups, it is important to realize that successful individuals do not necessarily improve the status of the disadvantaged group. Research on the "queen bee" phenomenon has shown that females in academia who reached higher-level positions (thus escaping the disadvantage of their group) tend to underestimate the level of ambition and commitment of other members of their group—that is, young female faculty (Ellemers, Heuvel, Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004). Recent data collected in a range of different organizations confirmed that it is the experience of group-based discrimination that triggers these effects among successful women, in particular when they do not identify strongly with their gender group (Derks, Ellemers, Van Laar, & De Groot, in press). In addition, the experience of personal success may more generally inhibit actions to improve the disadvantaged status of one's group. Token members of disadvantaged groups who gain advantaged positions (i.e., queen bees) while many of their group remain at a disadvantage, are less likely than their fellow disadvantaged group members to engage in collective action to address the disadvantaged status of their group (Wright & Taylor, 1999). Indeed, the perceived success of other individual group members may indicate both to members of disadvantaged and advantaged groups that it is not necessary to address group disadvantage. After the election of Obama as the first Black president of the United States, both Black and White Americans felt less need to address the disadvantage of Blacks (Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan, & O'Brien, 2009). Therefore it may be important to make clear both to members of advantaged and disadvantaged groups that these individual successes do not indicate that equality has already been achieved in society (see also "communicate fairness and equality" under social and policy implications).

In line with this idea, we were interested in assessing whether members of disadvantaged groups who, as described above, witness discrimination against other group members are able to recognize this prejudice and perceive it as illegitimate—irrespective of their own personal treatment (Stroebe et al., 2009, Study 1). The fact that targets do not suffer from the disadvantage of their fellow group members need not preclude that they recognize the injustice of this treatment. Our research

provided evidence that judgments of illegitimacy were primarily influenced by personal outcomes such that participants only recognized the illegitimacy of procedures directed at other group members when they personally were also a victim rather than just a witness of this illegitimacy.

Overall these studies reveal that, in the type of situation we and others studied (i.e., a job selection procedure, test of ability), individuals are often primarily focused on themselves and their own outcomes. They suffer less from the fate of their group and seem unable to identify the injustice of procedures when they have been personally successful (see also Ellemers, 2001). Of course, under other circumstances illegitimate group treatment may be recognized more easily, but recognition of group level injustice seems impaired in this type of individualistic context in which discrimination often takes place. In these contexts, as Figure 1 illustrates, policies aiming to expose and redress discrimination need to encourage targets to perceive the illegitimacy of their own personal treatment and to consider how this relates to the outcomes of their group (Kappen & Branscombe, 2001).

How can we reconcile this research (Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a; Stroebe et al., 2009) with findings by Dion and by Branscombe and colleagues that clearly reveal that discrimination is harmful for psychological well-being of targets? Recent research has started to address potential moderators of these processes. It has considered how individual differences (i.e., group identification, Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003b) and situational factors (pervasiveness of discrimination, Schmitt et al., 2003) may impact upon targets' responses to discrimination. In our research we have attempted to integrate these conflicting findings by focusing on the different (motivational) processes that may underlie targets' responses to discrimination, in particular depending on whether discrimination is perceived as rare versus pervasive. This approach stresses that experiences of discrimination may differ for different targets or target groups: Incidents of discrimination that are perceived to be both contextually and temporally (i.e., likely to occur in the future) widespread can be seen as pervasive. It may be easier to discount personal failure in favor of discrimination when the discrimination experienced is unlikely to have any long-term consequences or does not seem widespread within society. Yet often it may be difficult for targets to discern whether the discrimination they are experiencing is incidental or more pervasive. For example, a lawsuit was filed against a large restaurant chain that not only treated Black customers rudely but also had them wait longer, pay higher prices, and in some instances refused to seat them. For the single Black customer an occasion of rude treatment may seem like an incident that can be ascribed to random bad luck such as having a grumpy waitress. It becomes pervasive when individual targets realize that many Blacks are having this experience at the same chain and/or when it was discovered that many restaurant chains had policies that could be defined as racist. In the end more than 4,300 claims were filed in this case (*New York Times*, 1994).

Discrimination that is perceived to be pervasive provides a future perspective of unpleasant treatment. Additionally, in particular in the job market—a relevant context we frequently study as the key to important material and societal outcomes—pervasive discrimination implies that throughout one's career one may not be judged on the basis of one's individual abilities and personal strengths, but rather on the basis of a group membership even if this is irrelevant to the work context (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010). In line with this idea, Branscombe and colleagues (1999) argued that the more structural and pervasive group members experience discrimination to be, the more negative are the consequences for personal well-being when making attributions to discrimination. A number of correlational studies revealed that those members of disadvantaged groups (i.e., African–Americans, women) who experience their personal discrimination as pervasive also suffer lower levels of well-being (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002b; Schmitt et al., 2002).

One of the few studies to experimentally manipulate the pervasiveness of discrimination (Schmitt et al., 2003; cf. Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007) revealed that when discrimination was presented as pervasive within a certain context targets reported more negative affect than discrimination that was characterized as rare (Study 2). This study demonstrated that pervasive discrimination had more negative consequences for psychological well-being than rare discrimination. This type of research once again indicates that although we may see discrimination as less blatant and prominent within society, targets still experience discrimination as a structural part of society and, importantly, suffer from this perception.

In our research we further aimed to understand when discrimination is likely to be relatively self-protective versus harmful by providing more insight into the processes underlying responses to pervasive versus rare discrimination. Targets experienced prejudice but differed in the extent to which they expected to meet a similar type of person again in the future (manipulation of pervasiveness) (Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John, in press). We predicted that attributing personal failure to discrimination that is perceived as rare may serve to buffer the individual self, whereas when it is attributed to pervasive discrimination it is likely to have negative consequences for targets' psychological well-being. Female participants took part in a bogus selection procedure in which they were rejected by a male interviewer who was described as prejudiced against women (i.e., experience of personal discrimination). In the rare discrimination condition it was made clear to participants that they were unlikely to meet someone like the male interviewer again in the future. In the pervasive discrimination condition, participants learned that they were likely to meet similar types of interviewers in their future working life. We found that targets who could attribute their personal failure to discrimination that was perceived as rare did not report lower psychological well-being.

By contrast, those who attributed their personal failure to discrimination that was perceived as pervasive experienced significantly more negative well-being. Thus, being able to make attributions to discrimination buffered individuals when discrimination was perceived as rare, but had negative consequences for well-being when discrimination was perceived as pervasive. These studies provided evidence that very different processes may underlie the same experience of discrimination depending on targets' perceptions of discrimination. They suggest that instead of the actual experience of prejudice (which was the same for all participants) the perceptions and feelings targets have with regard to the prejudice they experience—for example, whether they see it as being pervasive and embedded in society or as incidental—determines their responses. Legal procedures and antidiscrimination measures and complaint procedures tend not to take this into account, which is likely to make them less effective. Thus, understanding these processes better can help design policies that meet the needs of a broader set of disadvantaged target groups.

We next turn to what discrimination communicates to targets, both about themselves and about the society they live in to further explain these differential effects.

Ego versus System Motivation

So far we have focused on circumstances under which the experience of discrimination induces different well-being responses. We have argued that experiencing discrimination as rare can induce a focus on the self and in first instance one's personal failure and lack of ability that initially poses a threat to the self (see Figure 1). By contrast, instances of discrimination that are perceived as pervasive emphasize the negative implications of one's group membership. Importantly, and this is what we will elaborate more in the present article, this type of discrimination may threaten the way members of disadvantaged groups view the society they live in. Here targets' view of the world and the society they live in is threatened (see Figure 1). As we will outline below, these different types of threat have implications for the types of motivations underlying targets responses to discrimination.

Motivated Responses to Discrimination: Ego Motivation

When situations of subtle discrimination make the implications of personal failure for the individual very salient, this implicates a threat to one's individual self-view and raises the motivation to protect and maintain a positive view of the individual self (see also Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009). We refer to this as ego motivation, or the idea that people's actions can be motivated by the

enhanced need to maintain a positive image of their individual selves both in the present and the future (see Figure 1).

Research findings in various areas of social psychology provide support for the idea that people have a very strong need to defend and maintain positive self-views. For example, research in the area of self-affirmation indicates that when people experience threat in a certain domain, affirming the self both in the same or different domains can help to reduce and cope with such threat (Steele & Liu, 1983). Similarly, people who have a need to self-protect tend to make (self-enhancing) downward rather than (threatening) upward comparisons to close others (e.g., Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & La Prelle, 1983).

The main theoretical ideas developed in research on subtle discrimination can be considered in line with an ego-motivated approach: The discounting model (Crocker & Major, 1989) states that targets make attributions to discrimination to protect the self. Research by Dion and colleagues considers discrimination as a stressor to the self and proposes that targets can engage in self-defensive mechanisms to cope with this threat. Similarly, research conducted by Branscombe and colleagues in part explains the negative consequences of discrimination as stemming from the fact that (pervasive) discrimination has very negative future implications for the self. Other research studying responses to discrimination has similarly focused on concepts that are relevant to the self such as the role of need for self-control (Sechrist, Swim, & Stangor, 2004), mood (Sechrist, Swim, & Mark, 2003), judgments of intent and harm in actions of the perpetrator (Swim, Scott, Sechrist, Campbell, & Stangor, 2003), or personal outlook in life (Kaiser, Major, & McCoy, 2004) in making attributions to discrimination. As we argued above, this self-focus may actually inhibit perceptions of (the illegitimacy) of discrimination (Ellemers, 2001; Stroebe et al., 2009).

Motivated Responses to Discrimination: System Motivation

Are experiences of discrimination "merely" threatening because they affect the self (at various levels of self-definition) and the achievement of positive outcomes in the future (i.e., Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2003)? Whereas individuals are motivated to protect a positive view of the self, research considering the cultural worldviews that individuals hold indicates that the desire to uphold one's worldview may also motivate responses to personal disadvantage. The perception of the world as fair and just is assumed by theories relating to equity and justice to play a fundamental role in human motivation (e.g., Lerner & Miller, 1978; Messick & Cook, 1983). For example, research in the just world tradition posits that people have a "need to believe in a world where people generally get what they deserve" (Lerner & Miller, 1978, p. 1030). Situations that challenge these principles by being inherently unjust and unfair can be experienced as very

threatening by individuals—such as learning about victims of sexual assault, robbery, or cancer (Hafer & Bègue, 2005). As we outline in Figure 1, discrimination, particularly discrimination that is perceived as pervasive and thus diagnostic for how society functions, may be especially threatening to people's worldviews as it communicates that individuals are not treated on the basis of equality and justice.

Discrimination that is perceived as rare can be seen as an incident that need not be informative of how society functions in general, and that can be addressed by sanctioning specific individuals or challenging particular decisions. The focus on self-concerns and the tendency to perceive discrimination as a rare exception in an otherwise fair society thus discourages the realization that specific incidents may be diagnostic of broader issues and makes policy change less likely, even if this is needed to effectively combat future discrimination. By contrast, when discrimination threatens just world beliefs, policies need to be aimed at re-establishing individuals' belief that the world can be just, for example, by communicating fairness and equality in certain life domains (Dzuka & Dalbert, 2007).

It is important to note that although the need to see the world as just and fair stems from events that might happen to oneself or one's group it is focused more generally on the fairness of the social system as a whole. This makes it different from the more self-related concerns that have been the focus of attention in research on perceived discrimination. Importantly, as we will outline in more detail later, these different types of concerns have different policy implications, because they imply that interventions have to meet specific requirements to be effective in countering discrimination and its negative effects.

Whereas research in the area of just world beliefs so far has mainly considered how experiencing the victimization of others may threaten one's personal beliefs in a just world (Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner & Miller, 1978), a number of studies have considered the relation between a different type of cultural worldview, system-legitimizing beliefs, and the experience of personal discrimination. System-legitimizing beliefs are beliefs that justify existing hierarchical and unequal relationships among groups in society (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Hunyady, 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). They differ from just world beliefs because in contrast to the premise of the belief in a just world—that individuals have the fundamental need to see the world as based on principles of fairness and equality—system-legitimizing beliefs refer to the tendency to see unequal societal outcomes as legitimate and fair. They provide initial evidence that observing disadvantage has the potential to threaten people's views of society—be it the conviction that people are basically equal or unequal.

Initial evidence that pervasive discrimination may threaten individuals' cultural worldviews has considered how differences in individually held system-legitimizing beliefs affect psychological well-being in response to discrimination. Major and colleagues (2007) considered the relation between beliefs in

meritocracy and discrimination. Beliefs in meritocracy represent the extent to which people believe the outcomes they and others achieve in life are based on individual merit. This research provides initial indications that discrimination may threaten people's worldviews. In line with our reasoning that, in particular, discrimination that is perceived as pervasive is likely to threaten people's view that the world is a just place, Major and colleagues (2007, Study 3), found that individuals who endorsed beliefs in meritocracy (a system-legitimizing belief) suffered more from pervasive discrimination and reported lower levels of personal self-esteem. Similarly, Foster, Sloto, and Ruby (2006) provided correlational evidence showing that individually held meritocracy beliefs predicted lower performance self-esteem primarily among women who reported relatively frequent past experiences of discrimination (see also Foster & Tsarfati, 2005).

These studies suggest that experiencing discrimination, particularly when this discrimination is perceived as pervasive, may adversely influence feelings of well-being for those individuals who have the individually held belief that the world functions on the basis of meritocracy. Focusing on the interpretation of these findings it is important to realize that beliefs about meritocracy (i.e., the belief that high status can be achieved by hard work) and the experience of discrimination (personal outcomes are not evaluated on the basis of personal ability but rather on the basis of group membership) both concern the domain of personal competence. In our research we were interested in considering whether discrimination has the potential to threaten a more fundamental and at the same time abstract need—the need to see the world as just and fair—that is not directly related to the domain of personal achievements and competence.

To see whether perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination may also affect this more abstract cultural worldview, as a first step we considered whether there was a relation between individually held just world beliefs and perceptions of pervasiveness of discrimination (Stroebe & Ellemers, 2010). We expected those individuals who experienced discrimination as pervasive to have lower beliefs in the world as just. In this study members of disadvantaged groups (ethnic and gender) were asked to describe a situation in which they personally experienced discrimination as well as indicating the likelihood that similar situations might occur in the future.

Confirming our hypotheses, perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination were related to lower just world beliefs (Stroebe & Ellemers, 2010) indicating that the experience of discrimination as pervasive may also threaten the more abstract need to see the world as just (see Figure 1). Although this never became a central part of research on just world beliefs, early work of Lerner and Miller (1978) discusses the fact that believing that the world is just allows people to engage in the socially regulated behavior of day to day life. This makes sense as without the belief that the world is just and will treat one fairly, there is little reason to treat others fairly or engage in socially conforming behavior. This

insight can help us explain why certain disadvantaged groups (e.g., Moroccans in the Netherlands; see also Kamans, Gordijn, Oldenhuis, & Otten, 2009) seem to be disengaging from society.

Nevertheless some caution is necessary in interpreting these results. One of the drawbacks of focusing on individually held beliefs is that it is difficult to establish causality. One might argue that members of disadvantaged groups who see the world as less just are more likely to perceive discrimination as a structural part of their life. Therefore, in considering whether pervasive discrimination threatens individuals' need to see the world as just, we took a different perspective than research that has focused on individually held cultural worldviews as a personal threat when discrimination is experienced as pervasive. We reasoned that if pervasive, but not rare, discrimination threatens disadvantaged group members' beliefs in the world as just, then being able to affirm the world as just should buffer the well-being of individuals who experience discrimination as pervasive (but not those who experience rare discrimination). From an applied perspective such a manipulation can also provide indications of the potential to buffer targets against the experience of pervasive discrimination as it provides indications that we can influence peoples' beliefs about the world.

The idea of affirming the world as just is in line with research on self-affirmation showing that when individuals experience a threat to the self in a certain domain being able to affirm the self in another domain can counter the negative consequences of this self-threat (Steele & Liu, 1983; Tesser & Cornell, 1991). To give an example, imagine that a person has a negative outcome in the academic performance domain, such as failing an important exam (i.e., threat to the individual self). One way of feeling less threat in this domain could be to focus on the fact that he/she is a very good friend (i.e., affirming the self in another domain). This can reduce threat to the self in the academic performance domain (i.e., exam failure).

In a similar vein, we reasoned that if indeed members of disadvantaged groups experience threat to the belief in the world as just in a certain domain (pervasive discrimination), this threat should be countered by affirming the world as just in a different, unrelated, domain. To test this idea we exposed female participants to discrimination that, was described as rare or pervasive (see also Stroebe et al., in press; Study 1). Subsequently, we presented them with the description of a case that was unrelated to this experience of discrimination and designed to vary in the extent to which it affirmed the world as just (affirmation/no affirmation/control).

Research on just world beliefs indicates that reading about individuals who experience very unpleasant and thus threatening events such as a painful car accident but seeing this victim as deserving of his/her fate can reduce the threat to one's just world beliefs posed by this unpleasant event (e.g., Braman & Lambert, 2001; Hafer, 2000a). Similarly we affirmed participants' beliefs in the world as just by describing a painful car accident in which the victim was either seen as

deserving of his fate (a murderer; affirmation condition) or as not deserving of his fate (a life-saving surgeon; no affirmation condition). We also included a control condition that portrayed a positive event (cook winning a prize).

As expected, for individuals in the rare discrimination condition, affirmation of the world as just did not influence affective responses. By contrast, for women in the pervasive gender discrimination condition, having the world affirmed as just countered the negative consequences for psychological well-being otherwise experienced in response to pervasive discrimination. This research implicates that discrimination that is perceived as pervasive threatens targets' need to see the world as just. Furthermore, being able to affirm the world as just can buffer targets from the experience of pervasive discrimination.

Coming back to the attributional ambiguity inherent in situations of discrimination, the difficulty of discerning whether personal failure is due to lack of, for example, personal abilities, or due to the prejudice of another against one's group, we can conclude that this type of situation may raise different motives in members of disadvantaged groups. On the one hand it initiates the need to retain a positive self-view (ego motivation) in the face of failure and of one's group in the face of prejudice. On the other hand the experience of discrimination, in particular as we have argued discrimination that is perceived as pervasive raises the need to retain a positive view of the world as a place in which people are treated fairly and justly. This means that discrimination has more far reaching consequences than we might have assumed so far—not only does it have implications for how targets view themselves (i.e., ego motivation) but also for how they view the society they live in—and possibly for the extent to which members of disadvantaged groups may feel the need to remain part of, and engage in, society. For policy makers this provides the challenge of designing policies that can re-establish the belief that society functions on the basis of principles of fairness and equality. We turn to this next.

Social and Policy Implications

The distinction between ego- and system-motivated responses to discrimination has important social and policy implications when considering how to help individuals deal with situations of personal failure that may be attributable to prejudice against one's group membership. These motivations bring to attention the paradox of discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989): As we have made clear, from an ego-motivated perspective in which individuals are concerned with retaining a positive self-view in the face of personal failure, it is important that individuals are encouraged to perceive personal discrimination as well as the disadvantaged status of their group.

At the individual level, perceptions of discrimination can form an important buffer against experiences of personal failure that would otherwise be attributed

to lack of personal ability (Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a). From the perspective of a disadvantaged group as a whole, perceptions of this disadvantaged status may be a prerequisite for attempts to change the status quo, in this case for addressing the cause of discrimination. Only if individuals feel that the group as a whole is deprived and entitled to more does the likelihood of (collective) action to improve the disadvantaged status of one's group increase (Wright, 2001).

Yet, as we outlined, perceptions of prejudice may be more difficult in situations that are very individualistic and emphasize personal abilities. Furthermore, as individuals become more focused on themselves and their self-image (i.e., in cases in which they are ego motivated), the perception of personal discrimination may not automatically imply that individuals perceive the status of their group as illegitimate (Schmitt, Spoor, Danaher, & Branscombe, 2009). This is an important insight for policy makers: in some cases it may be necessary to focus targets on their disadvantaged status and the illegitimacy thereof—even if this undermines their psychological well-being—to initiate the motivation to pursue social change.

On the other hand, and here lies the paradox, once targets perceive discrimination to be present and pervasive within society, psychological well-being decreases. Indeed, research indicates that women who experience greater workplace discrimination reported lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Ensher, Grant-Vallone, & Donaldson, 2001) and higher intentions of leaving their jobs (Shaffer, Joplin, Bell, Lau, & Oguz, 2000). Furthermore, as our work indicates, the perception of discrimination as pervasive threatens individuals belief in the world as just. Policies directed at targets need to focus on how to buffer targets from the negative experience of discrimination and feelings of helplessness as a short-term goal such that they feel able to address and deal with their disadvantage as a long-term perspective.

Based on our work and the theoretical outline presented in this article, we suggest two points of attention on which policy makers should focus. First, policies need to aid members of disadvantaged groups in the recognition of prejudice, and to help them identify contexts in which their personal treatment is illegitimate (see "increasing perceptions of inequality and illegitimacy"). Here the aim should also be to identify or encourage the need for social change. Second, policies need to enable targets of discrimination to retain or re-establish the belief that the society they live in thinks it is best to function on the basis of principles of fairness and equality (i.e., "create/communicate opportunities for success"; "communicate fairness and equality in society").

It may seem odd that we are advising policy makers to increase perceptions of inequality and illegitimacy on the one hand while encouraging policies that communicate fairness and equality in society on the other hand. Yet it is important to realize there may be a distinction between perceiving personal discrimination as illegitimate (i.e., criticizing the current situation) versus having the idea that

society in general values fairness and equality (as a future ideal). Below we outline policies focusing on these points of attention and discuss the potential of these policies to initiate or maintain social change.

1. Increasing Perceptions of Inequality and Illegitimacy

As the example of the person with the headscarf who applied for a job illustrates, it can be difficult for an individual member of a disadvantaged group to realize that he/she is being disadvantaged. Research reveals that across many types of disadvantaged groups (i.e., women, African–Americans) group members report that their group in general is discriminated against, but they fail to realize they are personally discriminated against (Crosby, 1984). Individuals seem to have trouble relating information about the disadvantage of their group to their personal treatment (i.e., interpreting this treatment as discrimination).

Conversely, one of the implications of our ego-motivated approach is that targets of discrimination are in many cases focused on themselves and their personal outcomes and not aware that their personal treatment is related to the disadvantaged status of their group. Yet to perceive that one's own group as a whole is doing less well on status-related dimensions (i.e., income, position in organizational hierarchy) than the out-group, individuals need to make comparisons with both in-group (e.g., other women, ethnic minority members) and out-group (e.g., other men, majority group members) members (Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, & Hemker, 1986; Schmitt et al., 2009; Stroebe, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2010; Stroebe et al., 2009).

One way of increasing perceptions of discrimination is by changing the manner in which information is presented to members of disadvantaged groups. Take the example of women who receive less income than men of comparable ability and position within a company. The likelihood of recognizing this gender discrimination with respect to income would increase greatly if these individual women had access to information indicating the average pay of women compared to men—categorized by relevant information (i.e., function within company, number of working years).

Indeed, research looking at whether women recognize gender discrimination when given information about payment within a company, revealed that they were far more likely to perceive gender discrimination when they had aggregate (i.e., overall comparisons between men and women) as opposed to piecemeal information (i.e., individual case studies of men and women) (Crosby et al., 1986). Therefore an important way of enhancing recognition of discrimination in a work environment would be to provide aggregate information about personal outcomes of relevant groups (i.e., based on gender, ethnicity) within organizations. This openness about outcomes (such as salaries and bonuses) may also serve to reduce discrimination by making the evaluators themselves more aware of the group

biases in their decisions. Social policies should aim at encouraging, or obliging, organizations to publish information that facilitates the comparison of outcomes for different ethnic or gender groups.

In a similar line, policy makers can aid prejudice recognition when minority group members take steps up the career ladder and try to achieve promotion: here too, it seems important to create more transparent procedures. There is ample evidence that members of ethnic minorities and females are underrepresented at higher levels within organizations (Eagly & Sczesny, 2009; Merens & Hermans, 2008; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek- en Documentatiecentrum, & Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2005).

To both prevent the influence of prejudice in promotion decision, as well as enhancing the likelihood that targets realize their company may be using other promotion criteria for advantaged as opposed to disadvantaged group members, it is important to encourage openness with regard to these criteria. One way of doing so is to state criteria that are necessary to reach the next step in the promotion ladder. To give an example, some Dutch universities have very clear guidelines concerning the criteria (i.e., number of scientific publications, graduate student supervision, grant proposals) scientific staff members need to meet to proceed along the next step in the tenure track ladder. These guidelines may not only help to counter unequal treatment of majority and minority groups, they may also help to identify and aid feelings of justice (see system motivations).

It is important to note that although clear criteria are helpful in combating inequality, racism or sexism can be "institutionalized," such that criteria in themselves may be biased in favor of advantaged groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For example, a case of institutional racism was raised at hospitals in Ireland where non-EU doctors were reported to remain junior doctor for many years compared to their EU counterparts despite performing at a consultant level. The reason was that institutions (i.e., hospitals) did not provide sufficient training and career facilities to achieve consultant status (Birchard, 2001). EU doctors escaped this problem by completing their training outside Ireland. For non-EU doctors this was not an option and their career development was seriously impeded. Thus openness about criteria in itself may be an important first step but it remains important to be critical of the criteria used.

In summary, policy makers can aid recognition of pervasive discrimination by enforcing more openness with respect to, for example, salary information or promotion criteria within organizations. Yet, as we outlined in earlier sections of this article, one of the pitfalls of targets of, in particular, ego-motivated discrimination lies in the inability to identify personal discrimination, or that of other group members as illegitimate (Glick & Fiske, 2001; Kappen & Branscombe, 2001). For example, women who endorse the stereotypes of men as competent and women as warm may feel less competent and find it legitimate that they receive a lower salary than their male counterparts (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

Therefore an additional step may be needed in which targets are made aware of the illegitimacy of their disadvantaged status and personal treatment. One way of doing so is to define when a situation can truly be considered discriminatory and illegitimate rather than a legitimate differentiation of minority versus majority group members (Mummendey & Otten, 2004). For example, many antidiscrimination websites (i.e., Anti-Discrimination Board, Australia; Art.1, the Netherlands) aim to increase awareness of characteristics of discrimination. They define discrimination in terms of differential treatment due to one's group membership, and proceed to give examples of situations that can be classified as discrimination. This can help members of disadvantaged groups acknowledge discriminatory situations and enhance the likelihood that they will act upon transgressions. A campaign along these lines was conducted in Australia: A poster campaign was launched by the Australian Anti-Discrimination Board in which female employees were made aware of the fact that it is not "OK" for men to make sexual advances at work and that these advances should be reported.

Helping targets to diagnose their personal treatment as something that is unacceptable can increase perceptions of illegitimacy. As we stressed earlier, the need to emphasize the illegitimacy of personal treatment is likely to be greatest in situations in which targets perceive discrimination as something that is incidental and unlikely to recur. Once targets perceive the discrimination they experience as a structural part of society, other mechanisms take place that require a different policy approach.

The experience of discrimination as structural is debilitating and may ultimately lead to societal disengagement as people come to believe that whatever they do, society is unlikely to treat them on the basis of fairness and equality (Hafer, 2000b; Kamans et al., 2009). Why attempt to hold a job if you know that you are unlikely to be treated on the basis of principles of fairness and equality? This can be a vicious circle, as the fewer members of disadvantaged groups conform to societal norms, the more negative the attitudes of members of mainstream society are likely to be with respect to this group (Kamans et al., 2007). In this way negative attitudes on both sides are likely to perpetuate themselves. This has implications within society when one considers that for some low-status groups or group members discrimination may be (experienced as) more chronic than for others: Some groups may not only suffer more discrimination, they may also suffer more from discrimination.

Consequently, social policies need to create resources to cope with (pervasive) discrimination. As we saw earlier, being able to affirm the world as just in the face of pervasive discrimination reduces the extent to which individuals feel they lack self-efficacy or experience negative self-directed emotions such as depression. From the perspective of addressing pervasive discrimination, it may be important that targets are to some extent buffered from the threat of pervasive discrimination by making clear that the world is just, possibly not in all but in certain domains.

There are different ways in which policy makers can achieve this goal, for example, by emphasizing opportunities for personal success and at a more abstract level, by increasing perceptions of societal fairness and legitimacy for members of disadvantaged groups. We turn to these two approaches in the following.

2. Increase Opportunities for Personal Success

Obviously the best way to help targets cope with disadvantage would be to eliminate it. Although we hope this goal will be attained in the future, for now we believe an important step may be to work on methods to create opportunities for members of disadvantaged groups. For example, at the level of education, policies can aim at giving youngsters opportunities for further development. One important way of doing so can be to address the scarcity of work experience places specifically for members of low-status groups such as Moroccans in the Netherlands. It is a common problem in the Netherlands that youngsters of an ethnic minority origin are required to have work experience as part of their educational program, yet have considerable trouble finding companies that will take them on. This may be in part due to lacking self-presentational skills and language problems on the side of the ethnic minority youngsters, but is also for an important part due to prejudice against these youngsters on the side of organizations. Creating opportunities therefore on the one hand may entail some training such as interview training or training presentational skills. On the other hand organizations need to be encouraged to take on members of disadvantaged groups. One (more costly) way of achieving this would be to subsidize these work experience places. Other ways of increasing opportunities for youngsters are mentoring projects that assign a mentor to disadvantaged youngsters that encourage and help them make use of opportunities that are available. At an earlier stage, so called weekend schools where members of disadvantaged groups who are highly achievement motivated but have few academic opportunities receive extra small group teaching from professionals within organizations can be an important way of creating opportunities for these youngsters.

At the organizational level, one important way policy makers can increase opportunities for disadvantaged group members is to enhance the awareness and necessity of creating diverse work environments within organizations. As a recent study with respect to diversity policies (in this case of Dutch provinces and communities) for a center for multicultural development, FORUM (Noort & Pelgröm, 2008) revealed, barriers to diversity may need to be addressed at many levels within organizations not only at a management level, but also within the personnel department, or at an even more basic level, with regard to more widespread and less traditional forms of employee recruitment—at present largely geared toward majority group members. Increasing awareness of the necessity of, and encouraging companies to enact, diversity policies at different

organizational levels may help create more opportunities for members of disadvantaged groups.

In creating more opportunities for members of disadvantaged groups, it is important to realize that these opportunities can backfire when individuals feel their personal success is not personally earned (i.e., merely due to their group membership). Indeed some have argued against affirmative action policies for members of disadvantaged groups because beneficiaries of this policy may feel their position is undeserved (Heilman, Battle, Keller, & Lee, 1998). Yet, these negative effects can be countered by communicating and enforcing that affirmative action policies select beneficiaries on the basis of merit and not merely group membership (Major, Feinstein, & Crocker, 1994). Therefore in increasing opportunities for success in members of minority groups it is important that these members are told they gained their position on the basis of personal qualifications (Heilman, Rivero, & Brett, 1991). Only then will the "creation of opportunities for success" translate into more positive psychological well-being in response to personal experiences of pervasive discrimination.

3. Communicate Fairness and Equality

Creating opportunities for success is one way to address the negative consequences of pervasive discrimination and counter the debilitating emotions that accompany pervasive discrimination by giving targets opportunities to achieve positive outcomes in the face of their disadvantaged group membership. Throughout this article we have alluded to the importance of re-establishing individuals' view that society may function on the basis of principles of fairness and equality. Although we do not deny that creating opportunities for success increases perceptions of fairness we below allude to possible policies that have been shown to directly tap into perceptions of equality and fairness. At the same time we discuss the pitfalls that these policies may have.

a. Role models and target percentages of minority group representation within organizations. Within (German) politics, Angela Merkel is a clear and visible example of a woman who has proceeded to the upper echelons of politics. Similarly, within the United States Barack Obama can be considered an example of what is possible for African–Americans. Indeed social policies are often geared to increasing minority group representation within, for example, organizations. These policies are a very important first step in increasing minority group representation and hopefully in the long term inducing social change. Although as we note below there are some pitfalls to these policies, we would like to stress that role models can serve an important function for other members of disadvantaged groups as they enhance the feeling that society must be to some extent fair and just in allowing other group members to achieve such high-level positions

(Wright, 2001). This can help counter the feelings of helplessness experienced in the face of pervasive discrimination.

Mentor projects within society and organizations are an important way of creating contact of role models with "relatively" disadvantaged group members (see also Rogat & Redner, 1985). At an organizational level one can think of activities that pair young professionals of disadvantaged groups with older successful ones. For example, a Dutch ministry organized a "speed-dating day" in which young women were given the opportunity to meet and (in the longer run) build a relationship with older female top managers. For younger members of disadvantaged groups, important initiatives are "mentoring projects" in a number of towns in the Netherlands: Youth members of disadvantaged groups who are known to be struggling at school or in their home environment are paired with a mentor, "successful" youths of similar/same ethnicity. These role models coach one of these youths throughout a year, generally on a weekly basis. For youngsters from a disadvantaged background, this mentor may be one of the few people they associate with who does have a job and is ambitious.

Importantly, if activities such as mentoring are seen as important and valued by policy makers, this communicates to members of disadvantaged groups that their disadvantage is seen as something structural that needs to be addressed and not as a personal shortcoming. This message can help increase trust in societal policies as well as the feeling that societal justice may be achievable in the future if (not yet) in the present.

At the same time as we stress the importance of role models both for the role model him/herself and for other members of disadvantaged groups, we would like to make clear that role models should be seen as an important first step in increasing minority group representation within organizations or other domains of society. It is a good that social policies are often geared to increasing minority group representation within, for example, organizations yet, as we will outline in more detail below, these policies should not be seen as an indicator that social equality has been achieved. This has been diagnosed as one of the pitfalls of what is referred to as tokenism—situations in which an advantaged group admits "token" members from disadvantaged groups while at the same time there are still severe restrictions to access to advantaged positions for disadvantaged group members (Wright, 2001).

From the perspective of the disadvantaged individual (our "role model") policies aimed at increasing minority group representation are attractive. Indeed research in our lab indicates that women who experienced personal success actually reported increased levels of well-being when they were made aware of their token position (Stroebe et al., in press). Yet, the downside was that these women were also less likely to view the disadvantaged position of their fellow group members as procedurally unjust. This is in line with other research indicating that when organizations have token members of, for example, ethnic or gender minority

groups this actually increases perceptions of equality, compared to closed systems (Barreto, Ellemers, & Palacios, 2004; Schmitt et al., 2009). Thus studies have revealed that organizations that were portrayed to have a tokenist policy (i.e., even if only admitting a small percentage of women) were assessed as more devoted to gender equality (Danaher & Branscombe, reported in Schmitt et al., 2009).

Similarly, research on court cases filed by employees who reported personal discrimination by their company indicates that those employees who were part of a company that could show that they engaged in affirmative action policies were less likely to win their lawsuit (Hirsch, 2008). Taking this a step further, research by Kaiser and colleagues (2009) reveals that the success of Barack Obama in the American elections decreased the perceived necessity, both in White and African–Americans, of advancing the position of African–Americans within society. In fact American society was considered more egalitarian after Obama's electoral success.

Therefore both research inside and outside our lab indicates that whereas tokenist policies may be perceived as advantageous by members of disadvantaged (and advantaged) groups, and potentially provide important role models, these policies may actually decrease the extent to which members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups feel that they need to address the disadvantaged status of minority groups.

At the same time it is important to be aware that tokenism is an essential and inevitable first step in increasing minority group representation within organizations. Here policy makers can play an important role. In essence the task is to increase minority group representation while focusing both minority and majority group members on the ultimate goal of creating equality (Schmitt et al., 2009). This makes salient that in achieving token representation the goal of equality has not been achieved yet.

A good example is the Dutch foundation "Talent naar de Top" (Talent to the Top) that developed a charter, also titled *Talent naar de Top*, in which organizations are asked to publicly commit to increasing the representation of women in top positions. Concrete and measurable aims both with regard to acceptance and promotion percentages of women within the organization are then set in collaboration with a monitoring committee (consisting in part of members of the Dutch government). Whether aims are met is evaluated on a yearly basis and organizations are ranked according to relative progress in comparison to other organizations who have signed the charter.

Importantly the charter clearly states that only once a company has a 30% minority group representation, it can actually consider its representation of minority groups "reasonable." Indeed some argue that to change existing views and practices within an organization it is necessary to have a 30% representation of minority group members (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009b). Many major Dutch companies have signed this charter. Policies supporting initiatives such as these

are essential in moving from tokenism to "reasonable" minority group representation. This will not only aid perceptions of equality but in the long run create more equality.

  b. Communicating a commitment to fairness and equality. Our work suggests that targets can be helped to cope with discrimination by reassuring them that there is agreement that the world should be just, and that remaining injustices need to be identified and addressed. This may help sustain their belief that the world can be and eventually will be just—even if there is discrimination at present. For members of disadvantaged groups this, for one, may mean communicating commitment to principles of fairness and equality. Some of the guidelines we have outlined for enhancing prejudice recognition at work (i.e., openness about salary information across disadvantaged and advantaged groups) may help achieve this goal by communicating to members of disadvantaged groups that their organization is committed to equality and justice and to correcting injustices that do inadvertently leak through the system.

  In the domain of education we see a number of ways that policy makers can create hope and increase feelings of justice for members of disadvantaged groups, while at the same time encouraging schools to guard and enhance equal treatment of disadvantaged and advantaged group members. In the Netherlands, for example, a national school project designated as "ONE" (Scholenproject [ÉÉN]; Art.1, 2007) was launched to promote equal treatment of all school attendees. This project requires commitment from the school, students, and parents toward principles of justice and equality. Schools have to meet a number of criteria (i.e., school activities to promote equality; newsletter reports; plans of action) and then receive the ÉÉN certificate as a statement that the school is against discrimination and intolerance and promotes diversity. The schools are re-evaluated every year concerning whether they meet the set criteria. Focused more directly on school teaching programs rather than school activities, the American NCCRESt (National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, n.d.) is an example of how policy makers can encourage schools to become aware of and work toward schools in which pupils are allowed to be culturally diverse but do not differ in the treatment they receive. This center has developed guidelines to promote cultural diversity. Examples are stimulating schools and teachers to reflect on questions such as "Where are the best teachers assigned?", "Which students get to take advanced courses?", and "Where are resources allocated?" Although the Dutch ÉÉN and the American NCCRESt differ in the way they approach the promotion of equality, both communicate and work on enhancing environments that are likely to assure members of disadvantaged groups that justice and equality are valued in some— albeit not all—parts of their life. Importantly, they communicate to members of disadvantaged groups that although principles of equality and deservingness (i.e., the world is just) may not be fully attained at present, there is hope that these

criteria will be reached in the future. This, we argue, can decrease the feeling that discrimination will always be pervasive and help undermine feelings that the world treats people unjustly.

Conclusion

The work we reviewed here shows that how targets respond to, and the extent to which they are likely to address discrimination, is largely determined by their perceptions of discrimination. In the present article we have outlined how perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination can differentially influence whether discrimination buffers individuals from, or increases negative well-being in response to, among others, personal failure. Underlying these differential responses to discrimination, we have argued, are on the one hand the motivation to maintain a positive view of the self (ego motivation), on the other hand the need to see, or re-establish one's view of the world as a just place in which people get what they deserve (system-motivation). These motivations have differential implications not only for how targets respond to discrimination but also for their likelihood to engage in activities to address the disadvantaged status of their group.

Our work reveals that from the perspective of aiding members of disadvantaged groups such as women or ethnic minorities to maintain a positive view of themselves in the face of personal failure (ego motivation) it is very important that recognition of (the illegitimacy of) prejudice is facilitated (e.g., by encouraging openness within companies with respect to salaries or promotion criteria). From the perspective of buffering individuals from the threat of discrimination to their views of the world as just and fair (system motivation), by contrast, it may be important to increase the perception that personal success is possible and that society is committed to principles of fairness and equality. These policies will not eliminate discrimination but they can help targets cope with, and in the long run, more effectively fight their disadvantage.

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