Chapter 5 | Summary and Discussion

Being a member of a group that is chronically devalued can damage people’s motivation to strive for high performance in domains that are associated with high societal status (leadership ability, academic performance, career success). In this dissertation we employed the social identity framework to analyze why devaluation of one’s group leads to reduced motivation on status-defining dimensions. We argued that threats to social identity and the perception of the status hierarchy as impermeable, stable and legitimate dissuade low status group members from attempts to improve their actual outcomes, and lead them to protect their social identity by using cognitive strategies that simultaneously lower their motivation in domains that they associate with higher status groups (‘outgroup dimensions’). Instead of striving for higher personal or group outcomes through individual mobility or social change, members of devalued groups often employ social creativity strategies that are said to improve their personal perception of the value of their ingroup rather than actually improving objective outcomes. Social identity theory discusses social creativity as a last resort strategy that distracts members of low status groups from the need to improve their outcomes. For example, devalued group members can improve their social identity by withdrawing from settings in which their group is devalued (self-segregation) or by claiming that status-defining domains are not important (domain devaluation). However, when low status group members use these motivation-debilitating ways to counter threats to their social identity, social identity threat can become a self-fulfilling prophecy that keeps members of low status groups at their disadvantaged position.

In this dissertation we propose a way in which members of socially devalued groups can solve their identity concerns in a way that simultaneously allows them to invest and be motivated in domains that lead them to achieve higher societal status. Specifically, we re-examined the different social creativity strategies and proposed, in contrast to earlier predictions from social identity theory, that social creativity is not necessarily a last resort strategy that distracts group members from the need to improve their outcomes. Instead, we argued that some forms of
social creativity will in fact improve group members’ motivation in status-defining domains. For example, instead of reducing the value that they attach to status-defining dimensions, members of socially devalued groups can also protect social identity by searching for alternative domains in which their ingroup is successful. By comparing the ingroup to high status outgroups in these domains (e.g., social skills, cultural values, athletic ability) and by personally attaching value to these domains social identity is enhanced without necessarily causing a reduction in motivation in status-defining domains. In contrast to previous discussions of social creativity, we proposed that focusing members of devalued groups on their ingroup’s high performance on alternative performance dimensions (‘ingroup dimensions’), helps to construct a positive perception of their ingroup. This in turn reduces the need to withdraw from threatening contexts and enables low status group members to remain motivated for self-improvement in a status-defining domain. In this chapter, I will start by summarizing our main findings.

Overview of the main findings

Chapter 2: Social identity protection increases performance motivation

In Chapter 2, we confirmed that members of low status groups who protect their social identity by attaching value to ingroup dimensions are indeed more motivated to perform on outgroup dimensions. Experiments 1 and 2 provided converging evidence that the degree to which low status group members personally value a dimension on which their ingroup is successful (social identity protection) is positively related to motivation on the outgroup dimension when they are under high social identity threat but not when they are under low social identity threat. These results provide evidence for our central hypothesis that social identity protection benefits self-improvement motivation on a status-defining dimension when it serves to reduce social identity threat. Additionally, Experiment 3 revealed that offering members of a low status group social identity protection by inducing a high contextual value for an ingroup dimension (i.e., information conveying that an ingroup dimension was highly valued by future employers), also improves their motivation on an outgroup dimension. Specifically, the results of Experiment 3 revealed that low status group members feel more threatened in contexts that emphasize the importance of an outgroup dimension. However, a simultaneous emphasis on the importance of the ingroup dimension (social identity protection) successfully reduces this threat. Importantly, highest persistence and actual
performance on the outgroup dimension were found when low status group members were not only informed that performance on the outgroup dimension was important for career success, but when the importance of the ingroup dimension was also emphasized. Thus in order for members of a low status group to persist and perform well on an outgroup dimension it is important that they are aware of the importance of this outgroup dimension. However, since a context that assigns high importance to the outgroup dimension causes devalued group members to feel threatened, social identity protection in the form of acknowledging the importance of the ingroup dimension is needed as well to reduce threat and improve motivated performance on the outgroup dimension. Chapter 2 thus confirmed our central idea that social creativity can actually prepare members of socially devalued groups for improving their performance on status-defining domains, rather than social identity theory’s proposition that all forms of social creativity reduce interest in status improvement behavior.

The experiments reported in Chapter 2 were the first to examine the direct positive link between this type of social creativity and motivated performance on a status-defining dimension on which the ingroup is negatively stereotyped. The results supported our idea that members of devalued groups become more motivated to improve their performance in outgroup domains when they are able to protect their social identity by focusing on their ingroup’s high performance in alternative domains. Moreover, they showed that engagement in social creativity by valuing ingroup dimensions is not necessarily a negative strategy as was previously assumed (Lemaine, Kasterzein, & Personnaz, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) but actually prepares group members for self-improvement behavior.

Chapter 2 did not provide an answer as to how social identity protection improves motivation on outgroup dimensions: Experiment 3 confirmed that contextual value for both the ingroup and the outgroup dimension reduces threat and improves performance motivation. However, mediation analysis revealed that reduced threat did not mediate the effects found on motivation and performance. In other words, Chapter 2 revealed that it is not the reduction in experienced threat that is caused by contextual value for the ingroup dimension that explains why members of a devalued group become more motivated to perform on an outgroup dimension. Chapter 3 and 4 further address the question as to how social identity protection improves performance motivation.
Chapter 3: Social identity protection induces a focus on success

Chapter 3 examined in more detail how social identity threat and social identity protection affect motivation and performance on status-defining outgroup dimensions. More specifically, Chapter 3 examined how social identity threat and social identity protection affect the degree to which people in performance settings cognitively focus on the possibility of succeeding versus the possibility of failing. We argued that whether members of low status groups focus on success or failure while performing on outgroup dimensions predicts whether they are likely to persist in improving their performance on this dimension or whether they will attempt to withdraw from the performance setting. That is, whereas people who focus on failure will vigilantly avoid making mistakes, people who focus on success are more eager to improve their performance, even in domains in which they previously failed such as outgroup domains. The results of Experiments 1 and 2 suggest that social identity threat reduces motivation because it induces a focus on failure rather than a focus on success on the outgroup dimension. Importantly, we again showed the beneficial effects of social identity protection: Offering members of low status groups in threatening contexts social identity protection improves their focus on success. These experiments thus provided evidence for the explanatory process, suggesting that social identity protection increases performance motivation on outgroup dimensions because it induces a focus on success.

In addition to low status group members’ focus on success versus failure, Chapter 3 sheds more light on a specific type of situation that is threatening to social identity, namely ‘outgroup settings’ in which individual group members are surrounded by members of a higher status outgroup. We examined how outgroup contexts affect members of low status groups and why these contexts are so threatening. The results of Experiment 1 revealed that placing members of a low status group (e.g., women) in a performance setting with outgroup members (e.g., men) can have very negative consequences: Women have a more negative attitude towards performing on the outgroup dimension and are more focused on failure when anticipating a situation in which men are present than when anticipating a situation in which women are present. Additionally, compared to ingroup contexts, outgroup contexts induce women to protect their social identity by attaching a high value to an ingroup dimension. Examining in more detail the cause for these effects of threat revealed that when low status group members are placed in outgroup contexts they expect that the outgroup members present attach a higher value to the
outgroup’s performance dimension than to an ingroup dimension on which ingroup members are successful. We statistically showed that this perceived emphasis on the outgroup dimension, in turn, induces low status group members to focus on failure rather than success and to protect their social identity by personally valuing an ingroup dimension. Experiment 1 thus clearly outlined why it is that outgroup contexts are more threatening than ingroup contexts: Outgroup contexts are perceived to emphasize the importance of outgroup dimensions. However, since low status group members are aware of the negative stereotypes concerning the performance of members of their group, they become focused on avoiding possible failure. In this way outgroup contexts can lead low status group members to give up their aspirations on status-defining dimensions.

On a more positive note, Experiment 2 revealed that the negative effects of outgroup contexts can be alleviated by contextually emphasizing the value of an ingroup dimension. An emphasis on the ingroup dimension induces members of low status groups to focus on success, even in threatening outgroup contexts. However, the results of Experiment 1 and 2 showed that in order for a contextual value on the ingroup dimension to successfully improve focus on success, it has to come from the immediate context (the other people present in the performance setting, Experiment 2) rather than from a source outside the performance context (information on how valued ingroup dimensions are in general, Experiment 1). Thus, the expectations of low status group members that outgroup members will exclusively value the outgroup dimension are so strong that outgroup contexts only become less threatening when low status group members become convinced that the outgroup members present do value the ingroup dimension.

In sum, Chapter 3 revealed that outgroup contexts can have very detrimental effects on members of devalued groups, as they induce them to focus on failure on status-defining dimensions. These effects are caused by devalued group members’ perception of outgroup contexts as devaluing the ingroup dimension and emphasizing the outgroup dimension. By explicitly informing devalued group members that others present (be they ingroup or outgroup members) do value the ingroup dimension and are not exclusively concerned with the outgroup dimension, a focus on success on the outgroup dimension is improved, even in threatening outgroup contexts.

Chapter 4: Social identity protection differs from self-affirmation
In Chapter 4 we revealed the additional benefits of social identity protection by comparing it to the effects of a more individualistic type of identity protection, namely personal self-affirmation (Steele, 1988). The experiments reported in Chapter 4 show that both personal and social identity protection can motivate group members towards higher performance on a status-defining dimension. However, they do so in different ways. First, Experiment 1 and 3 confirmed that personal and social identity protection operate through different levels of the self-concept. We showed that, because social identity protection by valuing ingroup dimensions depends on a specific group membership, it specifically motivates those group members who feel identified with this group (i.e., who base part of their self-concept on this group). Personal self-affirmation, on the other hand, directly improves self-esteem and is therefore motivating to low and high identified group members alike. Second, we showed an important benefit of social identity protection. Because personal and social identity protection center group members on different parts of their identity, they also affect the manner in which group members strive to improve their outcomes (individually vs. collectively). Although high identifiers generally are more likely than low identifiers to improve their outcomes by striving for social change that benefits the whole group, Experiment 2 revealed that highly identified group members are more likely to strive for collective status improvement (e.g., by helping other ingroup members to improve their performance on outgroup dimensions) following social identity protection than following personal self-affirmation. Thus, offering highly identified group members ways to protect their social identity allows them to strive for higher performance on outgroup dimensions without turning away from their ingroup. This is an important finding as social equality is more likely to be achieved when talented group members who do succeed in achieving upward mobility remain concerned with the outcomes of other ingroup members and use the power they acquired to challenge the existing status differences between low and high status groups, helping other group members to achieve higher status as well.

The effects of social identity protection were different, however, for group members who did not feel strongly identified with the low status group. The reactions of low identified group members to social identity protection can be characterized as indicating categorization threat (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 2002; Barreto & Ellemers, 2003). Because low identified group members do not want to be seen as members of the low status group, they show lower motivation on an outgroup dimension when they are treated as members of the low status group than
when they are approached as unique individuals. Moreover, although in general low identifiers are more inclined to pursue individual mobility strategies, treating them as group members rather than as individuals induces them to show even more interest in behaviors aimed at improving their personal status in ways that can damage their ingroup (e.g., condoning negative treatment of other women). In conclusion, offering highly identified group members social identity protection has important beneficial effects, as it leads to behavior aimed at social change rather than individual mobility strategies. However, low identifiers are more likely to benefit from personal rather than social self-affirmation as social self-affirmation implies that they are being seen as group members, which potentially threatens their self-concept.

Finally, in Experiment 3 we concluded our examination of the psychological process that underlies the increased motivation on outgroup dimensions that is found when low status group members are offered ways to protect their identity. Continuing on the path we took in Chapter 3, in which specific emotions and performance styles indicating a focus on success or failure were examined, Chapter 4 examined a broader psychological concept that is expected to be directly related to performance motivation in performance settings. Specifically, we measured how members of low status groups perceive performance settings more generally by measuring their cognitive appraisals of these contexts as threatening or challenging (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). The results revealed that both personal self-affirmation and social identity protection induce highly identified group members to perceive the testing situation as a challenge. However, among low identifiers personal self-affirmation leads to a higher level of perceived challenge than does social identity protection. Importantly, Chapter 4 added to the results of Chapter 3 by confirming with mediation analyses that the degree to which participants perceived the performance setting as a positive challenge explained why personal self-affirmation induced high performance motivation in all participants, while social identity protection specifically induced high performance motivation among high identifiers. Additionally, although the results for threat appraisals resembled those found for challenge appraisals, as in Experiment 3 in Chapter 2, experienced threat did not predict motivation on the outgroup dimension. This finding confirms the notion that although perceptions of threat and challenge might appear to be two sides of the same coin, their ability to predict performance motivation is very different. Although threat is a negative state, alleviating such
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threat does not enhance motivation. Instead, the perception of challenge has the potential to motivate individuals to move towards their goals. These results converge with the results found in Chapter 3, which revealed that although outgroup contexts induce a focus on failure, social identity protection allows members of socially devalued groups to focus on success. By inducing group members to perceive a performance setting as challenging, social identity protection allows low status group members to focus on success and to be motivated to achieve higher outcomes on status-defining dimensions.

**Theoretical implications**

**Implications for social identity theory**

The results reported in this dissertation have important theoretical implications for social identity theory in general and the conceptualization of social creativity in particular. Whereas social identity theory up till now has defined social creativity as a last resort strategy that group members will only use when individual mobility and social change seem impossible, our results redefine social creativity as a preparatory strategy that reduces social identity threat and subsequently allows members of socially devalued groups to work towards individual mobility or social change. The results of our experiments indicate that when individuals cognitively improve the perception they have of their ingroup’s worth (social creativity), this does not necessarily blind them from the fact that their group has lower status and receives lower outcomes. However, in settings of acute social identity threat, for example when devalued group members are confronted with high status outgroup members, the stress response that results from social identity threat can disable individuals from taking appropriate action to improve their outcomes. For example, we showed that threatening outgroup contexts induce low status group members to focus on the possibility of failing rather than on succeeding on the outgroup dimension, undermining their motivation to improve performance on this dimension. Importantly, we revealed that social creativity can diminish the immediate debilitating effects of social identity threat on performance motivation, hereby allowing people to improve their situation through individual mobility or social change.

In this dissertation we addressed one specific form of social creativity, focusing members of socially devalued groups on the positive characteristics of their ingroup. This is not to say that all forms of social creativity will likewise have
beneficial effects on performance motivation. In fact, some social creativity strategies (such as devaluation of the outgroup domain) directly reduce motivated performance on status-defining dimensions. Thus, consistent with social identity theory we find that some forms of social creativity can be very detrimental to opportunities for status improvement. In fact, it is exactly for this reason that we underline the importance of offering members of socially devalued groups opportunities to improve the perception of the ingroup’s worth by emphasizing positive aspects of the ingroup: When individuals can improve their social identity in this way, they are less likely to resort to social creativity strategies that will steer them away from self-improvement in status-defining domains.

Another important theoretical implication that follows from our results is that the road from social identity threat to individual mobility or social change strategies is not necessarily as direct as social identity theory has suggested. Research that sprang from social identity theory has often addressed immediate reactions to social identity threat and the variables that determine whether members of socially devalued groups strive to improve their actual outcomes by pursuing individual mobility strategies or instigating collective action (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 2002; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Ellemers, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990). This research perspective tends to suggest, however, that if members of socially devalued groups do not directly respond to social devaluation by instigating collective action or by taking advantage of their individual opportunities, they never will. By contrast, we argue that the mobilization of members of socially devalued groups to strive for better collective outcomes or to aim for success in domains and contexts in which the ingroup is negatively stereotyped will not necessarily be immediately achieved whenever group devaluation is evident. Instead, it can be a lengthy process in which group members need to not only perceive their unequal outcomes but also need to find the motivation to strive for better outcomes. Our results indicate that social creativity can play a very important part in mobilizing members of socially devalued groups to improve their personal or collective outcomes. By turning individuals’ attention to the positive aspects of their group they become focused on success on the outgroup dimension and challenged to improve their performance in this domain. In essence, we argue that the different types of social identity protection that were proposed in social identity theory (individual mobility, social change and social creativity) do not cancel each other out. Instead, we think one can follow from the other or they can be pursued side by side. Social creativity is then not always the last resort to which devalued group members turn when they see no
possibility to improve the status of their group, but can be a first step towards achieving greater social equality.

**The advantages of protecting social identity**

The results discussed in this dissertation not only reveal that social identity protection helps to improve performance on status-defining dimensions, they also point to the important advantages that social identity protection has over more individualistic forms of identity protection such as self-affirmation (Steele, 1988). Although our results revealed that both individual and social forms of self-affirmation induce devalued group members to become more positively challenged and motivated on an outgroup dimension, we show that social identity protection allows members of socially devalued groups to strive for higher performance on outgroup dimensions without turning away from their ingroup. Our results indicate that group members who feel identified with their low status ingroup will be more inclined to pursue collective status improvement when they have the opportunity to protect their social identity than when they are offered an opportunity to improve their personal identity. There are numerous historic examples of successful collective action, such as the American Black Civil Rights movement and feminist movements that fought for women’s right to vote, that highlight the important part it can play in improving collective outcomes. Furthermore, although individual mobility is often presented as the royal road to equal opportunities for low status groups such as ethnic minorities and women, there is ample research to suggest that the effects of individual mobility on more general improvement of group status are limited, and can even be negative. First, opportunities for upward individual mobility are often highly restricted (‘tokenism’, Wright, 2001a) allowing for successful individual mobility of only a limited number of highly talented low status group members (tokens). Second, even when some members of the low status group do succeed in achieving positions of status or power, this does not necessarily improve the outcomes of other members of the low status groups. By contrast, individual mobility can seriously undermine efforts of members of devalued groups to achieve higher outcomes. This is because the process of individual status enhancement often entails that individuals distance themselves from their negatively evaluated group. Therefore, successful upwardly mobile individuals are not necessarily willing to help other group members to achieve similar high outcomes (Ellemers, 2001; Ellemers & Van Laar, in press; Ellemers, Van Den Heuvel, De Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004; Wright & Taylor, 1999). In fact, research has found that low status group members who achieve upward mobility on their own
are likely to hold negative attitudes towards low status group members (Ellemers et al., 2004; Wright & Taylor, 1999). Because successful tokens are likely to be seen as experts on the abilities of other members of their group, their negative attitudes towards this low status group will be especially damaging to other members of the low status group (Ellemers & Van Laar, in press). Additionally, when only a small number of low status group members achieve positions of higher status, as is the case in token settings, this serves to legitimize the unequal outcomes between groups. This is because the success of some low status group members suggests that achieving high status is in fact possible for members of all social categories, affirming the notion that low status group members themselves are responsible for their lower outcomes. Finally, individual mobility not only undermines the success of individual mobility attempts of other group members, it also undermines the group’s potential to collectively strive for higher status. Previous research had found that low status group members become less interested in collective action when they think other group members will opt for individual mobility (Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Moreover, since collective action is often set in motion by talented leaders who stimulate group members to participate in collective protest (Watson, Chemers & Preiser, 2001), individual mobility drains low status groups from individuals who can take on this part.

Since individual mobility alone is not likely to result in more general social equality between low and high status groups, it is important to examine the factors that induce group members to strive for collective forms of status improvement. When successful members of devalued groups remain concerned with the welfare of their group, they are more likely to serve as role models for other members of their group, they are less likely to undermine collective action tendencies within their group and they will less likely serve as the exception proving the rule that low status group members are not entitled to receive better outcomes. The results discussed in this dissertation suggest that highly identified group members are more likely to remain concerned with the status of their entire group when they can protect their social identity with social creativity. In other words, neglecting and devaluing the social identity of members of low status groups in society (e.g., ethnic minorities, women, homosexuals) by persuading them to focus on their personal identity undermines the groups’ potential to collectively strive for better outcomes.

As such, the results presented in this dissertation reveal the limitations of improving the well-being or performance of members of devalued groups by inducing them to focus on their personal identity (Ambady, Paik, Steele, Owen
Smith, & Mitchell, 2004; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2006) or on other social identities than the one that is threatened (Gresky, Ten Eyck, Lord, & McIntyre, 2005; Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999). Although making personal identity salient might improve individual performance on dimensions that define status in society, and be the most optimal strategy for low status group members who do not identify with the group, this strategy also undermines the potential for collective action in low status groups and is not necessarily the strategy of choice for individuals who feel strong ties with their group. By inducing group members to perceive themselves as individuals rather than group members they become less motivated to strive for collective status improvement. By contrast, because social identity protection allows members of low status groups to strive for higher personal performance while simultaneously remaining concerned with the welfare of the group, offering highly identified group members opportunities to protect their social identity might be the most fruitful way to social equality.

A question that follows is how beneficial it actually is to offer members of low status groups social identity protection if it yields high challenge and performance motivation in highly identified group members while simultaneously reducing challenge appraisals and performance motivation among less identified group members. We propose, however, that real world intergroup performance settings often offer clues that potentially protect personal identity as well as clues that improve social identity. Whereas low identifiers are then more likely to search for personal self-affirmation, high identifiers are likely to search for both. The important message that this research offers is that in order to motivate highly identified members of low status groups to pursue collective rather than individual mobility, it is necessary that their search for social self-affirmation does yield possibilities to protect their social identity and does not induce them to resort to personal self-affirmation. For example, contexts that emphasize positive characteristics of low status groups and communicate respect for these groups, allow members of low status groups to become challenged to reach their optimal potential without having to disidentify from their group.

In essence our results highlight the importance of intergroup respect and intergroup differentiation for low status group members' performance motivation. Existing theoretical models such as the mutual intergroup differentiation model (Hewstone & Brown, 1986) and the ingroup projection model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999) argue that in order for subgroups such as ethnic minorities to feel part of a superordinate category (e.g., a multicultural society), they need to be able
to show their distinctive subgroup identity, for instance by focusing on alternative dimensions such as cultural values and religion. Moreover, characteristics of this identity need to be respected and valued by other subgroups, in order for them to feel identified with the superordinate category (see also Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). For example, Huo and Molina (2006) showed that in a pluralistic society such as the United States, perceiving acknowledgement of and respect towards one's subgroup leads ethnic minorities to identify with the common identity (i.e., Americans) and to have more trust in the justice system. Similarly, Steele (2004) argues that minorities in integrated settings need a sense of 'identity safety', a psychological state that arises in contexts in which individuals feel that their identity is valued, in order for them to feel comfortable enough to achieve their optimal potential. Our research highlights the importance of these ideas and provides an important extension to these previous lines of research. We find that by acknowledging and valuing the positive characteristics of socially devalued groups, members of these groups are more able to remain identified with status-defining dimensions and will feel more challenged and motivated to perform on these dimensions. This suggests that a society that communicates respect towards subgroups by valuing the dimensions that they find important not only enhances well-being and a positive attitude towards this society, but also increases low status groups' motivation to perform well on the dimensions that define status in this society.

Another important implication of our results is that they present an alternative route to social equality between low and high status groups in society. While it has proved to be difficult to remove the chronic threats that low status groups face in society (discrimination, negative stereotypes, Fiske, 2002, 1998), our results emphasize the important part that challenged group members can play themselves in the process towards social equality. In essence, social identity protection allows members of devalued groups to reappraise the obstacles that their group membership poses as challenges instead of threats, encouraging them to strive to achieve their full potential on status-defining dimensions. This shows that, regardless of whether identity threat lowers motivation among devalued group members or whether the source of this threat can be resolved, affirming and boosting social identity improves the perception that one can cope with the threat and allows devalued group members to confront social inequality and work towards status improvement. Thus, in addition to efforts to eradicate discrimination, social identity protection forms an important vehicle towards the removal of inequality.
**Practical implications**

Our findings have important implications for the status improvement behavior of members of devalued groups such as women and ethnic minorities in real world settings such as work environments and school settings. Our results indicate that in order to motivate devalued group members to perform on dimensions that are important for social status - such as employment and education – they must perceive that their group is valued and respected. When the context emphasizes only how important it is to perform well in domains on which high status groups excel such as academic achievement and high status jobs, this increases social identity threat among members of devalued groups. This in turn leads these individuals to become less motivated to perform on these dimensions, encouraging them to withdraw and emphasize ingroup dimensions (e.g., cultural values or religion). One way to achieve higher motivation among devalued group members is by explicitly communicating respect and value for dimensions that positively define their low status groups. For example, women in male dominated companies would be more likely to pursue positions of leadership, regardless of the negative stereotypes concerning women in this domain, if they would perceive that the organizational structure valued women and acknowledged their skills on dimensions other than leadership ability (e.g., social and communication skills). Likewise, by offering programs that allow women to combine work and family, for example by offering opportunities for maternity and parental leave for both parents and by offering day care facilities, companies can communicate that they want women to work in their company and that they value their input. Facilitating the combination of work and family has been shown to improve organizational commitment among female employees (Van Steenbergen, Ellemers & Mooijaart, in press a, in press b). Opportunities for women to protect their social identity are especially important in contexts such as the Netherlands in which a high percentage of women work in lower level part-time jobs and stop working when they start a family (Portegijs, Boelens, & Olsthoorn, 2004). Similarly, ethnic minority children would be more motivated to strive for high academic performance in schools that acknowledge and value their ethnic background. For example, through diversity teaching programs that inform children about different cultures and religions and about the importance of diversity and intergroup respect (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado & Gurin, 2002; Gurin, Nagda & Lopez, 2003), it can be communicated to ethnic minority children that the
school setting acknowledges and values diversity. By expressing value for status-defining dimensions as well as dimensions that are important to members of low status groups, integrated performance settings can become settings in which members of lower status groups feel challenged to counter the negative stereotypes that exist about their group and actually achieve higher performance on status-defining dimensions.

Our research also speaks to debates about the integration of ethnic minorities into multicultural societies such as the Netherlands and the United States. In an effort to reduce differentiation by ethnicity and religion, various European governments are discussing and implementing policies that limit ethnic minorities in the expression of their identity. For example, in 2004 the French government introduced a policy that prevents individuals in governmental or education settings from wearing symbols that indicate their religious identity, such as the Islamic veil or the Jewish Kippah. In the same vein, the Dutch government is discussing new policies that require immigrants who apply for Dutch citizenship to give up citizenship in the country from which they originated. In essence, these policies are based on the assumption that the best way for ethnic minorities to integrate in a multicultural society is by focusing on the dimensions that define status in this society and by disidentifying from their ethnic background. However, these policies neglect the psychological need of ethnic minorities for a positive social identity. The research presented in this dissertation suggests that ethnic minorities can perceive such measures as devaluing their ethnic identity. Moreover, the social identity threat that results from these measures decreases the chances that ethnic minorities will work for better outcomes. Instead it induces them to protect their social identity, for example by showing how they are different from other groups or withdrawing from integrated performance settings. As suggested by Berry’s acculturation model (Berry, 1997, 2001), true integration only takes place in settings that value characteristics of both majority and minority groups. By contrast, societies that communicate low regard for minorities, and that ask them to assimilate into the host society and to abandon their cultural background, induce minorities to segregate, resulting in suboptimal outcomes for both society in general (e.g., intergroup conflict) and minority group members in particular (e.g., negative health outcomes, low well-being). The emphasis on dimensions that are typical of the higher status groups in society that is expressed by such measures could then actually cause more rather than less differentiation between groups (see also Barreto & Ellemers, in press). Importantly, our results suggest that these policies will also
erode the potential of low status groups to collectively strive for higher outcomes as these measures will induce successful ethnic minority members to emphasize their individual identity, hereby reducing their tendency to help other members of their ethnic group to integrate into society and achieve success. Another important drawback of policies aimed at reducing the expression of ethnic diversity is that it signals to members of the dominant ethnic group that they do not have to be respectful of the positive characteristics of ethnic minority groups. Given that our results show that outgroup members can be very important sources of both social identity threat, through their mere presence, and social identity protection, through the value they express for dimensions of importance to the low status group, these policies further limit the chances that ethnic minority groups will successfully integrate in society. By contrast, our results suggest that members of ethnic minority groups will be more likely to integrate into a multicultural society, strive for high status within this society and help other group members to achieve the same, when governmental policies not only emphasize the importance of dimensions that define societal status (education and work), but simultaneously communicate respect for ethnic backgrounds, for example by allowing ethnic minorities to express this ethnic background, by valuing cultural diversity and by inducing members of the dominant ethnic group to acknowledge and respect people with a different ethnicity.

**Limitations and suggestions for further research**

One important extension of our research would be to show that other forms of social identity protection than the ones that were offered in our research, such as respecting the ingroup’s norms and values and valuing diversity, also improve performance motivation of low status group members on status-defining dimensions. In this dissertation we examined the beneficial effects of a specific social creativity strategy that improves social identity by increasing the perception of the ingroup as efficacious on alternative domains. It would, however, be interesting to show that manipulations that protect social identity by more generally increasing the perception of the ingroup as respected by other groups, similarly improve low status group members’ performance motivation in status-defining domains. This would provide us with other practical implications of social identity protection in real world performance settings. For example, it would be interesting to examine whether employment contexts that value diversity rather than advocate color blindness (Purdie-Vaughns, 2004) are more likely to motivate members of low status groups to pursue high status jobs. We would also expect that, because these contexts
acknowledge rather than neglect low status group members’ social identity, they induce low status group members who do succeed in achieving a position of power to help other members of their group to achieve the same.

An important question that follows from the research presented here is whether members of high status groups can be stimulated to express more value for the positive characteristics of low status groups. Our research shows that in integrated performance settings low status group members expect that high status outgroup members will only value status-defining dimensions and hold low regard for the dimensions that positively define the low status group. As a result, integrated performance settings will negatively affect the performance of members of low status groups unless they perceive that outgroup members do value the dimensions that positively define their low status group. However, because high status groups are motivated to protect their high status position (Ellemers, Doosje, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1992; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), it might be difficult to motivate members of high status groups in society to acknowledge the positive characteristics of other groups. Previous research has shown, however, that although high status groups will protect their advantaged position in the social hierarchy, this does not mean they will not acknowledge other groups’ higher performance on alternative performance dimensions (Van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 1990). We predict that, as long as high status groups feel secure about their position in the social hierarchy, they can be motivated to express value for lower status groups and be respectful of the domains of importance to low status groups (cultural values, religion). By teaching members of high status groups in integrated performance settings such as schools and work settings about the importance of acknowledging and valuing diversity, high status group members might come to express more value for the positive characteristics of groups with lower societal status. For example, through contact programs and diversity training, employees with different cultural backgrounds can learn about the positive characteristics of other ethnic groups and can come to respect and value diversity (Cox, 1993, Rynes & Rosen, 1995; Lindsley, 1998).

Another extension of our work is to examine how social identity threat and social identity protection affect physiological reactions that indicate threat and challenge. The biopsychosocial model of Blascovich and colleagues (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, & Salomon, 1999; Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996) provides a framework by which the acute physiological changes in threat and challenge that individuals experience when they are in a performance setting can be measured. The
advantage of measuring threat and challenge on a physiological level is that these measures do not depend on participants’ awareness or willingness to report the degree to which they feel threatened. Furthermore, with this methodology, changes in threat or challenge appraisals can be monitored over time. The results found in Experiment 3 in Chapter 2 and Experiment 3 in Chapter 4, for instance, indicate that the degree to which participants reported threat was not related to their motivation to perform on an outgroup dimension. In addition, in Chapter 4, Experiment 3 showed that participants’ reported challenge appraisals were related to performance motivation. It is possible that participants under identity threat are either reluctant or unable to report the identity threat they experience which might explain why their reports of threat are not related to their performance motivation. For example, Johns (2005) has shown that when stigmatized group members have to perform on a dimension on which their ingroup is negatively stereotyped, they become motivated to avoid their anxiety and do not report how threatened they actually feel. This would explain why the results found for challenge did mediate the effects of social identity protection on motivation: Although participants might not have accurately reported the threat they experienced, it might still be likely that they would indicate not being challenged. Physiological measures of threat and challenge assess the motivational state participants are in outside of their control, and allow for a categorization of physiological responses as indicating either threat or challenge. Moreover, physiological measures allow for continuous measurement of how social identity threat and protection affect members of low status groups. Whereas administering multiple consecutive self-reports of challenge and threat is problematic, it is possible to measure the effects of consecutive experimental manipulations by continuously measuring physiological reactions indicating challenge and threat. For example, assessing physiological responses would allow us to examine in detail the degree to which outgroup versus ingroup contexts result in physiological threat reactions and the degree to which a subsequent manipulation of social identity protection is able to transform a physiological threat response into a challenge response.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results from the experiments presented in this dissertation consistently show that ingroup dimensions are important sources of social identity protection that lead low status group members to focus on success and become challenged to improve their performance on status-defining dimensions.
Moreover, we have shown the important benefits of providing social identity protection rather than inducing members of low status groups to focus on their individual identity: Members of low status groups who are able to protect their social identity from the threats that social devaluation poses are more likely to strive for higher personal as well as collective status. The insights that emerge from this work redefine social creativity from a purely cognitive strategy that allows members of low status groups to protect social identity to a vehicle to maintain motivation on outgroup dimensions. These results show that social creativity can have important implications for status-improving behavior and thus “strike back” to reduce social inequality.