Is this about me?

Responding to subtle discrimination – beyond an individual versus group perspective

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Chapter 1 | Introduction

Introducing subtle discrimination

When I was at the post office, a white male was waiting to be served by an African American post office assistant. His number was called but he was slow approaching the counter so the assistant jokingly said: “Sorry, can’t help you, you are too late”. The white male got very angry at the assistant and became increasingly rude in his communication. The African American assistant came to the assistant who was serving me and said: “Will you take over this customer, this is not going to work out anymore”. I was left wondering whether the white male was just nasty and could not appreciate a joke, or had responded the way he did because of the ethnicity of the post office assistant. Clearly the post office assistant interpreted the behavior in the form of prejudice, but I was not sure. To me this was the clearest demonstration I had ever had of how ambiguous discrimination can be.

(personal experience)

This example of an unpleasant interaction that is tinted by possible underlying prejudice illustrates how unclear it can be to targets of discrimination (and to those observing the interaction), whether the negative treatment they receive is due to their individual behaviors, such as a mistimed joke, or due to the group-based prejudice of another. This ambiguity for members of stigmatized groups regarding the causes of their personal outcomes is illustrative of the kind of discrimination that takes place in society at present (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). Whereas in the past the blatant expression of prejudice was not only common but also accepted within society, past decades have seen the social and legal sanctioning of these more overt forms of prejudice. In consequence discriminatory behavior has taken on more subtle forms that are less easily detected by targets of discrimination (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002b; Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998). Expressions of these more subtle 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 or, not necessitating actual interaction, in unjustified negative personal treatment (i.e. not being invited for a job interview or accepted for a job). These types of expression can create considerable ambiguity concerning whether the (negative) personal treatment received is due to one’s personal deservingness (such as lack of ability/interpersonal skills) or due to one’s membership of a devalued group and the prejudice of another.

It is this ambiguity concerning whether treatment is individually or group based that will be the focus of this thesis. Specifically I will consider how individuals ‘switch’ from an individual level focus in which one’s personal characteristics are most salient to a group level focus in which one’s group membership is considered a possible cause of one’s personal outcomes. I will focus on the following two questions: When do targets of prejudice perceive a situation to be discriminatory? How do these ambiguous situations influence targets’ psychological well-being?

Below I first outline in more detail what constitutes subtle discrimination. I then present a working model to show the processes underlying responses to subtle discrimination. This working model will also be used as a framework to review prior research in this area and introduce the studies conducted in this dissertation.

**Subtle discrimination**

The historical development of expressions of discrimination from more blatant to more subtle forms of discrimination means that for members of stigmatized groups it can be very unclear how to attribute their personal outcomes. Crocker and Major (1989) have defined this attributional ambiguity as the uncertainty 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. Not only is this an unpleasant emotional state to be in – given the strong evidence that individuals dislike uncertainty (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990; Kagan, 1972) – it can also lead to misinterpretations of situations. Indeed members of stigmatized groups may both miss instances of discrimination or over-interpret situations as due to discrimination.

An early experiment by Kleck and Strenta (1980) showed how strong and misleading this uncertainty can be. In this classic study, the researchers led participants to believe that their interaction partner thought they had a stigma (facial scar or disability). In fact the interaction partner received no stigma information and displayed behavior similar to the control group. Nevertheless, participants who ‘thought’ they had a stigma perceived the interaction more
negatively than a ‘non-stigmatized’ control group. In this case participants who thought they had a stigma were very focused on their group membership and possible negative treatment on the basis thereof. Clearly the opposite can occur such that individuals are so focused on individual level characteristics of the situation that they do not realize they are being treated on the basis of to their group membership and attribute their failure to personal inadequacies instead of their devalued group membership. Both over and under attributing situations to discrimination can have negative consequences for well-being, albeit in different ways. Below I further discuss possible determinants of this ‘individual’ versus ‘group’ level focus on perceptions of discrimination.

Situations that are attributionally ambiguous can have negative consequences for group member’s well-being (i.e., self esteem) both at an individual and at a group level: They can have negative consequences for personal self esteem when individuals blame negative treatment that can in fact be attributed to their group membership on themselves. When a situation is attributed to discrimination, this can have negative consequences for collective self esteem (i.e., one’s feelings with respect to one’s group, Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) as group members realize that their own group is devalued by others. In fact, situations that are ambiguous can threaten well-being both at the individual and the group level, precisely because group members are experiencing uncertainty concerning whether to blame themselves or their group membership for their personal outcomes. Indeed, as pointed out by Crocker and Major (1998), paradoxically it may in some ways be less threatening to experience more old-fashioned and blatant forms of discrimination as opposed to modern and subtle discrimination: At least when discrimination is blatant it is clear to targets how to attribute the cause of their negative treatment (see also Cihangir, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2009).

In sum, attributionally ambiguous discrimination can be misleading concerning group members’ perceptions of discrimination, they may either fail to perceive discrimination when it occurs, or misattribute personal treatment to the prejudice of another when this is not the cause of their outcomes. Furthermore, this ambiguity concerning the causes of personal outcomes can have rather negative consequences for personal well-being as group members may feel threatened at an individual and/or group level. In studying these processes it is important to look at their determinants. Above I pointed out that individuals may be focused on more individual (i.e., attributing negative treatment to personal characteristics, experiencing negative personal self esteem) or group level (i.e., attributing negative
treatment to the prejudice of another, experiencing negative collective self esteem) aspects of a situation and that this can determine both the nature of prejudice perceptions as well as well-being responses. Below I present the model of subtle discrimination that has provided the framework for the present dissertation (Figure 1).

Figure 1.1. Perceiving and responding to attributionally ambiguous situations of personal failure/success

This model assumes that individual differences (box A) and situational cues (box B) determine the extent to which group members are focused on individual level aspects (i.e., personal characteristics, interpersonal liking) or group level aspects (i.e., devalued group membership, social identity) of the situation (box C). The relative focus on individual or group level aspects of a situation in turn influences the extent to which group members perceive discrimination (box D), as well as their motivational concerns with respect to this situation (box E). Motivational concerns can be the need to protect the self from personal failure (i.e., individual level) or to protect or enhance one’s group membership in response to devaluation of one’s group (i.e., group level). Perceptions of discrimination and motivational concerns result in certain outcomes for the target, ranging from personal well-being to broader perceptions of justice (box F). In the following sections I will use this framework to organize and review recent work in the area of subtle discrimination as well as to introduce the studies conducted as part of this dissertation.
A. Individual Characteristics

Stigma consciousness

Research by Mendoza Denton and Pinel indicates that members of low status groups can differ in the extent to which they are likely to perceive discrimination against their race and gender respectively (Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, Davis, & Pietrzak, 2002; Pinel, 1999). Mendoza Denton and colleagues developed a scale of race rejection sensitivity and provided evidence that ethnic minority members who score highly on this scale were more likely to perceive interaction partners and personal treatment as (racially) prejudiced (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002). Similarly, Pinel’s stigma consciousness scale (1999) measures the extent to which members of minority groups are attentive to signs of gender discrimination. In a series of studies Pinel showed that people high in stigma consciousness were more likely to report past experiences of discrimination and expect future discrimination. Recent research by Kaiser and colleagues indicates that individuals who are high in stigma consciousness are in fact more attentive to prejudice related cues at a subconscious level (Kaiser, Vick, & Brook, 2006). In a similar vein, research by Inman and Baron (1996) indicates that members of disadvantaged groups (i.e., women) are more likely than members of privileged groups (i.e., men) to perceive discrimination against other disadvantaged groups (i.e., African Americans). Note that this is not necessarily due to differing positions of men versus women with respect to African Americans: In this context both men and (White) women could be considered privileged with respect to African Americans. The explanation given here is that women, having personally experienced discrimination, are more able to recognize prejudice in their encounter with others than men who have little experience of discrimination. Therefore, group members can be more attentive to discrimination when they are chronically aware of stigma (i.e. high in rejection sensitivity, stigma consciousness) and/or themselves have had many past experiences of discrimination. Obviously these aspects can not always be separated and the extent to which group members are chronically aware of their stigma may be highly related to the extent to which they have experienced discrimination in the past.

Social categorization and group identification

One of the tenets of Self Categorization Theory (Turner, 1987) is that individuals cognitively structure their environment to perceive the position of themselves and others in a social world. Seeing social structures in one’s
environment gives meaning to and enables individuals to process their environment. Individuals can give meaning to their environment at different levels of abstraction such as at a purely individual level (i.e., inter-individual comparisons) or at an intermediate level (i.e., intergroup comparisons). One of the focuses of this dissertation is to consider the relative influence of determinants that focus individuals on ‘individual level aspects’ of a situation, with no reference to group membership (i.e., individual level), as opposed to factors that increase the salience of one’s group membership (i.e., intermediate or, in this dissertation, ‘group’ level). This concept will be discussed in more detail in section C of the introduction. As will also become clear in the course of this introduction, this may influence both the extent to which individuals perceive a situation as discriminatory as well as their motivational concerns. I consider the individual versus group level focus a cognitive factor that determines how people categorize their environment.

By contrast, research in the area of subtle discrimination has mainly focused on a more ‘emotional’ component of individual’s group membership (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; see also Stroebe, Lodewijkx & Spears, 2005), the extent to which they identify with their group. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) people vary in the extent to which group membership is personally and emotionally meaningful to them. In consequence, some members identify more with the group(s) they belong to than others. Studies looking at the relation between group identification and perceptions of and appraisals of situations as discriminatory have indicated that the more group members identify with their group, the more likely they are to perceive and appraise situations as discriminatory (e.g., Eccleston & Major, 2006; Operario & Fiske, 2001). These studies indicate that in considering targets’ propensity to perceive discrimination, it is important to consider how central the group is to the self. It is likely that high identifiers are more attentive to discrimination cues than low identifiers – in other words, they are more focused on group level aspects of their surroundings.

Turning back to Self Categorization Theory and my definition of the individual versus group level focus I assume that social identification may aid, but is not a prerequisite for prejudice perceptions. Rather the salience of cognitive categories should be sufficient to enhance prejudice perceptions.

B. Situational cues

Situations can differ in the extent to which they make individual or group level aspects of a situation salient to group members. This focus can be caused by
characteristics of the other person group members are interacting with but also more generally by the nature of the situation or the type of information offered in any given situation. For example, information that already offers some kind of categorization (i.e., salaries of men versus women) may elicit a stronger group level focus than information that does not do this (i.e., salaries of a number of individuals with no special reference to gender). Situational cues may interact with individual differences to enhance, or inhibit, the extent to which individuals perceive discrimination and influence their motivational responses. For example, an individual who is high in stigma consciousness may be more likely to perceive discrimination when processing information containing evidence of discrimination (see also Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, & Hemker 1986).

**Characteristics of the perpetrator.**

Surprisingly little research considers how differences in perpetrator attitudes and behavior influence targets’ responses to possible discrimination. Research mainly stems from the area of interethnic interactions, considering, for example, how implicit and explicit attitudes of a perpetrator influence interethnic interactions (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002). Interestingly, the main finding of this research is that perpetrator’s implicit racial attitudes, rather than their explicit behaviors, are determinant of target’s perceptions of, and well-being during, interethnic communication. Thus research by Dovidio and colleagues (2002) revealed that White Americans’ score on an implicit measure of prejudice influenced the extent to which they were perceived as biased during interethnic interactions by both the African American communication partner as well as observers of the situation. By contrast, explicit reports of prejudice by White Americans did not influence perceptions of bias on the side of the target or observer. This research indicates that targets of discrimination are able to pick up very subtle cues of prejudice and that it is the implicit intergroup attitudes on the side of the perpetrator that can cue a target to group level aspects of a situation.

At a more explicit level, research indicates that the reasons given to targets for the negative treatment they receive (that can be attributed to the prejudice of another) can determine the extent to which targets perceive situations as discriminatory. Research by Kappen and Branscombe (2001) revealed that targets who received discriminatory treatment but were given a deflecting and gender related reason for their treatment (i.e., you received this treatment because you are too small) attributed their treatment less to prejudice than those who were given an
explicit reason (i.e., you received this treatment because of your gender). Similarly, the extent to which a perpetrator’s behavior is perceived as intended to discriminate and/or harmful to the target influences the extent to which targets (and observers) attribute negative treatment to discrimination (Swim, Scott, Sechrist, Campbell, & Stangor, 2003). This research indicates that more explicit information on attitudes or underlying reasons for perpetrator’s behaviors can influence the extent to which targets attribute the behavior of the perpetrator to discrimination.

In sum, the (little) research that has considered the influence of perpetrators’ attitudes and perceived behavior (both explicit and implicit) on targets’ perceptions of prejudice reveals how perceptive targets can be to the prejudice of others, even when it is not explicit, but at the same time, how easily they can be deflected from perceiving, or making attributions to discrimination. It is important to note that in contrast to the research by Dovidio and colleagues (2002), the studies just reviewed are more ‘explicit’ in two ways: Firstly, they actually inform targets (to a greater or lesser extent) that a situation may be discriminatory, secondly, they explicitly ask (rather than implicitly measuring) the extent to which targets felt this situation could be attributed to discrimination. This means that one cannot be sure whether targets are actually deflected from perceiving a situation as discriminatory, or are wary of attributing/reporting a situation as discriminatory. It highlights the importance of considering both more subtle ways of providing cues concerning whether a situation is discriminatory (one of the foci of the second chapter of this dissertation) as well as designing implicit measures of prejudice.

Nature of situation

Many situations in which people encounter discrimination are by nature very individualistic, enhancing a focus on the self (see also Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe, 2009). Indeed, as also reflected by the experimental paradigms used (e.g., Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Sechrist, Swim, & Stangor, 2004), discrimination may manifest itself in settings in which individual evaluations take place, such as in job applicant evaluations, promotion decisions or class admission. This type of situation is strongly associated with merit beliefs that assume that individual achievements are the result of and the reward for hard work. Therefore, in first instance, individual failure may be attributed to merit based reasons (i.e., lack of personal ability, hard work) rather than the prejudice of another person. On the other end of the continuum are situations that focus on the experience of one’s group membership (e.g., entering a White school as an African American) or even
on group-based disadvantage, such as activities taking place to uncover or address group disadvantage (e.g., women’s rights movements).

**Information format**

The way information is formatted can also make individual or group level aspects of a situation more salient. A number of studies have considered the role of information format in influencing perceptions of discrimination. The basic idea underlying these studies is that people may make information processing errors when provided with information indicative of discrimination because they are not aware of the fact that categorization or systematic treatment on the basis of group membership is taking place. For example, in order to recognize that indeed women receive lower salaries than men in a certain company, it is necessary to compare the salaries of a group of women to a group of men. This requires what I would define as a group level focus: A focus on differences between, as opposed to within, groups. A number of studies have revealed that individuals who were asked to judge salaries and not given information that focused them on possible discrimination were less likely to perceive discrimination indicating that men received higher salaries than women when provided with case-by-case information of male and female salaries. Individuals provided with aggregate salary information that allowed direct comparisons of salaries of males versus females as a group were more likely to perceive discrimination (Cordova, 1992; Crosby et al., 1986; Rutte & Messick, 1996). This research indicates that the way in which information about discrimination is presented influences the processing of information and the ease with which group based discrimination is perceived.

Research on information format highlights a so far neglected area in discrimination research: How do people process information that contains evidence of discrimination and to what extent does the manner in which this information is presented aid or hinder the recognition of prejudice? At the same time it raises an interesting question. Whereas this research provides insights concerning the likelihood of recognizing, in this case, salary discrimination, it only considers this question from the perspective of the observer not of the target of discrimination. This may be an essential difference. Providing some indications concerning possible differences in search behavior depending on an observer or target perspective, studies by Kessler, Mummendey and Leisse (2000) and Postmes, Branscombe, Spears and Young (1999) indicate that people make different types of social comparisons depending on whether they are asked to consider discrimination against themselves.
or against their group (see also the perception of discrimination section). These studies indicate that it may be important to consider how people process information about discrimination not only with regard to other ingroup members but also when concerning themselves personally.

When focusing on how targets process information individual level aspects of a situation (that are unrelated to group membership) such as the extent to which information is personally threatening, may also influence search behavior and ultimately the likelihood of perceiving discrimination. Research by Blanton and colleagues (Blanton, George, & Crocker, 2001) asked people to evaluate satisfaction with pay rate and revealed that whether people were focused on potential changes (i.e., focus on future pay compensation) or not (i.e., focus on past payment) determined the types of social comparisons people made. In fact this research revealed that people who could not change their personal outcomes made more within as opposed to between group comparisons. Supposedly, within group comparisons were less threatening, given that participants were less likely to realize they had received less payment in the past than comparable outgroup members when they did not compare themselves to other outgroup members. This study highlights the necessity of - when focusing on individuals’ personal experiences of discrimination - also considering individual and situational differences that may influence how targets process information. Indeed this is addressed in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

C. Individual versus group level focus

How people respond to situations in which it is ambiguous whether they are being treated on the basis of group membership or personal characteristics is, in my view, largely influenced by the extent to which individual or group level aspects of the situation are more salient to individuals. The salience thereof is determined by individual and situational characteristics (sections A and B). In essence I see the distinction between individual and group level focus as a cognitive process comparable to Turner’s (1987) distinction between abstraction levels within which individuals categorize their social surroundings. Turner distinguishes between a subordinate level of categorization which I refer to as individual focus when applying it to a subtle discrimination context, and an intermediate level of categorization which I refer to as the group level focus. At a subordinate level, individuals are focused on similarities and distinctions between themselves and other individuals. At this level group membership is not salient. By contrast, at the
intermediate level, individuals are focused on similarities to other ingroup members and differences between the own group and other relevant outgroups. Drawing a parallel to the area of subtle discrimination, my definition of individual level focus implies that individuals are focused on aspects of the situation that relate to themselves such as making interpersonal comparisons and/or dealing with (possible) personal failure. Given the individualistic nature of many situations of discrimination that targets are likely to experience (see nature of situation section) it is not surprising that targets confronted with discrimination are (in first instance) likely to focus on individual level aspects of the situation (see also Barreto et al., 2009). For individuals with a ‘group level focus’ aspects of their (devalued) group membership such as the treatment of other ingroup members or the implications of their group membership for their personal future are salient. This is not to say that having an individual level focus precludes perceiving discrimination.

D. Perceptions of discrimination

Above I have discussed indicators that may determine the extent to which individuals are focused on group level aspects of a situation (i.e., stigma consciousness, identification, information format). In most cases these determinants of group level focus also increase attendance to prejudice cues, and perceptions of discrimination and are therefore more or less directly linked to this concept. Yet it is important to note that motivational factors (see section E) may also determine the extent to which people perceive discrimination. In the area of subtle discrimination perceptions of and attributions to discrimination are generally seen as interchangeable concepts. Yet, there is some evidence (although see Chapter 5 of this dissertation) that attributions to discrimination may be the result of motivational processes that can increase or decrease the extent to which people make attributions to discrimination (see Sechrist et al., 2004). Therefore it is not necessarily the case that perceptions and attributions match one another. In other words, perceptions of discrimination may measure the extent to which targets (subconsciously) recognize discrimination, whereas attributions to discrimination may be the result of some (conscious) censoring (i.e., not wanting to blame someone for being prejudiced) and/or motivational influences (see section E). When this is not the case (i.e., no motivational influences) attributions are likely to reflect perceptions of discrimination. More subtle indicators or measures of discrimination are required to consider this distinction (see Operario & Fiske, 2001; Dovidio et al., 2002). In the present dissertation I try to tap into a more subtle indicator of
discrimination by presenting discrimination information via personal outcomes of other ingroup and outgroup members (see Chapter 2).

At a more abstract level, a considerable amount of work has focused on differences between ‘perceptions’ of individual versus group level discrimination. Although this work in fact measures attributions to discrimination, it is considered in this section because the processes that determine the direction of these attributions have been shown to be cognitive (i.e., differences in the frames of reference people have). Nevertheless it is the case that within these cognitive frames of reference different motivational processes may take place (see Postmes, Branscombe, Spears, & Young, 1999).

An early study of Crosby (1984) revealed that although working women reported being aware that women workers generally do not receive the rewards they deserve and are discriminated against, they did not report personal experiences of discrimination. This finding demonstrates that whereas at a more abstract level (treatment of one’s group) group members may perceive unjust treatment, this need not necessarily translate to perceptions of individual level injustice. Why do targets perceive group level discrimination but not discrimination at an individual level? Building on the work of Crosby, numerous studies have found that although members of low status groups recognize discrimination against their group as a whole, they fail to report instances of personal discrimination (D.M.Taylor, Wong-Rieger, McKirnan & Bercusson, 1982; D.M.Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994). This person-group discrimination discrepancy (D.M.Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990) has since been reported across many disadvantaged groups, including women, African Americans and Inuits (see D.M.Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994 for a review).

Much research has focused on possible explanations for these differences between reports of personal as opposed to group level discrimination. The initial and for a long time most prominent explanations centered on possible motivational processes (Crosby, 1984). Motivational explanations assume that perceiving discrimination at a personal level is threatening to members of disadvantaged groups and that therefore lower reports of personal level rather than group level discrimination stem from the need to deny personal discrimination to protect the self (Crosby, 1984). Although not contesting that motivational processes take place, two lines of work provide strong support that the direction of peoples’ attributions is largely determined by cognitive aspects, namely peoples’ frames of reference (Kessler et al., 2000; Postmes et al., 1999). Both lines of work provide evidence that
when group members make judgments of personal discrimination they think at a different categorization level and make different social comparisons than when making judgments of group discrimination. Specifically, both papers argue that in making personal judgments of discrimination people are focusing on their personal identity and using an interpersonal frame of reference. This means that peoples’ judgments of personal discrimination are likely to be influenced by interpersonal comparisons by which group members assess their standing with respect to other individuals. In contrast, when making judgments of group discrimination, group members categorize at a group level and assess the standing of their group with respect to other groups. In support of this idea, both Kessler et al. (2000) and Postmes et al. (1999) in two very different series of studies (field versus laboratory) showed that whether group members made interpersonal versus intergroup comparisons differentially predicted levels of perceived personal and group discrimination respectively. In further support of differentiating between personal versus social identities, Postmes and colleagues also provided evidence that factors feeding into group level categorization, such as group identification, only differentially influenced attributions to group level but not to personal level discrimination.

This research underlines the importance of considering the reference groups individuals use when asked to make judgments of discrimination. Yet it is important to note that the levels of abstraction at which people make judgments of group discrimination may differ. Measures of group discrimination in the above research are referring to discrimination against one’s group within society in general (as opposed to within a certain context). In more specific contexts (i.e., within an organization, sports club etc.) perceiving group discrimination may involve assessing whether other group members in one’s direct environment (i.e., one’s company) are receiving similar outcomes to oneself. Here people are more inclined to consider their individual outcomes with respect to others (i.e., individual level focus). In order to perceive discrimination, it will be necessary to adopt a group level focus in this context and to pay attention to whether outgroup members’ outcomes differ from those of the ingroup. I focus on this question in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

E. Motivational concerns

The attributional ambiguity of discrimination can threaten its targets in different domains, those more related to the self (i.e., individual focus) and those more related to one’s group membership. I argue that the extent to which targets
perceive relatively more threat at an individual as opposed to group level, will determine motivational concerns with respect to discrimination. Motivational concerns are studied by examining the level or domain in which targets feel the strongest need to buffer themselves from threat. Below I will outline three motivations and argue that the motivation to self protect is largely triggered by an individual level focus, whereas the motivation to protect social identity is triggered by a group level focus. New is the system motivation (see Chapter 4) which, as will be discussed below, is more abstract than an individual or group level focus.

**Motivation to self protect**

When situations of subtle discrimination make personal failure and possible lack of personal ability very salient, peoples’ self views can be threatened. In consequence, people may be motivated to self-protect to be able to maintain a more positive view of themselves. Different research findings in various areas of social psychology provide support for the idea that people have a very strong and inherent 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 reduce threat to the self (Steele & Liu, 1983; see Tesser 2000 for a review). Similarly, social comparison research indicates that when people have a strong need to self protect they make downward rather than (threatening) upward comparisons to close others (e.g., Aspinwall & Taylor, 1993; Pyszczynski, Greenberg, & La Pelle, 1983).

Evidence for these mechanisms to protect the individual self have also been found in the area of subtle discrimination. 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. As discussed earlier, many situations of discrimination can be very attributionally ambiguous to targets of discrimination: Personal negative outcomes could be due to one’s lack of ability, inferior personal characteristics, or other shortcomings. On the other hand, these situations may be due to one’s devalued group membership and the prejudice of others against one’s group. Drawing on Kelley’s attribution theory (1973), Crocker and Major’s discounting hypothesis (1989) argues that being able to attribute personal failure more externally, such as to the prejudice of another, allows targets to discount their own role (i.e. lack of ability) in causing personal failure, thus avoiding self blame. This suggests that
attributions to discrimination are seen as more external than attributions to lack of personal ability. Considering the consequences of this attribution process for psychological well-being and drawing on emotion theory, Crocker and Major (1989) argue that the effects of discounting protect self esteem and decrease levels of self-directed negative affect (i.e., depression) in response to personal failure.

Early support for the discounting hypothesis was provided by two studies of Crocker and colleagues (1991) revealing that women (Study 1) and African Americans (Study 2) who were placed in an attributionally ambiguous situation experienced less negative self-directed well-being (i.e., lower depressed affect, higher self esteem) when they could attribute the negative treatment of another to prejudice as opposed to lack of personal ability. Further evidence for the underlying role of attributions in these self-protective processes was provided by a later scenario study of Major and colleagues (2003a) indicating that people who could attribute personal failure to discrimination as opposed to personal deservingness made less internal and more external attributions. Importantly, the extent to which people could discount their personal ability in causing failure (i.e., in favor of discrimination) mediated people’s self-directed well-being responses. People who could discount personal failure in favor of discrimination reported lower levels of depressed emotions.

So far I have only discussed how attributions to discrimination can be self-protective with respect to the effects of personal failure. One of the questions also considered within this approach, and further elaborated in the present dissertation (see chapters 2 and 3) concerns situations in which members of stigmatized groups experience personal success. Research in the area of attribution theory has revealed that just as people prefer to attribute personal failure externally, they also like to attribute personal success internally. Yet, because situations of attributational ambiguity raise concern about the cause of personal treatment, members of devalued groups may come to doubt whether their personal success is due to own (superior) ability, or due to preferential treatment on the basis of their group membership. Take the example of affirmative action by which members of disadvantaged groups are specifically encouraged to apply for jobs or are promoted within companies. These laws, although good for promoting diversity within organizations, may increase uncertainty concerning personal ability and own input with respect to personal success. Indeed, a number of studies suggest that experiencing personal success that can be attributed to one’s group membership can actually undermine
the (positive) well-being effects of positive feedback (Crocker et al., 1991, Study 2; Hoyt, Aguilar, Kaiser, Blascovich, & Lee, 2007).

In sum research on the discounting approach provides evidence that responses to situations that provide indications of discrimination can be motivated by the need to self-protect. In the case of personal failure, attributions to discrimination can serve to self protect from attributing this failure to the self. In the case of personal success, attributions to discrimination may actually counter the possibility to self enhance by attributing success internally. When considering discrimination as potentially self-protective it is important to keep in mind that the situations studied in line with the discounting hypothesis are by nature likely to focus targets on individual failure and their personal outcomes. For example many of the studies employed in this area consider interpersonal evaluation settings such as study progress tests or job selection procedures (i.e., Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a). This means that individuals may be relatively more focused on averting the negative consequences of experiencing failure rather than on the negative implications of being devalued on the basis of their group membership. In consequence they may adopt an individual (not group level) focus to understand the situation. As will be discussed later on, situations in which individuals have more of a group level focus and are aware of the (negative) future implications of their devalued group membership may carry less potential to protect targets from personal failure by making attributions to prejudice. In this case the self-protective aspects of attributing failure to prejudice are countered by the negative consequences of perceiving one’s group membership as devalued (see below section ‘motivation to protect one’s social identity’).

The idea that perceiving discrimination is always self-protective and, specifically, that an attribution to discrimination should be seen as relatively external to the self has been contested by a number of researchers. It forms the basis of the second motivational process I discuss below.

**Motivation to protect one’s social identity**

The discounting approach has been countered by those who argue that attributing situations to discrimination is also harmful to the self (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a, b). In line with social identity theory Branscombe and colleagues have posited that attributing a situation to discrimination should not be considered as a purely external attribution, as realizing that one is devalued on the basis of one’s group membership does threaten part of
the self, namely one’s social self or group-based self (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002b). In response to the Discounting Hypothesis, Schmitt and Branscombe (2002b) showed that with respect to purely external attributions for personal failure, an attribution to discrimination was perceived as both internally and externally caused. Note that in this case internally caused did not mean that targets felt they personally caused their failure, rather they perceived their outcome as partially due to something in themselves, namely their group membership.

Perceiving discrimination is not only considered harmful because it threatens people’s social identity, but also because it makes people aware of the negative implications of being a member of a devalued group. Indeed, it provides a future perspective of not being judged on the basis of one’s individual abilities and personal strengths, but rather on the basis of an (in many cases) irrelevant characteristic of the self, one’s group membership. In line with this idea, Branscombe and colleagues (1999) argue 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 (Branscombe et al., 1999). Two lines of research provide some initial evidence for this assumption. One line considers the extent to which group members are structurally as opposed to not structurally disadvantaged, assuming that structural disadvantage is related to perceiving discrimination as pervasive. In a number of studies Schmitt and colleagues (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002b; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002c) showed that attributions to discrimination were negatively related to well-being for members of disadvantaged (i.e., women) but not for members of advantaged (i.e., men) groups. Unfortunately, these studies cannot separate the severity of reported discrimination (less for men) from their group’s status. Therefore it is difficult to judge whether it is the low status and structural disadvantage that explains well-being effects or the fact that women know better what it is like to experience discrimination, and therefore give a more realistic response to situations of discrimination.

A second line of research has measured or manipulated the pervasiveness of discrimination (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). This research provides support that discrimination that is perceived as pervasive is negatively related to well-being. One of the few studies to manipulate the pervasiveness of discrimination (Schmitt et al., 2003; cf. Major, Kaiser, & O’Brien, 2007) revealed that discrimination that was perceived as pervasive as opposed to rare within a certain context elicited more negative affect (Study 2).
Research studying effects of pervasiveness of discrimination on well-being provides initial evidence that the extent to which discrimination is perceived as pervasive may be an important moderator in determining whether the experience of discrimination is likely to be relatively self-protective (i.e., averting failure) versus harmful. Although the studies discussed above do not show direct evidence for the self-protective potential of incidental discrimination, they do suggest that situations that are perceived as more incidental may have more potential to be protective of the individual self than those in which individuals are also aware of the negative consequences of discrimination for their future. Here the negative implications of discrimination are likely to cancel out the self-protective properties of attributions to discrimination. I test this idea in Chapter 4 of the present dissertation.

Given this relatively strong evidence that attributions to discrimination are also harmful at a ‘group level’, because they threaten people’s social identities and make salient the possibility of future disadvantage, it is likely that group members are motivated to protect their social identity. Indeed research on social identity theory has shown that people have a strong need to maintain a positive view of the groups they are a member of (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When social identities are threatened, group members will be motivated to re-establish a positive view of their group. In the area of subtle discrimination, research indicates that one way in which group members cope with the threat to social identity posed by discrimination, is to seek support of other group members and to increase identification with their group. Referred to as the rejection identification model (RIM, Branscombe et al., 1999), the idea is that (increased) identification with one’s group in the face of discrimination which represents the exclusion from an outgroup, can buffer group members from the negative consequences of discrimination and feelings of exclusion. Initial evidence for this argument was provided by a study showing that the negative consequences of attributions to discrimination for well-being were countered when group members identified highly with their group (Branscombe et al., 1999). Therefore, high identification with one’s group can serve as a source of strength in response to discrimination (see also Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001; Redersdorff, Martinot, & Branscombe, 2004).

Although identification may signal buffering against the negative consequences of discrimination, research also indicates that it may be a source of vulnerability: High identifiers are likely to feel more threatened by discrimination against their group than low identifiers because their group membership is more
central to the self. A study that measured identification and manipulated
discrimination indicated that group members who identified highly with their group
experienced more negative well-being in response to discrimination than low
 identifiers (McCoy & Major, 2003). Although these findings may seem equivocal
with those of the RIM, it is important to distinguish between determinants of an
individual versus group level focus, and determinants of perceptions of
discrimination, versus (motivational) responses thereto. It is possible that
participants who identified highly in the McCoy and Major study (2003) also
perceived more discrimination than low identifiers (the relation between
identification and perceptions of discrimination was not reported in this work). This
does not preclude the option that group members who face pervasive discrimination
further increase levels of identification to cope with this social identity threat.

System motivations

Research on people's worldviews, frequently focusing on system
legitimizing or system justifying beliefs, indicates that people have a strong
underlying need to view the world as a place that functions on the basis of principles
of fairness and equality (e.g., Lerner & Simmons, 1966). Situations that challenge
these principles by being inherently unjust and unfair can be experienced as very
threatening by individuals. Discrimination, especially, as I argue in the present
dissertation (Chapter 4), discrimination that is perceived as pervasive and inherent
in society, may be particularly threatening to people's worldviews. Below I will
consider evidence indicating that discrimination threatens people's worldviews, as
well as discussing individual and situational differences that can make certain
individuals particularly vulnerable to these 'worldview threats'. I conclude by
considering ways in which individuals can be motivated to cope with these threats.

Studies considering the experience of discrimination in relation to peoples' worldviews
have generally focused on beliefs concerning peoples' individual achievements such as beliefs in individual merit. Instances of discriminatory
treatment, arguably not based on merit, are likely to threaten merit beliefs.
Surprisingly, research so far has not experimentally established this causal relation.
A number of studies have provided some indirect evidence by showing that people
who endorse meritocracy beliefs report lower levels of well-being in response to
structurally experienced (as opposed to incidental) personal discrimination (Foster,
Sloto, & Ruby, 2006; Foster & Tsarfati, 2005; Major et al., 2007). These studies
suggest that the more individuals endorse these worldviews, the more vulnerable
they are to the experience of discrimination. These studies do have an important limitation: The use of individual difference measures does not allow one to draw conclusions concerning the causal relation between perceptions of discrimination and peoples' worldviews and thus how perceptions of discrimination influence worldviews. In Chapter 4 of this dissertation I address this by studying whether and under which circumstances discrimination actually threatens people's worldviews, specifically peoples' beliefs in the world as being just.

I argue that in studying threats to worldviews it is important to focus on how targets perceive discrimination and that a factor that may increase vulnerability to the threat to one's worldviews lies in the extent to which people experience discrimination as pervasive and thus structural within society. Prior research has indicated that the experience of discrimination as pervasive, as opposed to more incidental and rare, has negative consequences for targets' well-being. Explanations for the negative effects of pervasive discrimination so far have centered around targets' personal fear of encountering future negative treatment and outcomes on the basis of their group membership, which can lead to feelings of helplessness and depression (Schmitt et al., 2003; Schmitt & Brainscombe, 2002a). Causes that are seen as more stable and/or global, such as discrimination that is perceived as pervasive, are likely to increase proneness to depression (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989).

In the present dissertation I propose and show that another potential reason why perceptions of pervasive discrimination have such negative consequences for well-being may be because only discrimination that is perceived as pervasive threatens these core elements in the way people (want to) think about the world as being just. Discrimination that is perceived as more incidental and rare by contrast can be dismissed as an unusual aberration in a world that is basically just whereas being structurally disadvantaged in a pervasive and enduring way on the basis of group membership is more likely to threaten peoples' beliefs in the world as just.

In sum, there is evidence supporting the idea that discrimination can threaten peoples' worldviews. This threat to peoples' worldviews may be particularly strong the more people endorse these views, and the more the experience of discrimination is perceived as pervasive. How do people cope with these threats to their worldviews? The general idea underlying a worldview or system based perspective is that when confronted with injustice, individuals will be motivated to re-establish the system as just (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Research in the area of system legitimizing beliefs indicates that there are a number of ways in which people can 'operationalize' this motive. People can
(1) show enhanced ideological support for the status quo (2) use complementary stereotypes to bolster the system or (3) blame the victim of injustice (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Kay, Jost, Mandisodza, Sherman, Petrocchi, & Johnson, 2007, Lerner & Miller, 1978). Additionally, although nowadays receiving less attention in the area of system legitimization which assumes that people will try to legitimize rather than change the status quo (i.e., being disadvantaged on the basis of one's group membership), I will discuss a fourth option: (4) addressing injustice. I discuss these four options in more detail below.

Enhanced ideological support for the status quo refers to the fact that people may increase their support for a system in response to threats to this system (Kay et al., 2007). Within the area of subtle discrimination, research has not necessarily indicated enhanced ideological support for the status quo but a number of studies have provided evidence that targets of discrimination who endorse (i.e., were primed with) meritocracy beliefs or the belief in individual mobility are less likely to report injustice in the form of discrimination than people who did not endorse these beliefs (Major, Gramzow, McCoy, Levin, Schmader, & Sidanius, 2002a; McCoy & Major, 2007). Explanations of these results focus on the fact that these individuals are legitimizing the system by under-reporting discrimination. Alternatively, one might argue that people who are primed with meritocracy beliefs or who are high endorsers of meritocracy beliefs may be more likely to blame themselves for negative personal outcomes that can be attributed to discrimination - given their belief that one is responsible for one's individual achievements. Therefore one cannot be sure whether people who endorse meritocracy beliefs and report less injustice are doing so because they feel more threatened by the injustice of discrimination (i.e., threat to their system legitimizing beliefs) or because the nature of their beliefs is focusing them on their individual achievements (i.e., an individual level focus) rather than on unjust behaviour due to discrimination. In the latter case individuals would not be reporting this injustice (i.e., discrimination) because they do not perceive it.

The use of complementary stereotypes as a way of dealing with threats to system justifying beliefs refers to the fact that stereotypes can serve to justify status differences within society (Jost & Hamilton, 2005; Kay et al., 2007). In other words stereotypes that portray group members conform their present status can protect peoples' system legitimizing beliefs. For example, the African American stereotype of lazy can ‘justify’ the lower status of African Americans within the job hierarchy. One study in the area of subtle discrimination has so far provided evidence that even
targets of discrimination (and stereotyping) may increase self and ingroup stereotyping as a means of system justification (McCoy & Major, 2007). Targets of discrimination who were primed with a meritocracy as opposed to a neutral prime engaged in more self and group stereotyping. The authors reasoned that for those individuals who received a meritocracy prime, the experience of discrimination was more threatening to system legitimizing beliefs, thus increasing the need to justify the system by confirming stereotypes indicative of low status. Note that here individuals are in fact engaging in ‘coping strategies’ that although protective of their system justifying beliefs, may be harmful at both an individual and group level by undermining both one’s self view (i.e., self stereotyping) and one’s view of one’s group (i.e., group stereotyping). This indicates that discrimination may affect different domains – not only in reference to the self or one’s group membership, but also at the level of system justifying beliefs that are not necessarily linked to self motivated processes (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Regarding the motivation to deal with system threats by derogating the victim of injustice, numerous studies in the area of just world beliefs have provided evidence for this phenomenon (e.g., Lerner & Simmons, 1966; see Lerner & Miller, 1978, for a review). Seeing others as deserving of their fate rather than as recipients of unjust treatment can help individuals to preserve the idea of the world as a just place. This need is so strong that individuals will even blame victims of rape for their fate as a means of re-establishing the world as just. Within the area of subtle discrimination victim derogation has thus far not been studied. There is some research considering high status members’ responses to evidence of discrimination of a low status group. This research indicates that Caucasian Americans (i.e., high status group members) who endorsed system legitimizing beliefs blamed African Americans more for their discrimination than low endorsers (Kaiser, Dyrenforth, & Hagiwara, 2006). In the present dissertation I considered victim derogation as a means for studying the causal processes underlying responses to discrimination (Chapter 4). I argue that if discrimination threatens people’s worldviews, being able to derogate a victim of injustice should help re-establish the world as just. Targets of discrimination are given the opportunity to re-establish the world as just by derogating a victim of injustice (in a domain unrelated to discrimination). I study whether this opportunity for victim derogation has the potential to reduce the threat posed to system justifying beliefs by (pervasive) discrimination.

The strategies for coping with threats to one’s worldviews I have discussed so far have all focused on redefining situations that threaten worldviews and/or
justifying the status quo and therefore the system, rather than on changing the actual status quo by challenging the system. Within research on just world beliefs, one way of reducing threat to just world beliefs (by reinstating justice) is to compensate the victim of injustice (Lerner & Simmons, 1966; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Although at a lower level this changes the status quo (i.e., for the victim), it does not address the source of injustice or challenge or change the system at a higher level. Yet, in studying discrimination I believe it is essential to focus on when and how targets of discrimination whose worldviews are threatened, are likely to address the source of injustice or even challenge the system supporting this injustice. Research so far has mainly focused on responses to those who voice that they have been discriminated against (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Research in the area of tokenism indicates that targets may be more likely to address injustice when the system is completely closed (i.e., there is no access possible to the high status group). Those who achieve a token position (i.e., individual success in the face of their disadvantaged group membership) are unlikely to address the disadvantage of their group (Ellemers, 2001; Wright & Taylor, 1999). Focusing on the type of situation individuals may encounter when they face discrimination, these situations are likely to create the illusion of individual mobility in which positive individual achievements are possible, as long as one works hard enough for them (Barreto et al., 2009; McCoy & Major, 2007). This may even imply that members of devalued groups need not perceive situations of discrimination as unjust. A first step in studying to what extent individuals are likely to address injustice lies in considering these perceptions of injustice (see also following section). In the present dissertation I focus on processes that may indicate readiness to address injustice by considering individual level perceptions of injustice not only with regard to the self but also with respect to the disadvantaged position of one’s group. Furthermore, I study the circumstances under which targets are likely to perceive and respond to injustice against their group (chapters 3 and 4).

The interplay between perceptions of discrimination and motivational concerns

So far I have presented determinants of perceptions and motivational concerns with respect to discrimination. It has become clear that individual and situational variables may both influence perceptions of, and motivational concerns in response to, discrimination (i.e., identification with one’s group). Yet, in my model I suggest, albeit between brackets, that these two factors may interact with one another. Obviously, if individuals do not perceive a situation to be to some
extent discriminatory it is unlikely that the motivational concerns described above will arise. Alternately, some have argued that individuals may be motivated to make attributions to discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989; Sechrist et al., 2004). This again raises the question of whether attributions to discrimination can be considered equivalent to actual perceptions of discrimination. In other words individuals may perceive a situation to be discriminatory to the same extent, yet differ in their reports of (i.e., attributions to) discrimination due to their underlying motivations. I come back to the distinction between perceptions and attributions in Chapter 5. Certainly, more research is needed to determine the (possible) interplay between perceptions of discrimination and motivational concerns.

F. Outcomes

The discussion of motivational concerns provided indications that discrimination can differentially affect personal well-being depending on the underlying motives affected by the experience of discrimination. Below I discuss contextual versus more global indicators of the outcomes individuals and their groups may experience as a consequence of discrimination. I will focus on indicators relevant to this dissertation such as general and specific well-being measures and perceptions of justice. I do not address indicators such as possible performance/achievement measures and collective action tendencies in the research conducted in this dissertation because I was primarily interested in studying the question of how and under which circumstances discrimination negatively (or positively) affects targets’ well-being. I do see well-being measures as a possible indicator of targets’ (future) performance and collective action tendencies and certainly these variables warrant future attention (see also discussion of this dissertation).

Well-being

In considering the consequences of discrimination for the well-being of stigmatized group members, studies so far have mainly focused on self esteem and health indicators.

Health: Focusing on the consequences of discrimination with respect to global and long term indicators of well-being, many studies have considered the consequences of membership of a stigmatized group for the health of its members. Obviously it is difficult to establish a direct link with experiences of discrimination when studying more global indicators of well-being. There is evidence that
members of stigmatized groups are at a higher risk of depression, hypertension, coronary heart disease and stroke (Nazroo, Jackson, Karlsen, & Torres, 2000; Krieger, 1990). Indications that discrimination may play a role in causing these reduced health effects are provided by evidence revealing that members of stigmatized groups may have less access to healthcare (Williams & Rucker, 1996). Also, from a stress-coping perspective (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), those who experience frequent discrimination are suffering frequent stressful events that form a threat to individual health – although the impact of discrimination on health is likely to be moderated by people’s appraisals and coping mechanisms with respect to discrimination (Landrine, Klonoff, Corral, Fernandez, & Roesch, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). In part due to the difficulty of testing causal relations and the necessity of conducting longitudinal studies, I do not focus on health indicators in this dissertation.

Self esteem. An early review by Crocker and Major (1989) noted that although members of stigmatized groups face frequent and pervasive discrimination this is not reflected in levels of global personal self esteem. Indeed numerous studies have shown that African Americans have personal self esteem that is equal to or even higher than that of Caucasian Americans (Hoelter, 1983; Porter & Washington, 1979). Similarly women generally do not report lower levels of self esteem than men (Hoelter, 1983). Although discrimination therefore does not seem to have long term effects on individuals global self esteem, the experience of discrimination may lead to situational variations in (state) personal self esteem (see Heatherton & Polivy, 1991). As reviewed above (section D), being able to attribute personal failure to discrimination may protect personal self esteem. In my research (see Chapter 4), I find evidence that attributions to discrimination can also be negatively related to personal self esteem. This is in line with self esteem research that stresses the necessity of keeping in mind contextual variations in self esteem (e.g., Morse & Gergen, 1970). Take the example of the job applicant who is applying for a job and sees another very competent job applicant – research indicated that this temporarily lowered the self esteem of the applicant (Morse & Gergen, 1970). This contextual approach is fitting if one views self esteem as a measure of self efficacy that indicates to what extent one feels competent and in control over one’s environment. Situations that block these feelings of competence and control may (temporarily) lower self esteem (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). The experience of discrimination can lower feelings of self efficacy, either by indicating one’s lack of personal ability (i.e., when personal failure is attributed internally) or by making salient the fact that
being a member of a devalued group may be a barrier in achieving successful personal outcomes (i.e., when discrimination is perceived as pervasive).

**Affect.** When focusing on situational indicators of well-being it is important to also consider affect. The experience of injustice is frequently related to anger (see Miller, 2001 for a review). In the area of subtle discrimination research by Hansen and Sassenberg (2006) has stressed the necessity of distinguishing between self versus other-directed indicators of anger. Whereas prejudice in general is likely to elicit anger (towards the perpetrator), the experience of self-directed anger may depend on the extent to which individuals also attribute this discrimination internally. Research in the area of subtle discrimination stresses the necessity of focusing on more self-directed affective responses such as depression (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Major et al., 2003a; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). Whereas other-directed emotions are focused on factors external to the self (i.e., other's personality, prejudice of another), self-directed emotions have been shown to be influenced by experiences that affect the self (i.e., personal loss, personal failure, negative future implications of discrimination for the self, see also Chapter 4 of this dissertation). This distinction is important because discrimination need not necessarily affect overall emotional well-being but may, as outlined, differentially influence emotion measures (see also Chapter 4).

**Perceptions of injustice**

Although one might think that perceiving discrimination is equivalent to perceiving injustice, this need not be the case. For one, targets of discrimination may report discrimination yet differ in the extent to which they find discrimination unjust. For example, research considering responses of individuals who are discriminated against on the basis of their obesity indicates that these targets report perceiving discrimination but may to some extent find their treatment justified (Crocker, Cornwell, & Major, 1993, see also Major et al., 2002b). Furthermore, our research indicates that perceptions of justice may also depend on the perspective of the person making judgments (Chapter 3). Judgments of injustice against one's fellow group members may in part be determined by the extent to which one personally experiences injustice. So far perceptions of injustice as an outcome variable have received fairly little attention in the area of subtle discrimination. Yet, I would argue that perceptions of injustice are important because they can tell us more about the likelihood that targets of discrimination will (behaviourally) address their personal or their group's experience of injustice. Some research on subtle
discrimination has focused on the extent to which both targets and observers of discrimination are likely to report instances of discrimination and shows that the likelihood thereof is surprisingly low (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Possibly this is because there is no direct relation between the perception/experience of discrimination and perceptions of injustice: As mentioned above, the experience of personal injustice is not necessarily related to perceived unjust treatment against one's group as a whole. Yet, in order to engage in collective action against this injustice with fellow group members it may be essential that group members translate personal injustice to group level injustice, or alternatively, that they perceive group level injustice even when they do not experience personal injustice (see Chapter 5). Indeed Miller (2001) points out the necessity of distinguishing experiences of personal injustice from ‘victimless’ crimes against others, such as other members of one’s group. Although perceptions of group injustice are likely to raise somewhat less strong emotional responses, they nevertheless can induce strong ‘moralistic and punitive impulses’. Drawing on Heider (1958), Miller points out that injustice at a group level is seen as an infringement of a moral contract, the ‘ought forces’ of a community. As also pointed out in early work on just world beliefs (e.g., Lerner & Miller, 1978), people have a need to view the world as stable and orderly in order to be able to commit to long term goals and engage in meaningful interactions with their environment. Injustice at a group level (even if not experienced personally), is likely to be perceived as a breach of this moral contract that needs to be punished. In studying the broader effects of perceptions of subtle discrimination it may be very important to consider to what extent perceptions of personal discrimination (and injustice) are related to perceptions of injustice at a group level, against members of one's group. In the area of subtle discrimination no research I am aware of has considered the extent to which targets perceive injustice at a group level in response to (personal) discrimination. I address this question in Chapter 3 and at a more abstract level the relation between discrimination and just world beliefs in Chapter 4.

Conclusions
In this chapter I have presented a model that looks at the processes underlying individuals' outcomes and responses to subtle discrimination. Subtle discrimination concerns situations in which individuals receive negative personal treatment but cannot be entirely sure whether the cause of this treatment is the result of personal deservingness (i.e., lack of effort or ability) or of their group
membership and the prejudice of another. How do targets recognize and cope with these types of situations? The present model considers how individual and situational determinants can increase the extent to which individual or group level aspects of a situation are salient. The extent to which people have an individual versus group level focus can in turn have consequences both for perceptions of and (motivated) responses to discrimination. When focused more on individual level aspects people may fail to recognize prejudice as a cause of their personal outcomes. A group level focus may increase perceptions of discrimination. From a motivational perspective, the focus of individuals on protecting the self from failure (i.e., individual level focus) or protecting one's view of one's group (i.e., group level focus) can determine responses to discrimination.

The present dissertation

The studies conducted in this dissertation address different parts of this model and answer a number of questions raised by the model. All studies share the idea that individuals can be focused on more individual or group level aspects of a situation – and that this focus may influence responses to subtle discrimination. In Chapter 2, I consider how factors enhancing individual level focus such as the self relevance and nature of personal outcomes affect information processing and responses to subtle discrimination. In Chapter 3, I consider the relative influence of personal outcomes (individual level focus) and group outcomes (group level focus) on the extent to which individuals attribute situations to discrimination. I also focus on well-being responses. In Chapter 4, I move beyond an individual versus group level focus, contrasting the need to self protect by making attributions to discrimination with the extent to which experiences of discrimination form a threat to peoples’ worldviews.

Below I outline in a more detail the questions addressed by the separate chapters.

Chapter 2: How do individual level motivations influence information search and well-being in the face of subtle discrimination? – an individual level focus on subtle discrimination

In this chapter I study people's motivation to search for information about the cause of personal outcomes that can be attributed to personal discrimination, and the effects this information search might have for well-being. I consider to what extent aspects relating to an individual level focus such as the self relevance and nature of one's personal outcomes (Study 2.1) as well as the motivation to search for
information (Study 2.2) encourage or block information search in situations in which it is ambiguous whether or not targets are being discriminated against. In my paradigm the information sought provided the only indication of discrimination to targets. This research builds on prior research in the area by considering information search from a target’s perspective. As outlined earlier, research on information format thus far only considered observers’ responses to instances of discrimination. The present study allows us to study to what extent people are motivated to search for information that can provide evidence of discrimination when dealing with personal outcomes that differ in the extent to which they are relevant to the self. Although self relevance may increase a focus on the self, and thus inhibit perceptions of discrimination (which require also having a group level focus), research in the area of information processing has indicated that the more self-relevant situations are, the more individuals engage in information search, to some extent regardless of the negative implications for the self (Dunning, 1995). I also consider to what extent information about and the discovery of discrimination are harmful or self-protective for well-being. Furthermore, I focus more in depth on the processes underlying responses to discrimination that is harmful for well-being: Do people suffer from the fate of their group, or rather from the negative consequences of their group membership for the self?

Chapter 3: To what extent does the nature of personal outcomes (individual level focus) versus the fate of one’s group (group level focus) determine attributions to discrimination, perceptions of injustice and well-being? – an individual and group level focus on subtle discrimination

This chapter presents two studies examining how (in-) congruence between personal and group outcomes affects outcome attributions, procedural justice perceptions and emotional well-being of individuals who are exposed to subtle discrimination. As discrimination by definition involves both negative personal outcomes as well as negative group outcomes (i.e., the prejudiced attitude of someone against oneself and other group members in general), I was interested in considering to what extent the fact that one receives a negative personal outcome, as opposed to one’s group being treated negatively, would determine responses to discrimination and perceptions of injustice. I manipulated the nature of individuals’ personal outcomes (success versus failure) and the nature of group outcomes (no outcome versus group disadvantage in Study 3.1, group disadvantage versus group advantage in Study 3.2). This research focused on two main questions: Do people
suffer or profit from their group membership and do they, independently of their personal fate and motivations, perceive injustice against their group? In other words, how does the knowledge of outcomes of one's group influence individuals' psychological well-being? The second question this research addressed was to what extent attributions to discrimination are motivated by the need to self-protect, or are merely the result of information processing. In other words, if people discount personal failure in favor of discrimination (i.e., the discounting hypothesis), do they make these attributions to protect the self, or because information about prejudice provides clear indications that not personal ability but prejudice is causing one's personal outcomes? In the former case this would mean that individuals only discount personal outcomes in favor of a group outcome when experiencing personal failure but not success.

Chapter 4: Integrating motivational approaches: Countering the negative consequences of pervasive discrimination by affirming the world as just – beyond an individual versus group level focus

The present chapter considers conditions under which perceptions of discrimination may buffer against or exacerbate the adverse effects of negative treatment on targets' psychological well-being as well as exploring the underlying mechanisms for this effect. As such it aims to integrate seemingly conflicting findings in the area of subtle discrimination: Research has indicated that perceptions of discrimination can sometimes protect psychological well-being by allowing targets to attribute negative personal treatment and outcomes externally (e.g., to the prejudice of another) rather than internally (e.g., self-blame) (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a). Yet there is also evidence that perceiving discrimination is harmful to well-being because it signals devaluation of part of the self, the group self, as well as implying negative future treatment on the basis of one's group membership (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2002c). In this fourth chapter we study the role of the pervasiveness of discrimination as a moderator of these processes. Although prior research has suggested pervasiveness of discrimination as a moderator of these processes (Schmitt et al., 2003), no research so far has provided evidence that the same situation of discrimination (i.e., being rejected by a prejudiced evaluator) can induce different processes depending on people's perceptions of pervasiveness (rare versus pervasive): We predicted that perceiving discrimination as rare, and thus incidental, may serve to buffer targets from the adverse consequences of negative treatment because it provides a
convenient external attribution for failure and is relatively unlikely to occur again in the future. By contrast, discrimination that is perceived as pervasive may be harmful in part (but see below) because it implies future negative treatment and outcomes on the basis of one’s group membership, which can lead to feelings of helplessness and depression (Abramson et al., 1989; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a; Schmitt et al., 2003).

Importantly, in contrast to prior research that has manipulated discrimination that is contextually pervasive in the sense that the number of prejudiced persons in the specific context differed (see Schmitt et al., 2003), we manipulated discrimination that was personally experienced but differed in the extent to which it was likely to occur in the future (i.e., temporal pervasiveness: rare versus recurrent). In our view this covered the essence of discrimination as being threatening – as opposed to self-protective - when it provides targets with a negative perspective for the future.

A further aim of this chapter was to examine the processes underlying responses to pervasive discrimination. Prior explanations of the negative consequences of discrimination for well-being have largely focused on the fact that it implies future negative treatment and outcomes on the basis of one’s group membership which can lead to perceptions of barriers to one’s success and to consequent feelings of helplessness and depression (Abramson et al., 1989; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a; Schmitt et al., 2003). In this chapter I propose that attributing a situation to discrimination when this discrimination is perceived to be pervasive may not only be threatening because it has negative (future) implications for the self, but also because it threatens peoples’ worldviews, such as the belief that the world functions on the basis of principles of equality and fairness. I study this idea by giving individuals the opportunity (or not) of affirming the world as just.

Overall, this chapter therefore moves beyond the individual and group level focus outlined in above introduction: In the present chapter I argue that beyond the level of individual or group level focus discrimination may affect more abstract concepts such as the way in which people view the world. In the discussion of the present dissertation I integrate findings of this chapter to provide a more refined model of the area of subtle discrimination.
Footnotes

1. I refer to identification as an individual difference level *determinant* of perceptions of and responses to discrimination. Research indicates that perceiving discrimination can also influence levels of identification (Branscombe et al., 1999).
2. One might say that whereas cognitive aspects determine the direction of people’s attributions, the magnitude of these attributions may be determined by motivational factors operating at these different levels (see Postmes et al., 1999).
3. The explanation given for this finding is that obesity is perceived as a controllable stigma, thus inducing higher levels of self blame in targets than uncontrollable stigmas such as those based on ethnicity.
Chapter 2
When searching hurts:
The role of information search in reactions to subtle discrimination

As the blatant expression of prejudice is sanctioned in present society (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002), expressions of prejudice have become more subtle and implicit (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002b; Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998). As a result, women often fail to recognize prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory treatment (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Yet, in order to achieve social change and improve the status of women it is essential to recognize and report discrimination.

Why would women fail to perceive they are discriminated against? According to research by Crosby and colleagues, failure to perceive gender discrimination at the individual level may be due to lack of group-level information (Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, & Hemker, 1986; Rutte, Diekmann, Polzer, Crosby, & Messick, 1994). Women typically only have information about individual cases of discrimination (e.g. their own treatment), whereas inferring discrimination may require the comparison of a larger number of cases (e.g., the treatment of other women and men members). Consequently, in many situations these inferences require an active search for additional information. Yet, we also know that elaborate information processing does not always occur (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Thus, when studying perceptions of gender discrimination it is important to consider to what extent its targets are motivated to search for and process the necessary information to discover discrimination in the first place. The first aim of the present research is to study conditions under which women are motivated to actively search for information about the cause of the treatment they receive, when placed in a situation in which it is ambiguous whether or not they are victims of discrimination. We focus on settings in which the relevance of individual characteristics seems primary (i.e., in evaluation settings in which women experience personal success or failure).
A second aim of this research is to examine the consequences of searching for information, and thus viewing evidence of discrimination, for women’s well-being. Does the realization that a personal outcome is due to one’s gender rather than personal ability have positive or negative consequences for well-being? Past research has provided conflicting answers to this question. By studying differences in information processing the present studies can provide more insight into the mechanisms underlying responses to gender discrimination.

In the following we will first consider when targets may be motivated to search for information. We then review literature on the effects of discrimination on well-being and consider the possible role of information search in this process.

The role of information search in perceptions of discrimination

In 1984 Crosby published a paper on “The denial of personal discrimination” in which she discussed the paradox that although females were frequently aware of gender discrimination at the societal level, this awareness did not transfer to reports of personal discrimination. This pattern of results has been widely documented across a number of minority groups (e.g., Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; D.M. Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994).

Research studying this phenomenon has indicated that failing to perceive personal discrimination may be due to lack of information that would allow perceivers to shift from thinking about personal treatment to a more abstract level at which that personal treatment can be attributed to one’s gender (Crosby et al., 1986; Rutte, 1998; Rutte et al., 1994; Rutte & Messick, 1996). Indeed, many situations in which discrimination takes place do not include cues to group membership and in fact imply personal failure (such as when an individual is rejected for a job interview, see also Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002) rather than gender discrimination.

Yet, one important question prior research has not considered is whether, and under what circumstances, women are at all motivated to actively search for information that can reveal evidence of personal discrimination. Most of the prior research examining the relationship between information search and perceptions of discrimination focused on the role of ‘cold’ cognitive factors on prejudice recognition. In this research participants were asked to consider whether a company discriminated against its female co-workers and provided participants with the necessary information to be able to conclude that this was the case (e.g. Crosby et al., 1986, Rutte, & Messick, 1996; Rutte et al., 1994). Given that participants took
part as an observing third party, these studies do not consider to what extent women who have received negative information about themselves (in the form of personal rejection) are motivated to search for extra information that may reveal discriminatory treatment. Are women prepared to search for such information when this information is self-relevant to them? A focus on targets instead of observers allows us to examine peoples’ motivations to search for and process group-level information that may contain evidence of (personal) discrimination.

**Motivation to search for information**

In the present research (Study 2.1) we consider to what extent women engage in information search in situations that differ in the extent to which they are relevant to the person in question. When considering people’s motivation to search for information about themselves, it is important to realize that, in the first instance, information search may not be instigated or guided by any references to one’s group membership. In fact, the realization of group-based treatment may often only happen during or even after (Ellemers & Barreto, 2006) (and not before) information search. This means that to understand when women search for information about the cause of success or failure, we need to address other factors, for example at the individual level, that provide the initial motivation to search for such information. Accordingly, in this paper, we examine one factor that is likely to influence the need to search for information by increasing the self-relevance of the situation and thus of the information provided after success or failure.

Although there is no work that looks at the impact of self-relevance on the need to search for information in situations of discrimination, more general knowledge about information processing indicates that people attend to and process information more carefully when the issue is one that is more personally relevant. By contrast, in situations of low self-relevance, people use heuristic cues to derive their judgments and they engage in minimal amounts of information processing and base judgments primarily on easily processed heuristic cues (Eagly, & Chaiken, 1993; Petty, & Cacioppo, 1979; Petty, Cacioppo, & Goldman, 1981). For instance Petty and Cacioppo (1979) showed that college students who had to consider evidence on an issue that was of higher personal relevance processed information more thoroughly and gave more consideration to the arguments presented than when the issue was of less personal consequence to themselves. Dunning (1995) examined people’s attentiveness to information under conditions that more closely resemble the situation we are interested in, as he researched people’s interest in further
performance feedback after individual success or failure. This research indicated that participants were more interested in additional feedback that was of high as opposed to low relevance to the self (and there was a perceived opportunity to self improve). Importantly, this research revealed that under high self-relevance, people are motivated to search for information regardless of whether this feedback concerned situations of success or failure. This research thus indicates that people can be motivated to search for information under self-relevance, regardless of the extent to which a situation is personally threatening (i.e., whether it concerns personal success or failure).

We therefore expect that women who either fail or succeed are more likely to be motivated to search for information about the cause of the outcome they receive when the situation is of high as opposed to low self-relevance to them. Since in the situation we examine the information women search for contains evidence of gender discrimination, we can say that the more participants search for information, the more evidence they receive of discriminatory treatment. As a consequence, self-relevance should be associated with greater exposure to evidence of gender discrimination.

The consequences of discrimination for well-being

What are the consequences of searching for information and viewing evidence of gender discrimination for well-being? So far we have largely focused on individual level aspects of an evaluation setting such as the self-relevance of personal outcomes and the need to search for information about these outcomes. People confronted with this type of situation are likely to be focused on their personal characteristics such as competence or lack of ability. Viewing evidence of group disadvantage (in part) shifts the focus from these individual level aspects to one’s gender group membership and the implications thereof for oneself and one’s personal outcomes. We examine the situation in which the more information targets collect, the more cases they see of other ingroup (female) members who are treated unjustly with respect to outgroup (male) members. By also varying the nature of individual level outcomes (success versus failure, Study 2.1), the present research has the advantage of allowing us to focus on the interplay between having evidence of group disadvantage and the extent to which this disadvantage also affects the self (i.e., individuals also experience personal failure).

How does evidence of group disadvantage influence targets’ well-being? Prior research has revealed that being able to attribute negative personal treatment
to the prejudice of another person can have both positive and negative consequences for target’s well-being. On the one hand, research indicates that making attributions to discrimination can help protect the self in the face of personal failure. Research in line with the discounting hypothesis (Crocker & Major, 1989) has revealed that making attributions to discrimination has positive consequences for well-being to the extent that these attributions allow targets to avert self blame for failure by making attributions to the prejudice of another. In this case attributions to discrimination can alleviate the initial negative consequences of personal failure by adding an external element to the causal attribution of failure (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major, et al., 2002b). From this perspective, viewing evidence of group disadvantage may increase levels of personal well-being in the face of personal failure as it allows women to have a more positive view of themselves. The need to self protect (by making attributions to discrimination) may be particularly strong when women have experienced personal failure that is very self-relevant.

On the other hand research by Branscombe and colleagues has provided evidence that perceiving discrimination is harmful because it signals that one’s group and therefore part of the (group) self is devalued (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Furthermore group devaluation implies that negative outcomes can be expected in the future, limiting both future and present opportunities (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a;b; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). Indeed research by Schmitt and colleagues (2003) revealed that attributing personal failure to discrimination in an evaluation context in which women were judged by one of a number of male evaluators had more negative consequences for both group level (i.e., private and public collective self esteem) and personal level well-being (i.e., affect) when individuals perceived gender discrimination to be more contextually pervasive (i.e., all male evaluators are prejudiced) than when this was not the case (i.e., only the male evaluator evaluating the participant is prejudiced). This research provides initial evidence that discrimination may be more harmful the more pervasive women perceive it to be.

Therefore, based on this approach we would expect gender discrimination to have particularly negative consequences for group and personal level well-being the stronger the evidence of discrimination. In the present research discrimination becomes pervasive the more cases female participants see of (prior) disadvantage of women with respect to men. By also varying the nature of individual level outcomes (i.e., success versus failure), the present research allows us to focus more in depth on the processes underlying responses to pervasive discrimination. Past research that
has looked at the influence of pervasive discrimination on well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Major, Kaiser, & O’Brien, 2007; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002c; Schmitt et al., 2003) cannot discern whether the negative consequences of experiencing pervasive discrimination for well-being are due to the fact that individuals suffer from the fate of their group, or from the knowledge that they experience, and will in the future experience, negative personal outcomes. Indeed in these studies discrimination that is perceived as pervasive (and thus harmful for well-being) always considers situations in which both the group is (potentially) devalued and discrimination is (potentially) personally experienced (Branscombe et al., 1999; Major et al., 2007; Schmitt et al., 2002b; Schmitt et al., 2003). No studies we are aware of have so far considered the relative influence of personal interest versus the fate of one’s group in determining responses to pervasive discrimination. In the present research we consider whether viewing a lot of evidence of group disadvantage (i.e. many women receive unfair treatment) is harmful for women’s personal well-being because they suffer from the fact that their group which is a central part of their (group) self is devalued (empathy explanation). In other words, do women empathize with and suffer from the fate of their group (and its members) irrespective of how this affects themselves and their personal outcomes? Alternatively, we considered whether women suffer from discrimination that is pervasive because it negatively affects their personal outcomes (personal interest explanation). Therefore the present research provides additional insights into the processes underlying responses to pervasive discrimination.

Overall, the present research studies whether and when women are motivated to process information about gender discrimination by considering how the self relevance of individual outcomes affects information search (Study 2.1). Furthermore, it considers how searching for evidence of discrimination affects women’s group and personal well-being. We focus on two related questions: Firstly, what are the consequences of viewing evidence of discrimination for group and personal well-being (i.e., self-protective or harmful). Secondly, if information about group disadvantage does have negative consequences for levels of well-being (group and personal), is this because women suffer from the fate (i.e., disadvantaged position) of other group members, or because they personally suffer from disadvantage? We consider these questions by varying the extent to which group disadvantage affects the self (Study 2.1) and by comparing responses to information search with respect to personal failure that can or cannot be attributed to gender discrimination (Study 2.2).
Study 2.1 was conducted in the context of a selection procedure. We manipulated the nature (personal outcome: success/failure) and self relevance (self relevance: low/high) of personal outcomes as well as the type of feedback (feedback: positive/negative) women received before their outcomes. The participants were female and the person in charge of the evaluation procedure was male. Importantly, after the selections were made (i.e., women receive their personal outcomes) female participants were given the opportunity to search for information that could provide evidence of gender discrimination. The information consisted of cases of prior male and female applicants in the same procedure and with the same evaluator. This information revealed that no females had been selected in prior procedures whereas many males had, despite being less qualified (see dependent measures section). For participants this was the only indication that the person making the evaluations might be prejudiced.

In this study we were interested in when targets search for this information, and how they respond to information search. We predicted that women would generally have a higher motivation to search for information under high self-relevance. Additionally, we predicted a main effect of self-relevance on information search irrespective of success or failure (see Dunning, 1995). Since prior research has sometimes suggested that amount of negative information received (e.g., negative feedback and rejection, see also S.E. Taylor, Neter & Wayment, 1995) and unexpectedness of the outcome (e.g., negative feedback and acceptance or positive feedback and rejection, see also Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Wong & Weiner, 1981) can affect information search, we controlled for these processes by independently manipulating feedback (negative vs. positive) and outcome (acceptance vs. rejection).

Although information search was a dependent variable in this study, we also examined the consequences of information search on well-being and distinguished between more individual (negative affect) versus group level (collective self esteem) indicators of well-being. This allows us to study the interplay between how women feel 'about themselves' in relation to how they feel about their group membership.

If indeed responses to evidence of discrimination are based on the need to self-protect, we would expect that the need to self-protect (and the ability to do so) increases when personal failure is self-relevant. Therefore we predicted that women would not necessarily experience lower levels of personal well-being when personal...
failure is self-relevant (as opposed to not being self-relevant). In Study 2.2 we directly tested well-being hypotheses in line with the discounting approach. Concerning levels of group well-being our predictions were less clear as alternative predictions seemed plausible and prior research in line with the discounting approach does not measure group level well-being (e.g. Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003a). Although on the one hand one might predict that the more information women view about the disadvantage of their group, the lower their group level well-being, it is also possible that women are so focused on their personal outcomes (i.e., self-protecting from personal failure) that they do not internalize the disadvantage of their group. In other words, group level well-being may also remain unchanged. Looking at the relation between individual (affect) and group (collective self-esteem) level well-being when information about the disadvantage of one's group serves to self protect from personal failure, we therefore had two alternative predictions. We either expected to find a positive relation between collective self esteem and affect (lower collective self-esteem is related to lower levels of negative affect) or no relation between these measures.

If, on the other hand, women suffer from evidence of (pervasive) discrimination, we would expect them to experience more negative individual and group level well-being the more evidence of discrimination they view. Based on a personal interest explanation we would predict an interaction of self relevance by outcome such that women only experience lower levels of individual and group level well-being when they also experience negative personal outcomes and view a lot of evidence of discrimination (i.e., high self relevance). Based on an empathy explanation we would predict a self relevance main effect as women should also experience lower levels of group well-being when they experience positive personal outcomes but view a lot of evidence of discrimination against members of their group (i.e., high self relevance). We did not predict that individual level responses to success and failure would be the same in this case because when a situation is highly self-relevant, failure is more threatening than success (under low self-relevance this distinction is likely to be less strong or non-existent) and - although this may not affect information search - it is likely to be reflected in the individual level well-being participants report (see also Mc Farland and Ross (1982) for similar results). Concerning the relation between individual and group level well-being, based on the RIM and in contrast to the discounting approach, overall we would predict that collective self esteem and affect should be negatively correlated such that lower levels of collective self esteem are related to more negative affect.
Method
Design and Participants

One hundred and eighty-four female students of Leiden University took part in the experiment for course credits or payment of € 6 (US$ = 7.70). Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (self-relevance: high/low) X 2 (feedback: positive/negative) X 2 (outcome: rejection/selection) between participants factorial design.

Procedure

Upon arrival in the lab participants were received by a female experimenter and seated in front of computers in separate cubicles. Participants read they were (supposedly) taking part in a joint project of Leiden University and F., a bogus company specialized in coaching and recruitment, to study how selection procedures are experienced by job applicants. They were informed they would be taking part with a number of other participants in a selection procedure for a traineeship. It was stressed that, although they would not be offered an actual job at the end of the procedure, it was likely they would experience similar selection procedures in the future. Participants read the actual selection would be conducted via the computer by an interviewer of the company, Hans Brockens, in fact a confederate. Participants could see the confederate, dressed in a suit, sitting in front of a computer in an adjacent room as they entered the laboratory.

Before filling out a selection questionnaire on the basis of which participants allegedly would be accepted they were provided with information that contained the manipulation of self-relevance.

Manipulation of self-relevance. One way of increasing the self-relevance of a situation is by stressing the extent to which the personal outcome is also personally consequential (Dunning, 1995). Participants in the high self-relevance condition read that the company was looking for characteristics that are diagnostic of future success in the job market. Therefore, a high score on the selection questionnaire would mean the participants had a profile that was not only attractive to this particular company but also to other employers. Participants read that prior research had shown that this particular selection questionnaire was a reliable indicator of one’s chances in the job market.

In the low self-relevance condition participants read that in the present selection procedure the company was looking for characteristics specific to the present job at this particular company. Therefore, a high score on the selection questionnaire would mean the participants had a profile that was only attractive to
this particular company and not necessarily to other employers, providing no indication of how well participants would do later when on the job market. Before filling in the selection questionnaire, participants were asked to indicate whether they had understood the instructions so far (manipulation check of self-relevance).

Selection questionnaire. The selection questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part asked a number of demographic questions (e.g., age, married status). The second part consisted of 20 questions said to be related to happenings in daily life (e.g., “I like to do things my own way”) which only functioned as part of the cover story.

Manipulation of feedback and outcome. After filling in the selection questionnaire participants were asked to wait while the computer calculated their score on this questionnaire. All participants received a score of 73. In the negative feedback condition participants were told this was a comparatively low score and that they stood little chance of being selected. In the positive feedback condition participants were told this was a comparatively high score and they stood a good chance of being selected by the company.

Participants then received a message from the interviewer via the computer informing them that they had either been accepted (personal outcome: selection) or rejected (personal outcome: rejection). At this stage they were asked to answer a number of questions (see assessments).

Dependent Measures

Manipulation checks. After the outcome decision, participants answered three questions that consisted of our manipulation check of self-relevance (e.g., “I find it very important for my personal development that I am selected for this job”, α = .85) as well as two filler questions about the selection procedure to enhance credibility of the cover story (e.g., “I want to be better than other participants”). Participants indicated agreement on a 7 point scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Information search. We had two indicators of information search, namely participant’s indications of their wish to search for information, and their actual search behavior.

Wish to search for information. Before being given the opportunity to examine the information matrix (but after the manipulations), participants indicated in five items the extent to which they wished to search for information (e.g., “I would like to gain more insight into my achievements in this procedure”, α = .81).
**Actual search behavior.** Participants were also asked to indicate whether they would like extra information concerning the selection procedure (yes/no). Participants who indicated yes were able to see the information matrix. It provided information about other applicants who had taken part in selection procedures conducted by the same interviewer. This matrix showed the first names of eight female and eight male bogus applicants (in order for gender to be clear without making explicit that it was important in the present context). Participants could access further information about each bogus applicant by clicking the cells with his or her name. Participants could click 32 cells in total, 2 per bogus applicant. Search behavior could thus range from 0 clicks to 32 clicks. Per bogus applicant, one cell revealed his/her score on the selection questionnaire, the other whether the applicant was rejected or accepted. Each cell remained visible in the matrix after it had been clicked so that the more cells were clicked the more information stayed on the screen and could be compared. All bogus males had lower scores, ranging from 35 to 65 (M = 50) than all bogus females, ranging from 65 to 85 (M = 75) yet six out of eight males were accepted whereas no females were accepted. Thus participants who clicked all matrix cells could see that more women than men were rejected despite having higher qualifications. It is important to note that the information matrix thus provides the only cue to participants that they may be dealing with an interviewer who discriminates against women.

**Perceived prejudice of the interviewer.** Participants indicated to what extent they saw the interviewer, Hans Brockens, as being “prejudiced” or “discriminatory” (r = .65). These items were disguised by a number of other items that measured other characteristics of Hans Brockens (e.g., “intelligent”, “cold”). Scale endpoints ranged from 1 (completely disagree) to 7 (completely agree).

**Affect.** After information search, participants completed measures of negative affect (e.g., sad, angry, α = .96) taken from McFarland and Ross (1982). Responses were given on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

**Collective self esteem.** The public (e.g., “at this moment I feel women are valued”, “in this selection procedure women are seen as less efficient”, last item reverse scored; α = .72) and private (e.g., “at this moment I am happy to be a woman”, “I find it a shame that I am a woman”; last item reverse scored, α = .57) collective self esteem subscales of Luhtanen and Crocker’s (1992) Collective self esteem scale (CSE) were administered after being modified to be specific to gender and the present selection situation. Scale endpoints were 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree).
Results

Unless otherwise stated, data were analyzed using a 2 (self-relevance: high/low) X 2 (feedback: positive/negative) X 2 (outcome: rejection/selection) between participants analysis of variance. Relevant means are presented in Table 2.1.

Manipulation check

The manipulation check of self-relevance showed that participants in the high self-relevance condition found their outcome more self-relevant (M = 5.34, SD = .87) than participants in the low self-relevance condition (M = 4.87, SD = 1.16), F(1, 153) = 9.59, p < .01, η^2 = .05. No other effects were reliable, Fs < .69, ps > .41, η^2 < .01.

Information search

Wish to search for information. Only nineteen of the 184 participants indicated they did not want to view the information matrix. This group was too small to conduct separate analyses of variance (ANOVA) and was therefore excluded from further analyses. Four participants were not able to look at the information matrix due to computer problems and were excluded from further analyses. Chi-square analyses on the remaining number of participants in the self-relevance, feedback and outcome conditions showed no reliable difference in distribution across the eight conditions, χ²(7, N = 161) = 1.44, ns.

As expected, participants in the high self-relevance condition indicated a greater desire to gain extra information concerning the outcome and procedure (M = 5.44, SD = .91) than participants in the low self-relevance condition (M = 5.02, SD = .95), F(1, 153) = 9.43, p < .01, η^2 = .05. No other main or interaction effects were reliable, Fs < 1.5, ps > .22, η^2 < .01.

Actual search behavior: Information search was meant to be assessed as a continuous measure (from 0 to 32 possible cell clicks). However, as 105 of 161 participants clicked all 32 cells we had to distinguish between participants who were motivated to acquire all the information available (32 cells clicked) and those who gave up before that was the case (0-31 cells clicked) when given the opportunity to search for information. A 2 X 2 X 2 log linear analysis on matrix clicks revealed only a reliable main effect of self-relevance on information search, χ²(1, N = 161) = 3.81, p = .05. There were no other reliable effects. Within the low self-relevance condition 42 % of participants collected incomplete information, whereas 58 % collected all available information. By contrast, in the high self-relevance condition only 27 % collected incomplete information, whereas 73 % searched for all available information.

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information. Therefore, as predicted, and despite the limitations of these analyses, participants for whom the situation was highly self-relevant searched for more information than participants for whom the situation was less self-relevant.

**Perceived prejudice of the evaluator**

Analyses of perceived prejudice of the evaluator \((M = 4.16, SD = 1.19)\) revealed no significant main or interaction effects, \(F < 3.25, ps > .07, \eta^2 < .02\). There was a marginal Outcome X Feedback interaction indicating that participants who received negative feedback and were rejected evaluated the interviewer as somewhat more prejudiced \((M = 4.46, SD = 1.26)\) than in the other conditions \((M\) ranges from 3.91 to 4.17, SD from 1.21 to 1.16 respectively).

**Affect**

Analyses of negative affect revealed a reliable interaction effect of outcome by self-relevance only, \(F(1, 153) = 4.76, p = .03, \eta^2 = .03\) (see Table 2.1). No other effects were reliable, \(F < 3.08, ps > .08, \eta^2 < .02\). There was a marginal effect of outcome which was qualified by the Outcome X Self Relevance interaction.

Simple effect analyses revealed that participants for whom personal outcomes were self relevant reported more negative affect after they were rejected than after they were accepted, \(F(1, 157) = 7.35, p < .01\). There was no difference in affect for low self-relevance, \(F(1, 157) = .72, ns\). This is consistent with a personal interest and inconsistent with an empathic response to discrimination explanation.

**Collective self-esteem**

Public and private collective self esteem were included as the repeated measures (scale) in a mixed model MANOVA. We found a reliable self-relevance X outcome effect, \(F(1, 153) = 10.61, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07\), which was qualified by a scale X self-relevance X outcome interaction, \(F(1, 153) = 6.87, p < .01, \eta^2 = .04\). No other effects were reliable, \(F < 2.55, ps > .1, \eta^2 < .02\) (see Table 2.1).

Univariate analyses on the separate private and public self esteem scales revealed a reliable self-relevance by outcome interaction only for public collective self esteem, \(F(1, 153) = 8.83, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06\). This effect was not reliable for private collective self esteem, \(F(1, 153) = 1.07, p = .3, \eta^2 = .01\).

Simple effects analyses for public collective self esteem revealed that under high self-relevance, participants experienced lower public collective self esteem when they were rejected rather than accepted, \(F(1, 157) = 23.53, p < .001\). There was no difference in public collective self esteem for outcome in the low self-relevance condition, \(F(1, 157) = .92, ns\). This is consistent with the personal interest explanation.
Negative affect and public collective self esteem (SD) as a function of self-relevance (high / low) and outcome (selection / rejection) in Study 2.1.

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<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Selection</td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative affect</td>
<td>2.31 (.102)</td>
<td>2.23 (.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective self esteem (public)</td>
<td>5.39 (.69)</td>
<td>5.30 (.80)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cells in the same row that do not share the same superscript reliably differ from each other at *p < .05*  
*p < .07*

In order to demonstrate that participants’ well-being was related to feelings about group membership, rather than simply to the experience of personal failure that is highly self-relevant, we conducted correlational analyses between negative affect and public collective self esteem. We found reliable correlations between the public collective self esteem scale and negative affect, *r = -.47, p < .01*, indicating that affective responses relate to group based self esteem.

**Discussion**

The results of Study 2.1 provide support for our hypothesis that women are more likely to search for information concerning their situation when this is highly self-relevant to them. Admittedly our measure of information search presented some limitations as we only had limited variance on this measure (this limitation is addressed in Study 2.2). Nevertheless the results on this measure were not only convergent with our predictions, but also with a five item continuous measure of participant’s self-reported wish to search for information (indicated before information was sought). In sum, and consistent with prior research conducted in a different area (e.g., Dunning, 1995), participants in the high self-relevance condition both indicated a greater need to search for information, and did indeed search for more information in the information matrix than participants in the low self-relevance condition.
Also consistent with research on information search after success and failure (Dunning, 1995), we found no effect of outcome on information search. In addition, the present study provided no evidence that the content of the feedback (negative vs. positive) or its relationship to outcome (acceptance vs. rejection) had an effect on need to search for information or on information search. This indicates that also in this context, higher self-relevance instigates information search irrespective of the personal treatment received.

Considering the effects of searching for information that contains evidence of gender discrimination on well-being we found that knowledge about group level discriminatory treatment had a negative effect on both individual (i.e., affect) and group (i.e., collective self esteem) level indicators of well-being when women personally suffered rejection and had sought a lot of evidence of discrimination (i.e., under high self relevance). In line with research by Branscombe and colleagues (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2003) these results indicate that experiencing self-relevant personal failure that is consistent with group based discriminatory treatment has negative consequences for personal well-being by undermining group based self esteem. Furthermore, our results have interesting implications when considering the processes underlying responses to pervasive discrimination. We see that rather than suffering from the disadvantaged position of their group, women only experience lower levels of group and personal level well-being when they also personally suffer from this disadvantage (i.e., in the case of personal failure). Therefore, we have reason to believe that the experience of disadvantage contains an element of self interest rather than merely empathy or concern about the group in general (see also Stroebe, Ellemers, Barreto, & Mummendey, in press).

Overall the present study provides initial evidence for our contention that the conditions that motivate women to search for information which contains indications of gender discrimination also have negative consequences for women’s well-being when much evidence of discrimination is viewed (and women have also been rejected). However, although the present study provides strong indications that not only rejection that is highly self-relevant, but also the amount of evidence of gender discrimination viewed, influenced well-being, its focus lay on motivators of information search. This meant that we could not consider the effects of information search, and evidence of discrimination viewed, entirely separately from possible motivational influences of the manipulations on women’s’ well-being. By directly
manipulating information search, we provide a more precise examination of the effects of information search on well-being in Study 2.2.

**Study 2.2**

In Study 2.2 we focus more on information search and well-being responses in situations of personal failure that can or cannot be attributed to gender discrimination. Whereas in Study 2.1 information search was motivated by self-relevance, in Study 2.2 participants were simply encouraged (or not) to examine the available information. The present study allowed us to further study the processes underlying responses to self-sought evidence of discrimination with respect to Study 2.1. Specifically, we considered whether the negative consequences of information search we found for women’s well-being in Study 2.1 were indeed due to an increase in information processing that reveals strong evidence of discrimination rather than being instigated by the self-relevance (and stronger negative implications) of personal failure. Furthermore, by manipulating whether or not the information viewed provided evidence of gender discrimination (evidence of discrimination: present vs. absent) we were able to further examine whether the negative consequences of information search for well-being are due to viewing more information containing indications of discrimination (as we argue), or are the result of spending more time thinking about a situation of rejection. Arguably, our finding that women only report more negative perceptions of their group membership and experience more negative personal level well-being in the case of self-relevant personal failure may be due to the fact that dissatisfaction about receiving a self-relevant personal outcome not only induces lower levels of personal well-being but also spreads to perceptions with respect to one’s group membership and therefore one’s group level well-being. The present manipulation allows us to potentially rule out this alternative explanation.

The manipulation of discrimination also provided a more direct test of the possible self-protective function of discrimination by allowing us to compare responses to situations of failure that do or do not provide the opportunity of more external attributions of this failure to discrimination. In line with the discounting hypothesis we would predict that women experience higher levels of well-being when they have indications that personal failure can be attributed to discrimination (i.e., under high information search/discrimination present). In line with research by Branscombe and colleagues (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2003), we expected the confrontation with strong evidence of discriminatory treatment to
have negative consequences for women’s well-being compared to when no such evidence is available. By contrast, under conditions of low information search, and thus weaker evidence of discrimination, we expected less negative consequences of information search, compared to when no such evidence is provided.

In the present study we also focused on assessing negative emotions that might be specifically related to experiencing discrimination such as threat and despair. Prior research has shown that being a target of discrimination is related to the experience of threat (Kaiser, Major & McCoy, 2004; McCoy, & Major, 2003). Whereas threat can be regarded as an immediate reaction to a situation posing a threat to social identity, Schmitt and Branscombe (2002b) have pointed out that the experience of discrimination may also lead to a realization that one is likely to encounter discrimination again in the future. One emotion that is linked to awareness of long term adverse consequences of discrimination is despair. Research by Van Overwalle, Mervielde, and De Schuyter (1995) showed that students experienced despair in the face of personal failure when they made a stable attribution to failure. Other research linked despair to long term regret of inaction (Gilovich, Medvec, & Kahneman, 1998). Similarly, the experience of discrimination can be related to feelings of long term loss of control.

Method

Design and Participants

One hundred and seven female students of Leiden University took part in the experiment for course credits or payment of 6 € (US$ = 7.70). Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (information search: high/low) X 2 (evidence of discrimination: present/absent) between participants factorial design.

Procedure

The procedure in Study 2.2 was almost identical to that of Study 2.1 except that we did not make use of a confederate but told participants we were interested in researching selection procedures via internet and that they would take part in an on-line selection procedure conducted by a male evaluator of the same company (F.). After the introduction to the study participants supposedly completed an on-line selection procedure. After completion all participants were told the computer had calculated their score on the questionnaire. All participants received a score of 60. Having waited some time and answered a number of filler questions participants read that the selector had made his decision and had not found them suitable as an employee of the company.
Manipulation of information search. In contrast to the first study where participants could indicate whether or not they wanted to view extra information about the selection procedure, all participants in Study 2 saw the information matrix. However, all the relevant information on the matrix was covered, and had to be clicked to become visible. Therefore, participants could search more or less thoroughly for information about prior applicants in the selection procedure. In the low search condition participants were told they could use the matrix to collect information about other applicants if they felt the need to do so, but that this was not necessary for the rest of the study. In the high search condition, participants were informed that it was important to thoroughly examine the information about other applicants in the matrix, and that they might need this information later on in the study. In both conditions it was emphasized that participants were free to decide how many of the other applicants they examined in the matrix.

The information matrix and discrimination manipulation. Participants were then given the opportunity to search for information in the matrix containing data about ten male and ten female names. To increase the variance on this measure, information search was made more difficult than in Study 2.1 as participants viewed more applicants (twenty instead of sixteen) and had to open four follow up screens (instead of only 1) to collect all the relevant information for each applicant they selected. Only then was return to the main screen possible to view the following applicant. Per applicant, the first screen gave the selection questionnaire score of the applicant, the second his/her age, the third study major and the fourth indicated whether the applicant had been rejected or accepted. Upon return to the main screen, participants received a brief summary of the available information about the viewed applicant, consisting of the questionnaire score and the selection decision. The already viewed information remained visible on the main screen while participants continued their information search.

In the discrimination present condition the information matrix revealed that all female applicants were rejected despite higher scores on the selection questionnaire (ranging from 61 to 78, M = 70) whereas eight out of ten male applicants were accepted despite lower scores on the same questionnaire (ranging from 41 to 58, M = 50). Therefore, as in Study 2.1, this information provided strong evidence that the male co-worker was discriminating against female and in favour of male applicants. In the discrimination absent condition, an equal number of male and female applicants were accepted. According to the information provided, participants who were accepted had a higher score (ranging from 61 to 78, M = 71)
than rejected participants (ranging from 41 to 68, M = 52). Therefore, this condition provided indications of a fair selection procedure based on qualifications (i.e., score), implying personal failure rather than group membership as the main cause for rejection.

**Dependent Measures**

**Manipulation checks.** To determine whether participants had correctly comprehended the information search manipulation, participants completed one item (“I expect to be asked questions about what I have read about the other applicants in the procedure”). Scale endpoints were 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). As a behavioral check of actual information search the number of cells participants had clicked to reveal information about other participants was computed. Endpoints were 0 (=none) and 20 (=all). We also measured the amount of time (in seconds) spent examining the information matrix.

**Perceived discrimination.** Because all individuals who had information about prejudice also were personally rejected, we administered a combined four item measure consisting of evaluations of the interviewer’s prejudice (i.e., prejudiced, discriminatory) and attributions of the personal outcome to discrimination (my outcome was: due to a prejudiced selector, due to Hans Brockens’ attitude towards men and women). Scale endpoints ranged from 1 (completely disagree/not at all) to 7 (completely agree/very much for the interviewer and personal attribution items respectively. Cronbach’s alpha of the perceived discrimination scale was .64.

**Affect.** Despair was measured with two items taken from Van Overwalle et al.’s measure (1995) of despair (hopeless, desperate, α = .56). Threat was measured with three items (worried, threatened, uneasy, α = .73). Scale endpoints were 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much).

**Collective self esteem.** The same private (α = .82) and public (α = .70) collective self esteem subscales of Crocker and Luhtanen’s CSE scale (1992) were used as in Study 2.1.

**Results**

Unless otherwise stated, data were analyzed using a 2 (information search: high/low) X 2 (discrimination: present/absent) between participants Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

**Manipulation checks**
Analyses of participants’ comprehension of the manipulation of information search revealed a main effect of information search, $F(1, 102) = 14.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. Discrimination had not been manipulated at this point and therefore was not included in this analysis. As expected, participants in the high information search condition ($M = 4.14, SD = 1.78$) thought it was more important for them to study the information than participants in the low information search condition ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.56$).

Furthermore, the behavioral measure of information search (matrix clicks) revealed that participants in the high information search condition ($M = 11.57, SD = 6.00$) indeed searched for more information than in the low information search condition ($M = 9.18, SD = 6.24$), $F(1, 102) = 4.09, p = .05, \eta^2 = .04$. No other effects were reliable, $Fs < .98, ps > .32, \eta^2 < .01$. The measure of time spent examining the matrix revealed the same pattern, such that participants in the high information search condition ($M = 128.68, SD = 62.49$) spent more time examining the matrix than those in the low information search condition ($M = 100.40, SD = 60.53$), $F(1, 102) = 5.73, p = .02, \eta^2 = .05$. No other main or interaction effects were reliable, $Fs < 1.04, ps > .31, \eta^2 < .01$. Therefore the manipulation of information search was successful.

**Attributions to discrimination**

Analyses of the perceived discrimination scale revealed a main effect of discrimination on the perceived discrimination scale, $F(1, 102) = 7.46, p < .01, \eta^2 = .07$. Participants perceived more discrimination in the discrimination present ($M = 3.78, SD = 1.01$) than absent ($M = 3.30, SD = .80$) condition. No other effects were significant, $Fs < 1.58, ps > .21, \eta^2 < .02$. Conform Study 2.1, amount of information sought does not influence perceptions of discrimination.

**Affect**

Analyses of the threat scale revealed no reliable main effects, $Fs < .49, ps > .49, \eta^2 > .01$, but revealed a marginally reliable information search X discrimination interaction, $F(1, 102) = 3.76, p = .06, \eta^2 = .04$. Although simple effects were not reliable, $Fs < 1.91, p > .17$, the means were in the expected direction, such that in the high information search condition, participants felt more threat in the discrimination present ($M = 2.36, SD = .92$) than discrimination absent ($M = 1.92, SD = .83$) condition, $F(1, 102) = 3.02, p = .09$. Means in the low information search condition did not differ significantly $F(1, 102) = .59, p = .44 (M_{\text{absent}} = 2.25, SD_{\text{absent}} = 1.07; M_{\text{present}} = 2.01, SD_{\text{present}} = .70)$. 

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Analyses of the despair scale revealed no reliable main effects, $F_s < .46, p > .79, \eta^2 < .01$, but a reliable information search X discrimination interaction, $F(1, 102) = 6.75, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$. As expected, participants in the high information search condition felt more despair when discrimination was present rather than absent, $F(1, 102) = 5.18, p = .03$. In the low information search condition there was no difference between the discrimination present and absent conditions, $F(1, 102) = 1.91, \text{ns}$. Thus, these affect responses do not seem to be simply a function of spending more time thinking about the negative outcome, as they are the result of both engagement in information search and of whether or not the information reveals discriminatory treatment.

Table 2.2 - Despair and private collective self esteem (SD) as a function of information search (low/high) and discrimination (absent / present) in Study 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Search</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Discrimination absent</td>
<td>Discrimination present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despair</td>
<td>2.66 (.94)$^{ab*}$</td>
<td>2.29 (1.01)$^{ab**}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective self esteem (private)</td>
<td>6.19 (.70)$^b$</td>
<td>6.38 (.52)$^a$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means in the same row that do not share subscripts reliably differ from each other at $p < .05$

Means in the same row that share ‘*’ or ‘’ differ from each other at $p < .07$ level

Collective self esteem

Public and private collective self esteem were included as the within participants variable (scale) in a mixed model MANOVA. No between participants effects of the experimental manipulation were reliable, $F_s < 1.69, ps > .20, \eta^2 < .02$. There was a reliable interaction between need to search for information, discrimination and the within participants variable (scale). When considering public and private collective self esteem at the univariate level, we found no reliable effects for the public collective self esteem scale, $F_s < 1.27, p > .26, \eta^2 < .01$. Analyses of the private collective self esteem scale revealed the expected information search X
discrimination interaction, $F(1, 102) = 5.67, p = .02, \eta^2 = .05$. Simple effects analyses showed that participants in the high information search condition experienced lower private collective self esteem when discrimination was present rather than absent, $F(1, 102) = 5.22, p = .02$. In the low information search condition there was no difference between the discrimination conditions, $F(1, 102) = 1.12, ns.$

Correlational analyses

In order to further demonstrate that our emotion effects were related to perceptions of discrimination and feelings about group membership rather than to the experience of personal failure in itself, we conducted correlational analyses between threat and despair on the one hand, and the private collective self esteem scale on the other. We found reliable correlations between private collective self esteem and both threat, $r = -.44, p < .001$, and despair, $r = -.40, p < .01$. These correlations indicate that, the extent to which persons view and internalize evidence that the group is discriminated is related to feelings of threat and despair.

Discussion

Study 2.2 revealed that, as predicted, viewing much as opposed to little evidence of gender discrimination can indeed be harmful for well-being. Therefore this study provides further support that viewing strong evidence of gender discrimination in the face of personal failure is harmful rather than self-protective.

We found no effects of information content on well-being when information search was low, rather, as expected, these effects emerged when women engaged more deeply in information search. Women who processed more information that revealed evidence of gender discrimination had lower collective self esteem and experienced more despair and marginally more threat. Importantly, lower levels of private collective self esteem were related to increases in threat and despair, indicating that women’s well-being responses, as in Study 2.1, were influenced by feelings with regard to their group membership in the face of evidence of discrimination. Therefore our alternative explanation that suffering from personal failure and experiencing lower levels of individual well-being spreads to feelings with respect to one’s group membership (i.e., group level well-being) received little support: women’s feelings with regard to their group membership were only more negative when they had actual evidence of discrimination.

Although we found the predicted patterns for threat, despair and private collective self esteem, we do not find effects on public collective self esteem. This is to some extent surprising given the results of Study 2.1. We cannot provide a
conclusive explanation for these differences but it is important to realize that participants were placed in quite different situations in Studies 2.1 and 2.2. In Study 2.1 women either contrasted (i.e., success) or assimilated (i.e., failure) their personal outcomes with the disadvantage of their group. This likely provided a stronger contrast concerning women’s personal outcomes versus concerns about how others view one’s group (public collective self esteem). The fact that in Study 2.2 all participants experience personal failure but that the extent to which this failure can be attributed to one’s group membership differs may explain why here women were more focused on their connection to the group (i.e., private collective self esteem).

In sum, the present study provides support for the idea that as women search for and see increasing evidence of the disadvantage of their group this has negative consequences for their well-being both at the individual and the group level.

**General Discussion**

The present research provides the first link between information processing, attributions to discrimination and well-being. It addresses the question of how women come to realize they are victims of gender discrimination in situations in which they are likely to be focused on individual level aspects such as personal competence or individual ability. Furthermore, we studied how viewing evidence of group disadvantage that shifts the focus to one’s gender group membership and possible devaluation on the basis of this group membership influences both group and individual level well-being.

In the present research we focused on situations of personal success or failure in which women had no prior cues to gender discrimination and needed to actively search for information about their personal outcomes in order to perceive the disadvantaged position of their group. Our research shows that women are motivated to search for information in the face of both personal failure and success: They sought more information when personal outcomes were self relevant. These results were conform our hypotheses based on prior research in the area of self-evaluation (Dunning, 1995) and information processing (e.g., Petty, & Cacioppo, 1979; Eagly, & Chaiken, 1991). Furthermore, findings across both studies revealed that women were able to shift from being focused on individual level aspects of a situation to realizing group disadvantage: even women who were arguably very focused on individual level aspects of the situation because their personal outcomes were self-relevant reported perceiving prejudice against their gender group. In sum,
the present research provides evidence that even when women are very focused on personal outcomes they are able to ‘shift’ to a group level and perceive group level disadvantage.

These results provide interesting additional insights with regard to research that has considered the relation between information processing and perceptions of gender discrimination. Although research in this area so far has not considered how factors at the individual level, such as the self relevance of personal outcomes, motivate information search, this prior research provides some indications that at a group level, the extent to which, in this case, observers are emotionally invested in the issue of gender discrimination increases recognition of discrimination – when this discrimination is somewhat subtle (i.e., presented in a piecemeal fashion) (Crosby et al., 1986). Therefore we have indications that, at a group level, the relevance of the judgment at hand influences the recognition of discrimination. The present study provides insights into the extent to which emotional investment at an individual level – with respect to the target of discrimination him/herself - may aid or hinder the extent to which women want to search for evidence about themselves and therefore recognize gender discrimination.

Importantly, in contrast to prior research in the area of information processing, the present work also considered the consequences of searching for evidence of discrimination for women’s well-being. Prior research has provided indications that making attributions to discrimination can have relatively positive consequences for well-being when it allows women to avoid self blame by attributing personal failure more externally, to the prejudice of another (Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a). Yet, the present research reveals that searching for more, and therefore stronger, evidence of past discrimination against fellow gender group members has negative consequences for women’s well-being both at a personal and a group level – even when women may be highly motivated to self-protect from failure because personal failure is highly self relevant.

Although prior research has provided evidence that the extent to which discrimination is pervasive increases the extent to which individuals suffer from discrimination (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2002c, 2003) it raises the question concerning why pervasive discrimination has these negative consequences for well-being. Are individuals suffering more from pervasive discrimination because their group is central to themselves and they feel concern with respect to other group members (empathy explanation), or because pervasive discrimination has negative consequences for personal outcomes (personal interest explanation)? Prior research
has focused on negative personal outcomes that can be attributed to the prejudice of another. Therefore, negative attitudes with regard to one’s (devalued) group always affected the self. In contrast to prior research, by varying the extent to which group disadvantage affected individual outcomes, we could consider these possible reasons why women would suffer from pervasive discrimination. We found that rather than suffering from the fate of their gender group in general, women seemed to suffer from group disadvantage because it has negative consequences for personal outcomes (personal interest explanation). Conform this idea we found that women experienced lower levels of personal and group level well-being when they had more evidence of group disadvantage and experienced personal failure – not in the case of personal success (Study 2.1). Furthermore, group level well-being was only lower when women experienced personal failure in the face of group disadvantage (i.e., not when information provided no indications of disadvantage) (Study 2.2). Therefore our research provides support for the idea that women seem to suffer from strong or pervasive evidence of gender discrimination largely because this has negative implications for themselves, and potentially for their future outcomes.

Although our findings provide little support for the self-protective properties of being able to make attributions to discrimination (i.e., discounting approach), it is important to view the present results in the correct context. Studies that have provided support for the discounting approach have generally focused on evaluation settings in which there is no explicit evidence that emphasizes the acts of discrimination (behavioural manifestations of bias) would be pervasive. We believe that when evidence of group disadvantage is very strong, this may outweigh the self-protective potential of attributing failure to discrimination – because individuals become aware of the negative consequences of discrimination for themselves in the future. In other words, in studying when discrimination is harmful versus self-protective it may be important to focus on the relative balance of threats at an individual versus group level. Determining the relative strengths of these threats can inform us when and whether attributions to discrimination are likely to be self-protective or harmful.

**Limitations and future directions**

One might expect that the amount of information sought containing evidence of discrimination would increase attributions to discrimination and not only influence perceptions of group membership. Across both studies this is not what we found. Indeed, it would seem that whereas women’s attributions reflect
whether or not a situation can be attributed to prejudice, similar levels of attributions can be based on more (i.e., high information search) or less (i.e., low information search) evidence of discrimination. Therefore it is possible that women who made attributions to discrimination on the basis of much evidence of discrimination were more certain that they had been discriminated against. Indeed, the standard deviations of the discrimination present versus absent conditions indicate that our manipulation of prejudice induced greater variability in the extent to which women felt certain that the person evaluating them was prejudiced: The standard deviations for attributions to discrimination were higher in the prejudice present ($SD = 1.01$) than absent ($SD = .80$) condition (Study 2.2). The fact that attributions to discrimination do not necessarily reflect the extent to which women perceive, or their feelings with respect to, discrimination, stresses the importance of studying responses to evidence of discrimination that is provided in a more implicit way, as we have done in the present studies. It also points to the necessity of considering implicit measures of discrimination in the future (see also Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2006 for an implicit measure). These can provide insights concerning differences in the extent to which women actually perceive versus are prepared to report discrimination.

**Practical implications**

The link we make in our research between information search, attributions to discrimination and well-being also has important practical implications. It allows us to discern when women will make an effort to discover discrimination in everyday life. In 1984 Crosby reported being shocked by the fact that females were aware that gender discrimination takes place in organizations, yet failed to realize they themselves were also being discriminated against. As Crosby (1984) pointed out in an explanation of this phenomenon, realizing one has been discriminated against, involves being aware of diagnostic information concerning not only personal treatment, but also treatment of others. This stresses the importance of studying when women are motivated to search for information about themselves and others in a manner that enables them to conclude that personal treatment can be attributed to a systematic pattern of group treatment.

Yet it is also crucial to understand what effect this search has on women’s well-being. Whereas the women in our study did engage in information search, despite the negative consequences they could envisage, one can question whether this desire would not decrease over time, as women become increasingly aware of...
the psychological costs of this search. We therefore believe that studying the extent
to which women approach information about discrimination and the effects this has
on their well-being can be important when considering ways to support women in
potentially discriminatory settings. One way of helping women to cope with the
painful consequences of the process of discovering discrimination may be to stress
the long term benefits of discovering discrimination. Because, paradoxically,
engaging in this process is the only way in which future well-being can be
increased. In order to deal with gender discrimination in society it is crucial that
women realize they are being discriminated against and report this discrimination.

In sum, our research illustrates that, even in situations in which women are
very focused on individual level aspects of a situation, such as implications of
personal outcomes, and there is no direct reference to gender, women can become
aware of gender discrimination. We show that women can be motivated to search
for information even when this search may be hurtful, such as in situations that are
highly self-relevant. Our research stresses the importance of considering the
interplay between aspects relevant to a personal and a group level in studying well-
being responses to subtle discrimination.
Chapter 2

Footnotes

1. This chapter is based on Stroebe, Barreto, & Ellemers (2009).
Chapter 3 | For better or for worse: The congruence of personal and group outcomes on targets’ responses to discrimination

When Bill Cosby became a star on American television there were not many African Americans in similar positions. In fact, he probably knew that in those times it would not be easy for African Americans to gain acceptance and make a career as he had done. How does it feel to reach the top, knowing that many fellow group members will not attain a similar position within society? Are successful individuals happy to have escaped their group's plight, or does their personal success make the disadvantage of other group members seem even more unjust? Although insights on social justice suggest that people's evaluations of their personal outcomes are guided by information about the legitimacy of procedures (e.g., Folger, 1977, Greenberg, 1987), previous research on tokenism, discrimination and relative deprivation suggests that people only suffer from illegitimate group-level disadvantage when this affects their personal outcomes (e.g., Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Smith, Spears, & Owen, 1994; Wright & Taylor, 1999). This raises the more general question of how information about individual and group outcomes both separately and in combination affect the way people perceive and respond to their situation.

In the present research we consider how information about group level treatment influences responses to personal outcomes in situations in which the relevance of individual characteristics seems primary (i.e., in evaluation settings in which positive/negative feedback is given). In line with prior research we argue that in this type of setting, that provides a focus on personal outcomes, knowledge of negative group level treatment can provide a relatively positive interpretation of
one’s personal outcomes as it allows people to attribute negative personal outcomes such as personal failure to the prejudice of another rather than to lack of personal ability. By looking at situations in which personal outcomes are assessed in the presence versus absence of information about group level disadvantage (Study 3.1), as well as situations in which personal outcomes are congruent or incongruent with group level treatment (Study 3.2), we extend prior research to consider three questions we view as central to the area of discrimination: First, is knowledge of group level disadvantage self-protective in that it has more positive consequences for well-being than not having any information about group level treatment (Study 3.1)? Second, do these effects simply stem from the congruence (vs. incongruence) of information about individual level and group level treatment, or is group level information attributed in a way that it reflects positively on the self (Study 3.2)? Third, do perceptions of procedural justice depend on information about group level treatment, or will personal outcomes determine the extent to which individuals perceive procedures as fair (Study 3.1 and 3.2)?

In the following we first review literature that considers how (negative) group level information influences responses to personal outcomes, in situations in which personal outcomes are either congruent or incongruent with group level treatment. We raise the question to what extent this concern with personal outcomes inhibits perceptions of illegitimate procedures that disadvantage one’s group.

The Effects of Group Disadvantage on Responses to Personal Outcomes

Prior research has considered situations in which the individual self is either, as is the case in tokenism and relative deprivation research, successful or, as is the case in discrimination research (with the exception of Crocker et al., 1991) unsuccessful in the face of group disadvantage. The studies we report in this paper are not only aimed at providing a connection between these lines of research but also at enabling us to consider to what extent responses to individual outcomes depend on group level outcomes and whether these processes generalize beyond situations of group disadvantage. Below we first consider evidence from research on the effects of tokenism.

Research on the effects of tokenism studies how members of minority groups respond to individual success (i.e., gaining access to advantaged positions in a higher status group) while knowing that the majority of their group remains in a disadvantaged position (Boen & Vanbeselaere, 2001; Wright & Taylor, 1998, 1999).
Research in this area provides evidence that responses to ingroup disadvantage can depend on individual outcomes (see Wright, 2001 for an overview). For instance research by Wright and Taylor (1999) revealed that group members only responded negatively to ingroup disadvantage (i.e., less personal satisfaction, need to engage in collective action) when this ingroup disadvantage also affected the nature of their personal outcomes. Thus even though the awareness of ingroup disadvantage in itself indicates that the current situation is unjust, people may have difficulty identifying the injustice of procedures when they have been personally successful (see also Ellemers, 2001). Additionally, studies in the area of relative deprivation reveal that when intergroup contexts are salient this can even augment the psychological benefits of positive personal outcomes in the face of group disadvantage (Smith et al., 1994). Overall this research indicates that when personal and group outcomes diverge, individual level outcomes may be more determinant of well-being and perceptions of procedural legitimacy than the disadvantage of the own group – even when group disadvantage is highly salient.

Research in the area of subtle discrimination also provides some evidence implying that the individual self often remains primary in the face of ingroup disadvantage. Note that we are now considering a different type of evaluative situation compared to the research reviewed above, one in which individual and group level outcomes are congruent rather than incongruent. This allows us to consider how people respond to personal outcomes in the face of group disadvantage both when ingroup level outcomes are congruent with and can therefore inform targets about their own outcomes (see below) as well as situations in which ingroup outcomes are incongruent with and therefore provide a contrast with individual level outcomes (i.e., tokenism/relative deprivation research).

Crocker and colleagues argue and provide evidence that attributing one’s own negative outcomes to prejudice against one’s group allows targets of discrimination to avoid self-blame by discounting lack of personal ability as a cause of their failure (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker et al., 1991). This is in line with insights from the social justice literature (Folger, 1977, Greenberg, 1987), indicating that the way people respond to their personal outcomes depends on the perceived legitimacy of the procedures that led to these outcomes. Thus the conviction that group based disadvantage underlies negative personal outcomes (by making attributions to discrimination) can have relatively positive consequences for individual well-being (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991; Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003a; McCoy, & Major, 2003).
Taken together, the research reviewed above shows a paradoxical effect when considering responses to group disadvantage in evaluative settings. Information about group-based disadvantage always improves how people respond to personal outcomes, regardless of whether their personal outcomes are positive or negative. When personal outcomes are positive (e.g., tokenism), information about ingroup disadvantage helps individuals stand out from their group. When personal outcomes are negative (as in the case of discrimination), individuals can find comfort in the fate of their group, as this helps them to explain personal failure by referring to unjust procedures. Hence the studies discussed above provide evidence that in settings in which personal outcomes are highly salient individual group members may focus on the positive interpretation of their personal outcomes even in the face of ingroup disadvantage. As will become clear in the present research, this focus on individual outcomes may even guide perceptions of illegitimacy of procedures affecting the group.

The Present Research

Although this reasoning is based on, and appears to be supported by, what we know from previous studies, the present research goes further than prior work in a number of ways: Whereas discrimination in principle implies that negative personal outcomes are related to ingroup disadvantage, considering situations in which personal and group outcomes differ allows us to gain more insight into the separate and interactive effects of these two types of outcomes. This allows us to examine three central processes associated with subtle discrimination.

Firstly, separating personal and group level outcomes allows us to consider to what extent people suffer or profit from the fate of their group in the face of actual discrimination and stigmatized group membership. That is, by contrasting situations in which people do or do not have information about group disadvantage (Study 3.1), we can consider to what extent responses to personal outcomes are augmented or dampened by knowledge about group disadvantage.

Secondly, the present research (Study 3.2) can provide insights concerning the extent to which discounting in the face of subtle discrimination is a general process or, as previously assumed but not directly tested in this area of research, one that is motivated by the need to self-protect from failure. We look at these alternative processes by giving congruence information (i.e., in which personal and group outcomes match) that does (rejection/group disadvantage) or does not (acceptance/group advantage) reflect positively on the individual self. In the latter
situation congruent information reflects less positively on the individual self because it implies that personal success is due to group membership rather than own ability. Study 3.2 allows us to reflect on whether people adjust attributions to personal characteristics in view of group-based information (i.e. due to the congruence between them) or also consider the implications thereof for the individual self.

A third contribution of the present research is to examine to what extent perceptions of group level treatment are also influenced by personal outcomes. Although tokenism research has considered the relation between personal outcomes and justice perceptions, research in the area of subtle discrimination focuses on measures that assess individual coping responses, not on examining broader perceptions of legitimacy. As a result, we do not really know how the experience of personal failure or group level disadvantage affects perceptions of procedural justice. Research in the area of procedural justice has repeatedly found what is referred to as the ‘fair process effect’, namely that perceived procedural fairness has a strong influence on how people respond to personal outcomes (Folger, 1977, Greenberg, 1987). At the same time we know from research on the person-group-discrimination-discrepancy that perceptions of group level injustice do not always translate into perceptions of personal disadvantage (e.g., Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990). The fact that the present studies assess both general perceptions of procedural justice and more specific perceptions regarding personal outcomes can thus help us to explore the interplay between justice perceptions and responses to personal outcomes that are, in some cases, the result of discrimination. Furthermore, it enables us to consider ways in which the personal experience of discrimination is likely to raise feelings of injustice which can lead to other (group-level) responses, for instance to challenge existing procedures, to publicly voice opinions about these procedures, or to raise support for collective action.

### Study 3.1

In Study 3.1 we considered how the presence vs. absence of information about group disadvantage affects outcome attributions, well-being and perceptions of procedural legitimacy. We manipulated personal outcome (acceptance/rejection) and information about group disadvantage (yes/no).

With regard to the extent to which these outcomes are attributed to personal characteristics vs. group based treatment, we predicted that having information about group level disadvantage would enable participants who experience personal rejection to decrease attributions to personal characteristics,
while increasing these attributions under personal success. In terms of discounting, information about group disadvantage allows participants to discount personal characteristics as a cause of their failure. Therefore making attributions to discrimination should buffer individuals' well-being from the effects of personal rejection.

For perceived illegitimacy of the procedure, two possible predictions can be made. If perceptions of illegitimacy are invoked to cope with personal rejection, we expected that people who were made aware of group level disadvantage to seize this information as providing an opportunity to regard the procedure as illegitimate when they are personally rejected, while they should be less likely to engage in such a strategy when they are personally accepted. If, however, perceived illegitimacy of the procedure is driven by the awareness that one's group is treated unjustly, the provision of information about group level disadvantage in itself should raise illegitimacy judgments, irrespective of one's personal outcomes.

**Method**

**Design and Participants**

Eighty-two female students of Leiden University (M age = 20.15) took part in the experiment for payment (1 Euro) or course credits. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) X 2 (information about group disadvantage: yes/no) between participants factorial design.

**Procedure**

Upon arrival in the lab participants were received by a male or female experimenter and seated in front of computers in separate cubicles. Participants read they were (supposedly) taking part in a joint project of Leiden University and F., a bogus company specialized in coaching and recruitment, to study the personal experience of online selection procedures. They were informed that they would be taking part in a selection procedure. It was stressed that, although they would not be offered an actual job at the end of the procedure, it was likely they would experience similar selection procedures when applying for a job in the future. After some information about company F., participants were asked to fill in a selection questionnaire on the basis of which they would allegedly be selected by an interviewer of the company, Hans Brockens.

*Manipulation of personal outcome.* Participants in the rejection condition were then told Hans Brockens did not consider them suitable as an employee.
Participants in the acceptance condition were told Hans Brockens considered them suitable as an employee.

**Manipulation of information about group disadvantage.** All participants then received some additional information (i.e., number of prior applicants) about the selection procedure, ostensibly to evaluate to what extent job applicants like to have extra information about the procedure they are taking part in. Participants in the information about group disadvantage condition also read how other applicants that were evaluated by Hans Brockens had done: 4% of all women and 60% of all men had been accepted. Participants in the no information about group disadvantage condition did not receive this information. Following this, participants were asked to complete a number of dependent measures. To ensure anonymity of participants' responses with respect to the evaluator, it was stressed that responses would not be sent to Hans Brockens.

**Dependent Measures**

**Manipulation checks.** As a manipulation check of personal outcome participants indicated whether they had been found suitable as an employee (1= not suitable; 2= suitable). The manipulation check of group outcome consisted of two items (“how many men/women were accepted in this selection procedure”: 1=less than 10% of all men/women; 2=between 10 and 50% of all men/women; 3=between 50 to 100% of all men/women).

**Personal and group level threat.** In order to test to what extent participants were affected by both information about their personal and the group outcome, we measured threat at a personal and a group level. Personal level threat was measured by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they experienced the emotions “threatened”, “worried” and “uneasy” when thinking about their own outcome (α = .81). Group level threat was measured by asking participants to indicate to what extent they experienced these emotions when thinking about the position of women in this selection procedure (α = .88). Scale endpoints were 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much).

**Attributions.** Two items measured the extent to which participants felt their personal outcomes were due to *group-based treatment* by asking participants whether they thought their outcome in the selection procedure was due to Hans Brocken’s “attitude towards men and women” and “due to my gender” (r = .86). Attributions to *personal characteristics* were measured by asking participants to indicate the extent to which they thought their outcome was due to “something in me” and “because of who I am” (r = .64, see Major et al., 2003a; Schmitt &
Branscombe, 2002b, for similar attribution measures). Scale endpoints were 1 (strongly disagree) and 7 (strongly agree). In accordance with prior research studying discounting in the area of discrimination (i.e., Major et al., 2003a; Major, Quinten, & Schmader, 2003b), we also computed a direct measure of discounting by subtracting (standardized) attributions to personal characteristics from (standardized) attributions to group-based treatment. Higher scores on this measure therefore indicate greater discounting.

**Affective well-being.** Participants completed a measure of (negative) affect that consisted of a list of 10 emotions taken from the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL; Zuckerman & Lubin, 1965) (e.g., blue, discouraged, happy, last item reverse-scored; \( \alpha = .87 \)). Scale endpoints were 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much).

**Legitimacy of the selection procedure.** We included a three item measure of overall perceived legitimacy of the selection procedure to see to what extent people perceive unfair treatment at a group level (e.g., “In general the choice of candidates took place in a legitimate way/the selections we fair”, \( \alpha = .76 \)). Scale endpoints were 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much).

**Results**

Unless otherwise stated, data were analyzed using a 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) X 2 (information about group disadvantage: yes/no) between participants factorial design.

**Dependent Measures**

**Manipulation Checks.** The manipulation check of personal outcome indicated that all participants correctly indicated their personal outcome in the selection procedure. The check of information about group disadvantage indicated that all participants correctly indicated the percentage of women that was accepted. One participant incorrectly indicated the percentage of men accepted. This participant was not excluded from analysis as participants who gave an incorrect response again received information telling them the correct result.

**Personal and group level threat.** Analyses revealed a main effect of personal outcome on personal level threat, \( F(1, 78) = 18.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19 \). Participants who were rejected experienced more personal threat (\( M = 2.56, SD = 1.16 \)) than accepted participants (\( M = 1.64, SD = .77 \)). No other effects were significant, \( Fs < 1.94, p > .17, \eta^2 < .02 \).

Participants who received information about group disadvantage felt more group level threat (\( M = 3.85, SD = 1.34 \)) than those who did not receive this
information (M = 2.09, SD = 1.30), F(1, 78) = 35.51, p < .001, η² = .31. No other effects were significant, Fs < .32, p > .57, η² < .004. These results indicate that negative personal and negative group outcomes are both experienced as relatively threatening by participants.

Attributions. Attributions to group-based treatment versus personal characteristics were examined with a 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) by 2 (information about group disadvantage: yes/no), by 2 (type of attribution: group vs. personal), mixed design, with type of attribution as a repeated measure. This yielded two-way interactions of type of attribution with personal outcome, F(1,78) = 27.64, p < .001, η² = .26, and type of attribution with information about group disadvantage, F(1,78) = 43.17, p < .001, η² = .36, which were both qualified by a reliable three-way interaction, F(1,78) = 28.32, p < .001, η² = .27 (see Table 3.1). To interpret this complex interaction, we computed tests of lower order effects at each level of personal outcome.

In the personal acceptance condition, this only yielded a reliable main effect of type of attribution, F(1,41) = 42.47, p < .001, η² = .51. The relevant means indicate that when participants were personally accepted they generally attributed this more strongly to their personal characteristics than to group-based treatment. When participants were personally rejected, however, the main effect of type of attribution, F(1,37) = 4.31, p < .05, η² = .10, was qualified by a reliable two-way interaction, F(1,37) = 46.30, p < .001, η² = .56. T-tests reveal that when no information was available about group-level outcomes, participants attributed their rejection more to their personal characteristics than to group-based treatment, t(19) = -2.97, p < .001. However, when the experience of personal rejection was combined with the information that the group was disadvantaged, participants attributed their own outcomes more to group-based treatment than to personal characteristics, t(18) = 7.48, p < .001.

In order to consider to what extent participants engaged in actual discounting (i.e., by making more attributions to group based instead of to individual based treatment), we also considered differences in the extent to which participants engaged in discounting (see Table 3.1). Conform our hypotheses, simple effect analyses revealed that rejected participants engaged in more discounting when receiving versus not receiving information about group disadvantage, F(1, 78) = 55.52, p < .001. Participants who were accepted did not differ in levels of discounting, F(1, 78) = .16, p = .69.
Table 3.1 - The effects of personal outcome and information about group disadvantage on attributions and discounting (Study 3.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rejection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about group disadvantage</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-based treatment</td>
<td>1.88 (1.27)a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>3.50 (1.72)c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounting</td>
<td>-.62 (1.49)a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cells in the same row that do not share the same superscript reliably differ from each other at p < .01
*p < .10

In line with our hypotheses, we also considered whether information about group disadvantage changed levels of attributions to personal characteristics and conducted simple effect analyses at this level. As predicted, simple effect analyses (see Table 3.1) indicated that accepted participants made more attributions to personal characteristics when receiving versus not receiving information about group disadvantage, F(1, 78) = 6.42, p < .01. Importantly (although marginal) rejected participants tended to make less attributions to personal characteristics when receiving versus not receiving information about group disadvantage, F(1, 78) = 2.70, p = .10.

Affective well-being. Analyses of the measure of negative affect revealed reliable main effects of personal outcome, F(1, 78) = 11.30, p < .001, η² = .13, and of information about group disadvantage, F(1, 78) = 3.89, p < .05, η² = .06 only. Participants who were rejected (M = 2.89, SD = .89) experienced more negative affect than accepted participants (M = 2.33, SD = .59). Also participants who received information about group disadvantage (M = 2.41, SD = .67) experienced less negative affect than participants who did not receive this information (M = 2.79, SD = 1.88). The interaction effect was not reliable, F(1, 78) = 1.22, ns. These results indicate that
personal and group outcomes work in opposite directions: experiencing negative personal outcomes induces lower levels of individual well-being whereas by contrast the experience of negative group outcomes induces more well-being.

In order to consider the relation between attributions and well-being, specifically whether information about group disadvantage buffers targets from the negative effects of failure, we looked at within cell correlations between attributions to personal characteristics and negative affect. Importantly, we found that within the rejection/group disadvantage condition, lower levels of attributions to personal characteristics were related to lower levels of negative affect ($r = .51$, $p < .05$). This was not the case within the other conditions ($r$ ranged from -.20 to -.22, $ns$). These results support our hypothesis that having information about group disadvantage can reduce negative affect after personal rejection by reducing the extent to which participants attribute failure to their personal characteristics.

**Legitimacy of the selection procedure.** Analyses revealed a reliable main effect of information about group disadvantage on legitimacy of the selection procedure, $F(1, 78) = 10.16, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12$, as well as a reliable interaction effect, $F(1, 78) = 8.14, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$ (see Table 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information about group disadvantage</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal outcome:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>3.98 (1.09)$^b$</td>
<td>2.60 (0.89)$^c$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>3.37 (.98)$^b$</td>
<td>3.29 (1.14)$^b$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means with different subscripts differ reliably from each other at $p < .05$.

The main effect revealed that participants who received information about group disadvantage experienced the selection procedure as less legitimate than participants who did not receive this information. Simple effect analyses of the interaction revealed that the main effect was qualified by this reliable interaction: Participants who were personally rejected only experienced the selection procedure as less legitimate when they had information about group disadvantage, $F(1, 78) = 17.44, p < .001$. Information about group disadvantage did not influence perceptions of legitimacy within the acceptance condition, $F(1, 78) = .06, ns$. Therefore, reports of For better or for worse
illegitimacy of group level treatment are not merely determined by the disadvantage of the group, but increase when group members also receive negative personal outcomes.

**Discussion and Introduction to Study 3.2**

In Study 3.1 we considered the consequences for well-being and justice perceptions of having information about group disadvantage that is more or less congruent with personal outcomes. This study revealed that information about group disadvantage made people feel better about personal acceptance and, importantly, helped people to cope with individual rejection as they discounted attributions to the self and reported higher well-being. Additionally, even though people reported feeling threatened by group disadvantage, they only considered the procedure illegitimate when they also suffered personal rejection. Thus, even looking beyond levels of personal well-being and considering perceptions of procedural justice, we see that participants report most illegitimacy when their personal outcomes are also negatively affected. Study 3.2 aimed to replicate Study 3.1 and to consider in more detail the processes underlying responses to discrimination. Specifically, with a slightly different design, we focus on whether discounting is motivated by the need to self protect from personal failure (i.e. by making attributions to group based treatment), or simply the result of processing information that indicates that personal outcomes are congruent with, and can therefore be attributed to, group level treatment. We again manipulated personal outcome (rejection/acceptance), but this time we always provided group level information and manipulated the nature of group level treatment at two levels, by either telling participants the male person making the evaluations had a preference for women (group advantage) or for men (group disadvantage).

Looking at group advantage is interesting because it can help discern the processes underlying responses to group level treatment. First, responses to group level treatment may be the result of the extent to which group level treatment can inform one about personal treatment. If so, when there is congruence between personal and group outcomes, this would attenuate personal attributions in favour of group level attributions (informational hypothesis). Second, it may also be that responses to group level information are driven by motivational concerns protecting the individual self. In this case, personal attributions are only attenuated in favour of group attributions when personal outcomes are unsatisfactory (i.e., rejection) and group attributions (i.e., group disadvantage) can serve as a positive reinterpretation of personal outcomes (motivational hypothesis). By contrast, positive congruence
(i.e., personal acceptance/group advantage) provides a situation in which information about group level treatment can actually serve to negatively reinterpret personal treatment: It indicates that individual success may have been due to one’s group membership rather than individual ability (i.e., one is ‘forced to’ discount personal success in the face of positive discrimination or realizes one is not special because ‘everybody’ can do this). The present design enables us to assess whether congruence between individual and group outcomes drives these effects (information hypothesis) or whether favourability of considering group level information to interpret personal outcomes plays a role (motivational hypothesis).

Previous work has yielded evidence suggesting that both hypotheses may be valid. In line with a motivational hypothesis, research in the area of subtle discrimination has argued that people’s attributions to discrimination reflect motivational states (Crocker & Major, 1989, Crosby, 1982). Studies that have looked at the self-protective properties of attributions to discrimination have frequently compared situations of personal failure that give no information about possible discrimination with those that can be attributed to prejudice. Although these studies (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991; Major, et al., 2003a) have provided strong evidence that perceiving discrimination can be relatively self-protective, the comparison of situations of personal rejection that vary in the extent to which they can be attributed to discrimination does not enable conclusions concerning whether individuals were ‘motivated’ to self protect or merely accommodating information offering an external attribution for personal failure. Testing whether attributions to discrimination versus the self are motivated requires considering situations in which discrimination or, in other words group level treatment, is constant but personal motives differ. In the present study we vary individual level outcomes (acceptance/rejection) across group level treatment (group advantage/group disadvantage). This enables us to consider to what extent the nature of individual outcomes motivates responses to individual and group level information.

On the other hand, and in line with an informational approach to attributions to discrimination, research has shown that group members are aware of and report discrimination experiences even when these attributions are relatively harmful to well-being (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999). In support of an informational approach one of the few studies to consider personal success in the face of (possible) group advantage revealed that even when information reflected negatively on the individual self (i.e., lower levels of well-being) because it offered an external and group based attribution for individual success, people made less internal attributions.
and more attributions to group based treatment (Crocker et al., 1991). It is important to note that in the study of Crocker and colleagues (1991) it is not entirely clear to what extent information about group based treatment was seen as 'group advantage’, given that the African American participants in this study were simply told that they were visible to the person evaluating them (thus indicating that positive feedback may be the result of ‘affirmative action’). In the present study the group is explicitly ‘advantaged’.

Considering specific predictions based on the motivational and informational hypotheses, according to the motivational hypothesis people should be more inclined to use information about group level treatment when this reflects positively on the self. Thus information in which personal and group outcomes are congruent should only attenuate personal attributions when this reflects positively on the self (i.e., rejection/group disadvantage condition). We also explored whether the need to self-protect translated into greater attributions to group-based treatment when this reflected positively as opposed to negatively on the self. Based on an informational hypothesis we predicted that congruence information (irrespective of whether this concerns rejection/group disadvantage or acceptance/group advantage) should attenuate the extent to which people make personal attributions irrespective of whether this reflects positively or negatively on the self. Also, we expected that levels of group based attributions might not differ across congruence conditions.

In order to distinguish to what extent people see themselves as more similar to the ingroup when this reflects positively on the self (motivational) or irrespective of how this reflects on the self (informational) across the congruent conditions, we also included a measure of gender differentiation. A motivational hypothesis would predict that people see themselves as more similar to the group in the condition in which group level treatment reflects positively on the self (rejection/group disadvantage) than when this is not the case (acceptance/group advantage). According to an informational hypothesis, there should be no differences in gender differentiation across the congruence conditions – although greater gender differentiation should be observed when personal and group level outcome are incongruent. As in Study 3.1 we also measured perceptions of procedural justice. Based on our results of Study 3.1, we predicted that participants’ perceptions of legitimacy would not only be determined by the nature of group level treatment, but also by the nature of individual level outcomes. Thus we expected perceptions of legitimacy to be lowest when participants received information about group level disadvantage, and also received a negative personal outcome.
Method
Design and Participants
Seventy-nine female students of Leiden University took part in the scenario study for course credits or payment (1 Euro). Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) X 2 (group outcome: advantage/disadvantage) between participants factorial design. Two participants were excluded from the study because they incorrectly remembered the outcome of their group.

Procedure
As in previous research in this area (e.g., Major et al., 2003a; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002b), Study 3.2 was a scenario study in which participants were asked to imagine a situation worded in the following way:
Imagine you have just completed your studies and are taking part in an application procedure of a company or organization. You very much want the job and meet the requirements described in the recruitment ad. The selection procedure consists of a number of personality questionnaires and an interview with the manager who makes the selections, mister Aalders.

Manipulation of personal outcome. Participants in the rejection/acceptance condition were then asked to imagine receiving a phone call from Mr. Aalders informing them they were rejected/accepted.

Manipulation of information about group outcome. All participants then read they knew someone working at the company. Participants in the group advantage/group disadvantage condition were told by this person that he had heard Mr. Aalders saying that he normally prefers to accept/not to accept women. Participants then completed a number of dependent measures.

Dependent measures
Manipulation checks. The manipulation check of personal outcome consisted of one item asking participants to indicate their personal outcome: rejected or accepted. The manipulation check of group preference consisted of one item asking participants whether Mr. Aalders had a preference to accept or reject women in this selection procedure.

Unless otherwise indicated, dependent measures were measured in the same way as in Study 3.1. Scale reliabilities were as follows: Personal (α = .78) and group (α = .76) level threat; attributions to group-based treatment (α = .88) and personal
characteristics (α = .83); affective well-being (α = .92); legitimacy of the selection procedure (α = .82).

Gender differentiation. Gender differentiation was measured with 2 items asking participants to indicate to what extent their outcome was due to the fact that they “possessed qualities that other women do not possess” and “distinguish themselves from other women” (r = .70). Scale endpoints were 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

Results

Dependent measures

Unless otherwise stated we conducted 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) X 2 (group outcome: rejection/acceptance) between participants univariate analyses of variance.

Manipulation Checks. The manipulation check of personal outcome indicated that all participants in the rejection/acceptance condition correctly reported being rejected/accepted for the selection procedure. The check of group outcome indicated that two participants incorrectly reported group outcome. As this study consisted of a paper and pencil questionnaire correction of incorrect answers was not possible, so these participants were excluded from analyses.

Individual and Group Level Threat. A 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) X 2 (group outcome: advantage/disadvantage) ANOVA indicated that, as in Study 3.1, participants who were rejected (M = 4.18, SD = 1.27) experienced reliably more personal threat than accepted (M = 3.40, SD = 1.09) participants, F(1, 73) = 8.07, p < .01, η² = .10. No other effects were reliable, Fs < .19, p > .67, η² < .003.

Participants in the group disadvantage condition (M = 4.58, SD = 1.22) experienced more group threat than participants in the group advantage condition (M = 3.90, SD = 1.09), F(1, 73) = 6.43, p < .01, η² = .08. No other effects were reliable, Fs < .79, p > .38, η² < .01. These results show that participants were aware of and found the nature of group level treatment threatening.

Attributions. Attributions to group-based treatment versus personal characteristics were examined with a 2 (personal outcome: rejection/acceptance) by 2 (group outcome: advantage/disadvantage), by 2 (type of attribution: group vs. personal), mixed design, with type of attribution as a repeated measure. This yielded a two-way interaction between type of attribution and personal outcome, F(1, 73) = 13.07, p < .001, η² = .15, which was qualified by a reliable three-way interaction,
To interpret this complex interaction, we computed tests of lower order effects at each level of personal outcome. In the personal acceptance condition, this yielded a main effect of type of attribution, $F(1,36) = 8.55, p<.01, \eta^2 = .19$, which was qualified by an interaction with group outcome, $F(1,36) = 16.62, p<.001, \eta^2 = .32$.

**Table 3.3** - The effects of personal outcome and group (dis)advantage on attributions and discounting (Study 3.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal outcome</th>
<th>Rejection</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group advantage</td>
<td>Group disadvantage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attribution to:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-based treatment</td>
<td>3.63 (1.63)(a)</td>
<td>5.98 (1.39)(b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>4.37 (1.55)(b)</td>
<td>3.10 (1.92)(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discounting</td>
<td>-.44 (1.51)(b)</td>
<td>1.58 (1.71)(c)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cells in the same row that do not share the same superscript reliably differ from each other at $p<.01$ (based on post-hoc Tukey comparisons across conditions).

T-tests indicate that when personal and group level treatment were incongruent (i.e., acceptance/group disadvantage), participants attributed personal acceptance less strongly to group-based treatment than to personal characteristics, $t(18) = 4.94, p<.001$. When personal and group treatment were congruent (i.e., acceptance/group advantage), personal acceptance was equally likely to be attributed to personal characteristics as to group-based treatment, $t(18) = .82, ns$. In the personal rejection condition, we also observed a main effect of type of attribution, $F(1,37) = 5.49, p<.05, \eta^2 = .13$, which was qualified by a reliable two-way interaction, $F(1,37) = 15.67, p<.001, \eta^2 = .30$. T-tests revealed that when personal and group level treatment were incongruent (i.e., rejection/group advantage), participants were equally likely to attribute their own rejection to their personal characteristics as to group-based treatment, $t(18) = 1.20, ns$. However, when
personal rejection was congruent with group disadvantage, participants attributed their own outcomes more to group-based treatment than to their personal characteristics, $t(18) = -4.29, p < .001$.

In addition, within the attribution to personal treatment measure we considered whether information about group advantage/disadvantage changed levels of attributions to personal characteristics. Simple effect analyses indicated that the nature of group level outcomes only influenced attributions to personal characteristics when participants experienced negative personal outcomes: Participants who were rejected and had information about group disadvantage made fewer attributions to personal characteristics than those who had information about group advantage, $F(1, 73) = 6.91, p < .01$. This replicates Study 3.1. Within the acceptance conditions there were no effects of group outcome, $F(1, 73) = 1.28, p = .26$.

In order to further consider whether we replicated Study 3.1 we performed simple effect analyses of the discounting measure. These analyses revealed that within the group disadvantage condition, participants engaged in more discounting when they were rejected as opposed to accepted, $F(1, 73) = 42.37, p < .001$. Within the group advantage condition personal outcomes did not influence levels of discounting, $F(1, 73) = 1.68, p = .20$. Conform Study 3.1 information about group disadvantage enabled participants to discount personal failure, whereas information about group advantage did not influence participants' levels of discounting.

Because our hypotheses also focused on possible differences between the congruence conditions at the level of personal attributions, we performed $[0, -1, 1, 0]$ contrasts between the congruence conditions for attributions to personal characteristics. These comparisons indicated that individuals who received positive congruence information (i.e., acceptance/group advantage) made more attributions to personal characteristics than those who received negative congruence (i.e., rejection/group disadvantage) information, $t(73) = 3.61, p < .001$. In support of a more motivational hypothesis, information that is congruent is only translated into less personal attributions when people experience rejection but not acceptance.

We also explored to what extent people differed in the extent to which they made attributions to group-based treatment. Post hoc Tukey comparisons indicated that attributions to group level treatment did not differ between congruence conditions, $p = .37$.

**Affective well-being.** Analyses of the negative affect measure revealed a reliable main effect of personal outcome only, $F(1, 73) = 101.94, p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .58$. 

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Chapter 3

82
Rejected participants ($M = 5.14, SD = .74$) experienced more negative affect than accepted participants ($M = 3.19, SD = .93$). No other effects were reliable, $F < .66, ps > .42, \eta^2 < .10$.

In order to consider the relation between attributions and well-being we conducted correlations within the personal outcome conditions between attributions to personal characteristics and negative affect. We found a relation between these variables only within the acceptance conditions ($r = -.30, n = 39, p = .06$) indicating that, in the case of individual acceptance, greater attributions to personal characteristics were related to lower levels of negative affect. Within the rejection condition attributions to personal characteristics were not related to affect ($r = .07, n = 38, p = .67$). Therefore we again find that attributions are relevant to affect well-being but in the present study in the case of individual success rather than failure: Complementing Study 3.1 we observe enhanced well-being when individual success was attributed to personal characteristics.

**Gender Differentiation.** Analyses of the gender differentiation measure revealed that accepted participants ($M = 4.57, SD = 1.27$) differentiated themselves more from the ingroup than rejected ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.42$) participants, $F(1, 73) = 25.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$. There was no reliable main effect of group outcome on differentiation, $F(1, 73) = 1.05, p = .31$. We also found a reliable interaction effect of personal outcome by group preference on differentiation, $F(1, 73) = 15.39, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$. We performed $[0, -1, 1, 0]$ contrasts to test whether participants in the congruence conditions (entered as -1 and 1) differed in the extent to which they differentiated themselves from the group. These analyses indicated that participants in the acceptance/group advantage condition ($M = 4.12, SD = 1.12$) differentiated themselves more from the ingroup than those in the rejection/group disadvantage condition ($M = 2.45, SD = 1.28$), $t(73) = 4.32, p < .001$. Levels of differentiation were ($M = 3.84, SD = 1.21$) and ($M = 4.97, SD = 1.32$) for the rejection/group advantage and selection/group disadvantage conditions respectively. In line with the motivational hypothesis these results reveal that people differentiate themselves more from the group when this reflects positively on the self.

**Legitimacy of the Selection Procedure.** We found a reliable main effect of personal outcome, $F(1, 72) = 24.83, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$, and a marginal main effect of group outcome on legitimacy of the selection procedure, $F(1, 72) = 3.55, p = .06, \eta^2 = .05$, as well as a reliable interaction effect, $F(1, 72) = 7.54, p < .01, \eta^2 = .10$ (see Table 3.4). Main effects revealed that rejected participants experienced the selection procedure as less legitimate ($M = 2.70, SD = 1.26$) than accepted participants ($M = 83$)
Participants in the group advantage condition experienced the selection procedure as more legitimate ($M = 3.58, SD = 1.01$) than those in the group disadvantage condition ($M = 3.09, SD = 1.47$). Simple effect analyses of the interaction revealed that participants in the group disadvantage condition found the selection procedure more legitimate when they were accepted as opposed to being rejected, $F(1, 72) = 30.68, p < .001$. Within the group advantage condition, the nature of personal outcomes did not influence perceptions of legitimacy, $F(1, 72) = 2.44, p = .12$. Conform Study 3.1, these results show that the selection procedure was perceived as most illegitimate when not only the group but also the self was disadvantaged.

**Table 3.4 - The effects of personal outcome and information about group disadvantage on perceived legitimacy of the selection procedure (Study 3.2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal outcome</th>
<th>Group advantage</th>
<th>Group disadvantage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rejection</td>
<td>3.30 (1.11)$^a$</td>
<td>2.17 (1.17)$^b$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance</td>
<td>3.84 (.86)$^a$</td>
<td>4.05 (1.08)$^a$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thor various means differ reliably from each other at $p < .05$.

**Discussion**

In the present study we considered the effects of group disadvantage and group advantage on people’s responses to situations of personal success and failure. The inclusion of a group advantage condition allowed us not only to consider situations in which group outcome reflects positively on the self (group disadvantage/rejection) but also a situation in which it would reflect negatively on the self (group advantage/acceptance). We reasoned there might be two possible paths determining responses to group level treatment and assessed empirical support for each path: Firstly, people use information about group level advantage/disadvantage to help interpret personal outcomes irrespective of whether it reflects positively or negatively on the self (informational hypothesis), and, secondly, information about group level treatment is preferably used when it reflects positively on the self (motivational hypothesis).

Our results provide relatively strong support for a motivational hypothesis. Indeed participants made less attributions to personal characteristics when they received a negative personal outcome that was congruent with group level treatment but not in the converse condition (i.e., acceptance/group advantage). Similar
patterns were found for differentiation from the ingroup: Participants saw themselves as more different from the ingroup when congruent information was positive (both individual and group are accepted) rather than negative (both individual and group are rejected). Yet, whereas based on the motivational hypothesis one might expect that if people need to self-protect from failure this should not only decrease attributions to personal characteristics but also increase attributions to group-based treatment (see Crocker & Major, 1989), this is not what we found: Participants made (equal levels of) attributions to group based treatment in the congruent conditions irrespective of whether this information reflected positively (i.e., rejection/group disadvantage) or negatively (i.e., acceptance/group advantage) on the self. It is therefore important to realize when considering a motivational approach to these results that the differences we find between the congruence conditions were driven largely by adjustments in attributions at an individual, not at a group level: People were positively biased to attribute success primarily to personal characteristics despite (acknowledging) evidence of a group-based explanation.

In sum, although participants process information about group level treatment and adjust group level attributions to accommodate this information, we also have consistent indications of a positivity bias such that attributions to personal treatment are motivated by the desire to maintain a positive image of the personal self. Note that we originally anticipated that motivational processes might also be reflected in the level of group based attributions made: That individuals might also 'adjust' group based attributions to reflect more positively on the self. The current research makes clear that to the extent that responses to subtle discrimination are motivational, these processes take place at the more individual level, via adjustments in levels of attributions to personal characteristics.

One might argue that these results are very much in line with general predictions from attribution theory, and that people were simply responding as individuals and not as group members. We do not disagree with this interpretation, yet we would like to stress that this provides further evidence for our reasoning: in contexts that focus so much on the individual such as the job selection contexts examined here, group members may only respond to group level information in ways that reflect favorably on the self: to enhance the implications of success or minimize personal failure. Indeed, in line with research in the area of tokenism and relative deprivation (e.g., Smith et al., 1994, Wright & Taylor, 1999), in this second study the effects we found on negative affect reflect only responses to personal and
not to group outcomes. Nevertheless, as indicated by the manipulation checks as well as by the indicators of personal and group threat, participants were clearly aware of how the ingroup was treated so this does not explain the absence of further effects of group level treatment. Therefore the present results can provide insights into the interplay between personal and group level attributions as well as informational and motivational accounts of different types of attributions.

In line with this individualistic approach to group based treatment, and conform Study 3.1, participants reported least legitimacy of the procedure only when the group was disadvantaged and they themselves experienced a negative personal outcome as well. Again these results suggest that in this type of context people recognize the disadvantage of their group, but only perceive the injustice thereof when it affects them personally.

Overall, the present study indicates that that group members acknowledge and are aware of the nature of group level treatment, but that further consequences of this knowledge are individually motivated and reflected in the nature of attributions, differentiation from the ingroup and well-being responses to success versus failure.

**General Discussion**

In the present research we varied the nature of individual and group level treatment in the face of a prejudiced evaluator to examine three questions. Firstly, is knowledge of negative group level treatment self-protective to such an extent that it has more positive consequences for well-being than not having this information (Study 3.1)? Secondly, does information about group level treatment always affect responses to individual level treatment, even when it may serve to harm rather than help the self (Study 3.2)? Third, do perceptions of procedural justice depend on information about group level treatment, or will personal outcomes determine the extent to which individuals perceive procedures as fair (Study 3.1 and 3.2)?

Across both studies we found that, at least in the type of context we examined, group members have an individualistic focus by which knowledge of (negative) group level treatment can augment the attributional consequences of personal success and discount personal failure. As Study 3.1 revealed, this even leads to increased individual well-being when observing group disadvantage as opposed to ‘merely’ experiencing personal failure without having group level information. Study 3.2 indicated that discounting does to some extent reflect an informational process: Individuals make attributions to group-based treatment regardless of
whether it has the potential to reflect positively or negatively on the self. On the other hand, in support of a more motivational approach this study also indicated that neither attributions to personal characteristics nor the reported similarity with the ingroup are adjusted to accommodate group level information when people are successful whereas this is the case after individual failure. Therefore we can conclude that people may adjust interpretations of their personal outcomes in the face of information about group membership and seek this kind of interpretation after individual failure not success.

Across both studies attributions were related to affective well-being but there were some differences across the studies that are worthwhile addressing. Whereas in Study 3.1 discounting failure in favor of discrimination reflected positively on target’s well-being, in Study 3.2 group level information about disadvantage had less severe consequences for well-being. It is important to note that studies 1 and 2 complement each other in a way that may explain some of the differences in well-being patterns across studies. For one, the nature of group level treatment differs between these studies. Study 3.1 likely provides a stronger contrast at the level of group based treatment because people either receive or do not receive information about group level treatment, whereas in Study 3.2 people always have group level information, only the nature of group level treatment is varied. Furthermore, whereas the information about group disadvantage in Study 3.1 provides a history of negative group based treatment (percentage of men versus women accepted in past), in Study 3.2 the group based treatment reflects the attitude of one evaluator without giving examples of actual negative treatment of group members. Furthermore, this manipulation is described as part of a scenario (i.e., Study 3.2) as opposed to being a personal experience (i.e., Study 3.1).

In sum we can conclude that although people recognize and report group level treatment, this is not necessarily reflected in the attributions they make for their own outcome or the well-being they experience. Furthermore, we see little evidence that people suffer from the disadvantage of their group: Information about group disadvantage neither enhanced the experience of personal failure, nor dampened the positive effects of personal success – as we have shown, the contrary seems to be the case. Yet it is important to note that in the present studies we have considered a very individualistic evaluative setting (i.e., a job setting) in which people are strongly focused on personal success and failure (see also Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a; Sechrist, Swim, & Stangor, 2004). Although many real life situations in which discrimination occurs may be evaluative and - like the one we
examined - seemingly focused on the individual, we therefore stress the importance
of keeping in mind the context in which discrimination takes place. Indeed we do
not propose that people never suffer from group disadvantage, nor do we say that
people are only motivated by individual level motives. On the contrary, research in
the area of subtle discrimination clearly shows that people generally do suffer from
discrimination (e.g., Schmitt et al., 2003; Branscombe et al., 1999). An important
factor influencing whether information about the prejudice of another is harmful
versus self-protective may lie in the extent to which discrimination is perceived as
pervasive, thus having long term negative implications for the future (Schmitt et al.,
2003; Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John, 2008). We would argue that
when the negative implications of one’s group membership override the self-
protective capacity thereof, discrimination will have negative consequences for
personal well-being. Hence, at a theoretical level, one of the implications of our
research may be that it is important to consider the relative salience of individual
aspects (e.g., need to self-protect from failure, need for personal control, see Sechrist
et al., 2004) as well as group aspects (e.g., pervasiveness of discrimination; group
identification) of situations of discrimination when making predictions concerning
how people will respond to information about the devaluation of their group.
Research so far has mainly focused on ‘group aspects’, while to some extent
neglecting the individual aspects that may influence these reactions. We believe that
the self relevance of the personal failure or beliefs about personal ability may also be
important determinants of the extent to which perceptions of discrimination are
relatively harmful or self protective. It may be a fine balance between individual and
group aspects that influences the nature of peoples’ responses to discrimination.

Beyond the level of individual responses to group advantage/disadvantage,
an important aim of the present study was to consider whether perceptions of
procedural justice of the selection procedures in general were also determined by
the nature of personal outcomes. Across both studies we found evidence that
perceptions of procedural justice are not only influenced by group level
disadvantage but also by the extent to which people are personally affected by this
injustice. This has implications for group members’ willingness to address collective
disadvantage. We know from prior research that targets who confront those who
discriminate against them are seen as complainers, both by in and by outgroup
members – even when there is clear evidence that discrimination has taken place
(Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Our research indicates that a
possible underlying cause for not confronting discrimination may be the fact that
people who do not directly suffer from discrimination, even ingroup members, do not perceive the situation as equally illegitimate and therefore may not see the need to address discrimination. Indeed research by Kappen and Branscombe (2001) also indicates that perceptions of (personal) illegitimacy are vulnerable to cues other than the disadvantage of the group. Hence, unwillingness to report discrimination against others may, in part, be due to differential perceptions of the injustice of the situation. The more far reaching consequence thereof is that individuals are unlikely to address group disadvantage unless they personally suffer from it. In fact research on the 'queen bee effect' has shown that females in academia who reached higher level positions (thus escaping the disadvantage of their group) were more likely to hinder rather than help other members of their group (i.e. young female faculty) achieve similar positions (Ellemers, van den Heuvel, de Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004). Our research complements these findings by showing that once a positive individual outcome has been achieved, perceptions of injustice and group disadvantage are reduced, and group members may be less likely to support other personally disadvantaged group members.

**Limitations**

One of the limitations of the present research may be that we cannot exclude the possibility that our results in Study 3.1 are influenced by social comparison processes. In other words, do people feel better about personal failure because they realize that other group members have done equally badly and better about personal success because they have done better than other group members? Although this is a possibility, a social comparison approach would not necessarily predict the differences we find in attributions to personal characteristics versus group based treatment. Thus our attributional approach can account for both the differences in attributions and the emotional responses we find.

A further limitation can be that we look at one specific disadvantaged group, namely women. Whereas in the area of subtle discrimination it is generally assumed that responses to discrimination generalize across groups, there are some differential results across groups concerning how ethnic minorities versus women respond to positive feedback. For example, it has been found that African Americans (Crocker et al., 1991, Study 3.2) experienced positive feedback as negative – because they attributed their success to group membership rather than ability. This is contrary to the results Crocker et al. found for women (1991, Study 3.1), as well as to the results of our study indicating that information about group advantage did not...
dampen the experience of personal success. One reason may be that members of minority groups, as opposed to women, are more aware of the fact that people may try to compensate their prejudice by being friendly or supportive (i.e., Gaertner, & Dovidio, 1977). In view of affirmative action policies it would be interesting to consider whether the possibility of compensative behaviour does induce similar reactions in women.

**Conclusions**

The present research shows that in contexts in which people are focused on individual benefits and ability they do not suffer from the fate of their group. In fact information about group membership can reflect positively on the interpretation of one’s personal outcomes. This focus on the self extends to perceptions of general illegitimacy of the treatment of other group members. Knowledge about the circumstances in which individuals experience group disadvantage as most illegitimate can help to inform us whether – and when – group members are unlikely to address and/or support other group members in their quest to counter discriminatory treatment.
Footnotes

1. This chapter is based on Stroebe, Ellemers, Barreto, & Mummendey (in press).
2. Although research on tokenism focuses on this question with respect to collective action tendencies, it generally considers minimal groups, or relatively short term low status groups (such as college membership) that offer the possibility of achieving individual mobility. By contrast, research on subtle discrimination focuses on groups that are chronically of low status with a history of discrimination. We know from research in the area of discrimination that people with temporary low status respond very differently to discrimination than those who are members of chronically disadvantaged groups (Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002c). Furthermore, even though in some of this research (e.g., Smith et al., 1994) real groups were considered, the unequal treatment of participants resulted in differential allocation outcomes of the self versus own group. The present research allows us to consider to what extent personal success in the face of actual prejudice and discrimination of other group members also reflects positively on the self.
3. The experimenter’s gender was unrelated to all dependent measures.
4. Prior studies employing scenario and/or experimental studies in the area of subtle discrimination have shown that results are consistent over scenario and experimental studies (e.g., Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major et al., 2003a; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003).
5. One participant did not complete this measure.
Chapter 4

Is the world a just place? Countering the negative consequences of pervasive discrimination by affirming the world as just

Although being the target of discrimination has negative consequences for access to important tangible resources, such as health care, employment opportunities, housing, and education (see Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), the consequences for psychological well-being are less clear (see Major & O'Brien, 2005). Perceptions of discrimination can sometimes protect psychological well-being by allowing targets to attribute negative personal treatment and outcomes (e.g., job-related rejection) externally (e.g., due to another's prejudice) rather than internally (e.g., self-blame for lack of ability) (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003). Yet there is also evidence that perceiving discrimination can be negatively related to well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen, 2002c). The present research thus investigated the conditions under which perceptions of discrimination may buffer against or exacerbate the adverse effects of negative treatment on well-being and explores an underlying mechanism for this effect. Although being the target of discrimination has negative consequences for access to important tangible resources, such as health care, employment opportunities, housing, and education (see Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), the consequences for psychological well-being are less clear (see Major & O'Brien, 2005). Perceptions of discrimination can sometimes protect psychological well-being by allowing targets to attribute negative personal treatment and outcomes (e.g., job-related rejection) externally (e.g., due to another's
prejudice) rather than internally (e.g., self-blame for lack of ability) (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003). Yet there is also evidence that perceiving discrimination can be negatively related to well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe et al., 2002c). The present research thus investigated the conditions under which perceptions of discrimination may buffer against or exacerbate the adverse effects of negative treatment on well-being and explores an underlying mechanism for this effect.

Perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination may play an important moderating role in the effects of attributions to prejudice on psychological well-being, determining the nature and direction of responses to negative treatment (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). Discrimination that is perceived as pervasive may be harmful, in part because it implies future negative treatment and outcomes on the basis of one’s group membership, which can lead to perception of barriers to one’s success and to consequent feelings of helplessness and depression (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a; Schmitt et al., 2003). In contrast, perceiving discrimination as rare, and thus incidental, may serve to buffer targets from adverse consequences of negative treatment because it provides a convenient external attribution for immediate failure and is unlikely to occur again in the future.

We propose in the present work that, in addition to creating feelings of direct personal consequence (e.g., personal helplessness), another potential reason why perceptions of pervasive as opposed to rare discrimination have such negative consequences for well-being is because pervasive discrimination threatens people’s basic view of the world as a fair and just place. Although the present research was not designed as a test of just world theory, it relies on the basic premise of the theory (as well as of other theories, such as equity theory; Messick & Cook, 1983) that people have a fundamental need to see the world as fair and just (e.g., Lerner & Simmons, 1966; see Hafer & Bégue, 2005, and Lerner & Miller, 1978, for reviews). Being disadvantaged in a pervasive and enduring way on the basis of group membership threatens perceptions of the world as just, but rare discrimination can be dismissed as an unusual aberration in a world that is still fundamentally fair. In the current work, we examined whether pervasive (recurrent over time) discrimination indeed has negative consequences in terms of two measures of well-being, personal self-esteem and depressed affect (see also Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003), whereas rare discrimination can be relatively self-protective for one’s well-being (Studies 4.1 and 4.2). Personal self-esteem relates to general feelings of
efficacy, whereas depressed affect involves a self-directed emotional reaction to negative events. In Study 4.2, we further investigated the potential contribution of threats to perceptions of the world as just to the negative consequences of recurrent (but not rare) discrimination.

Previous research provides some evidence that attributions to the prejudice of another person for one’s failure may be less harmful to the well-being of targets of discrimination when discrimination against one’s group is perceived as rare as opposed to pervasive (e.g., Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003; see Major, Quinton et al., 2002 for a review). These findings provide support for the “discounting hypothesis”, the idea that making an attribution to discrimination in a particular context allows targets to protect the self from failure because they can blame the negative feedback on the prejudice of another rather than on internal factors unique to the self (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998).

However, when discrimination is seen as pervasive, and the experience of an incident of discrimination is associated with possibilities of recurrent negative treatment on the basis of group membership, the self-protective effect of being able to attribute failure more externally is likely to be mitigated by the negative future implications of this attribution. Indeed, there is also some evidence that general perceptions of discrimination are negatively correlated with well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2002c).

Consistent with the hypothesis that perceptions of the pervasiveness of discrimination moderate the impact of experiencing bias on well-being, perceptions of discrimination have different impact on members of structurally disadvantaged and advantaged groups. Specifically, Schmitt and colleagues (2002c; see also Branscombe, 1998) found that reports of discrimination were negatively related to well-being in women, who are structurally disadvantaged and traditionally discriminated against, but not in men, who are structurally advantaged and only rarely discriminated against because of their gender.

We were able to locate only two sets of experimental studies that directly manipulated the pervasiveness of discrimination and considered its effects on well-being. Schmitt et al. (2003, Study 1) found that women who read information that discrimination against women was pervasive demonstrated lower levels of personal self-esteem than did women who read that discrimination against women was rare. However, Major, Kaiser, O’Brien and McCoy (2007) failed to replicate this effect.
with the same manipulation (Study 3). These studies also did not directly involve reactions to experiences of personal failure by women.

A second study by Schmitt and colleagues (2003, Study 2) did, however, consider personal discrimination by giving women failure feedback in a mock interview. Women who were led to believe that bias was contextually pervasive (i.e., 19 of 20 interviewers were biased) showed lower levels of positive affect and private collective self-esteem than did women who were led to believe that bias was rare (only 1 in 20 interviewers was biased). Although this study provided evidence that discrimination that is perceived as pervasive within a certain context can have negative consequences for well-being compared to a control condition, perceiving discrimination as rare did not buffer the effect of failure relative to the control condition. Moreover, as acknowledged by the authors, this research did not examine the particular processes that underlie this effect. We focus on these processes in the present research.

Taken together, research on perceptions of the pervasiveness of group-based discrimination suggests that when discrimination is pervasive (and thus a stable phenomenon), attributions to prejudice have a negative impact on psychological well-being (see also Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a). However, when discrimination is perceived to be rare, attributions to prejudice may relate to greater psychological well-being (because they provide a more salient external attribution for failure; the discounting hypothesis) or show little relationship with psychological well-being, perhaps because the incidental nature of the bias limit the perceived diagnosticity of the event for future outcomes. Either way, whereas psychological well-being appears adversely affected by attributions to prejudice when discrimination is perceived to be pervasive, this negative impact seems to be "buffered" by perceptions that discrimination is rare.

The essence of pervasive discrimination in our view lies not only in the contextual pervasiveness of discrimination (i.e., Schmitt et al., 2003) but also in the promise of discrimination across time: Whereas rare discrimination, by being incidental, can be discounted, pervasive discrimination, by promising future devaluation, is threatening. In the present research we therefore specifically focus on discrimination that is temporally pervasive (i.e., rare or recurrent). Study 4.1 explored this potential moderating role of the pervasiveness of discrimination (recurrent or rare) on women’s responses to a particular discriminatory action resulting in their failure; Study 4.2 attempted to replicate this effect and further investigated the importance of a view of the world as just in this process.
In Study 4.1, we presented female participants with a scenario in which they imagined that they had failed to obtain a job and their failure could readily be attributed to the gender-based prejudice of the male interviewer. We then manipulated whether such gender discrimination was recurrent or rare. Importantly, we kept the level of experienced discrimination (and attributions to prejudice for the particular event) equivalent across conditions while varying the likelihood of encountering other discrimination in the future. Because the prejudice of the interviewer represents a violation of norms of fairness by another person, which elicits other-directed negative affect toward this person (Hansen & Sassenberg, 2006), we anticipated that greater attributions to prejudice would be positively related to anger, a negative other-directed emotion, across the conditions.

Our primary hypothesis was that our manipulation of the pervasiveness of discrimination would moderate the relationship between attributions to another’s prejudice for one’s failure and two measures of well-being: personal self-esteem and negative self-directed (i.e., depressed) affect (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Major et al., 2003; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001). Specifically, when discrimination was presented as recurrent, we expected that greater attributions to the prejudice of the interviewer would relate to lower personal self-esteem and higher levels of negative self-directed affect; when discrimination was portrayed as rare, we anticipated that attributions to the prejudice of the interviewer would be buffered, either relating to higher personal self-esteem and lower levels of negative self-directed affect or showing no relationship to these dependent measures.

**Method**

*Participants*

Seventy-nine female introductory psychology students (mean age = 18.6, SD = .86) at a large public northeastern university in the United States participated in this study in partial fulfilment of one option for a course requirement. Participants were randomly assigned to either the rare discrimination or recurrent discrimination condition, representing the Pervasiveness of Discrimination independent variable.

*Procedure*

As in previous research in this area (e.g., Major et al., 2003), Study 4.1 was a scenario study that was conducted with groups of up to 15 participants by two female and one male experimenter. Participants were asked to imagine a
hypothetical selection procedure in which they would be applying for a job that was very attractive to them (i.e., high income, many career opportunities/vacation days). Participants were then told that as part of the selection procedure they would take a career test, and that the selection decision would be made by a male interviewer. To provide an opportunity to attribute their eventual outcome (failure to obtain the position) to the interviewer’s prejudice, the person (Mr. X) making the selections was described as, among other qualities, being politically conservative, having traditional views, and as having selected 80% men and 20% women for jobs so far.

Manipulation of Pervasiveness of Discrimination. Pervasiveness of discrimination (rare or recurrent) was manipulated by giving participants information about the likelihood of encountering someone like Mr. X in the future. The exact wording of the rare condition was:

Times have currently changed and traditional views are dying out. Mr. X is not the type of interviewer you are likely to meet when searching for a job. This means that you are very likely to come in contact with other interviewers who have a very different background, attitudes and beliefs than Mr. X. Also they will not be likely to treat men and women differently.

The exact wording of the recurrent condition was:

Although times have changed, traditional views persist. Mr. X is the type of interviewer you are likely to meet when searching for a job. This means that you very likely to come in contact with other interviewers who have the same background, attitudes and beliefs as Mr. X. Also they will be likely to treat men and women differently.

After further description of the career test, participants received their evaluation from Mr. X, telling them that he did not consider them suitable for a position at the company. Participants then completed a set of dependent measures and were fully debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Dependent measures

Unless otherwise stated, all measures were anchored with the same scale endpoints, 1 (not at all) and 7 (very much).

Attributions to Prejudice were measured by asking participants to what extent they though Mr. X was (a) prejudiced and (b) sexist (α = .72). In order to ensure that our manipulations were equally credible, we asked participants to indicate to what extent they felt the present situation could occur to them (“I do not
think this situation could happen in real life,” reverse-scored). Our check of the Pervasiveness of Discrimination manipulation consisted of two items: “I am not likely to meet an interviewer with the same background as Mr. X in the future”, and, “Many interviewers have as traditional views as Mr. X”. Due to their low inter-item correlation ($r = .38$), these items were analyzed separately.

Affect was assessed via a measure of other-directed affect, anger, and a measure of self-directed affect, depressed affect. We conducted a factor analysis of items from the Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL, Zuckerman & Lubin, 1965) and van Overwalle, Mervielde, and de Schuyter’s (1995) measure of despair. Based on this analysis we extracted a self- and other-directed affect measure by including items that had similar conceptual meaning and had relatively high factor loadings (above .45). The other-directed affect measure, anger, loaded on a different dimension (loading = .63) than the measure of depressed affect. Depressed affect consisted of the following six items: pessimistic (loading = .47), hopeless (loading = .79), desperate (loading = .61), fine (loading = -.64, reverse-coded), blue (loading = .50), discouraged (loading = .58). The composite scale of these items had high inter-item reliability ($\alpha = .77$).

Personal self esteem was assessed with Heatherton and Polivy’s (1991) four-item performance state personal self-esteem subscale (e.g., “I would feel confident about my ability”, $\alpha = .72$).

**Results**

**Manipulation checks**

Our manipulation of Mr. X’s action was intended to be recognized as prejudiced equivalently in the rare and recurrent discrimination conditions but was expected to be seen as a more common event in the recurrent versus rare condition. Consistent with our objectives, a 2 (Pervasiveness of Discrimination: recurrent/rare) between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) on attributions to prejudice revealed no effect of the manipulation, $M_{\text{recurrent}} = 5.55$, $SD_{\text{recurrent}} = 1.10$; $M_{\text{rare}} = 5.73$, $SD_{\text{rare}} = 1.06$; $F(1,77) < 1$. With respect to credibility, participants in the two conditions also equivalently felt that the event they read about could happen to them, $M_{\text{recurrent}} = 6.03$, $SD_{\text{recurrent}} = .99$; $M_{\text{rare}} = 6.05$, $SD_{\text{rare}} = .92$; $F(1,77) < 1$.

Further supportive of the intended manipulation, the ANOVAs for each item representing the perceived pervasiveness of such behavior revealed that participants in the recurrent condition had greater expectations of meeting someone like Mr. X again in the future than did those in the rare condition, $M_{\text{recurrent}} = 5.08$, $SD_{\text{recurrent}} = 1.06$; $M_{\text{rare}} = 4.86$, $SD_{\text{rare}} = 1.03$; $F(1,77) = 4.25$, $p = .04$.
SD_{recurrent} = 1.21; M_{rare} = 3.51, SD_{rare} = 1.53; F(1,77) = 24.75, p < .001, \eta^2 = .25. They also felt that more interviewers have traditional views like those of Mr. X. M_{recurrent} = 4.62, SD_{recurrent} = 1.06; M_{rare} = 3.41, SD_{rare} = 1.24; F(1,77) = 20.98, p < .001, \eta^2 = .22.

Affect and self-esteem

For the main dependent measures, the primary analysis was a simultaneous multiple regression involving as predictors a continuous participant variable (Attributions to Prejudice), a categorical independent variable (Pervasiveness of Discrimination: recurrent vs. rare), and their interaction. Attributions to Prejudice were first centered and then these centered terms were used to calculate interactions with the categorical independent variable (Aiken & West, 1991).

The regression analysis for the other-directed affect measure, anger, revealed a significant effect only for Attributions to Prejudice, \( \beta = .34, t = 2.35, p < .03 \). In general, greater attributions to prejudice predicted more anger.

Figure 4.1 – Reported depressed affect as a function of pervasiveness of discrimination (rare/recurrent) and attributions to prejudice (Study 4.1)

Regressioning the self-directed affect measure, depressed affect, on Pervasiveness of Discrimination and Attributions to the Prejudice of Mr. X revealed no main effect of Pervasiveness of Discrimination (recurrent vs. rare), \( \beta = .05, t = .43, \)
$p = .67$, or of Attributions to Prejudice, $\beta = -.02$, $t = -.16$, $p = .87$. Consistent with predictions, we obtained a significant interaction between Pervasiveness of Discrimination and Attributions to Prejudice, $\beta = .40$, $t = 2.37$, $p < .02$ (see Figure 4.1). As expected, within the recurrent discrimination condition, greater attributions to prejudice were related to more depressed affect, $\beta = .49$, $t = 3.19$, $p < .003$. In contrast, within the rare discrimination condition, greater attributions to prejudice were unrelated to depressed affect, $\beta = -.02$, $t = -.16$, $p = .87$. The significant interaction term in the regression equation indicates that the simple slopes are significantly different from each other (Aiken & West, 1991).

**Figure 4.2** – Reported personal self-esteem as a function of pervasiveness of discrimination (rare/recurrent) and attributions to prejudice (Study 4.1)

Overall greater attributions to prejudice were related to lower levels of personal self-esteem. This effect was qualified by the predicted Pervasiveness of Discrimination x Attributions to Prejudice interaction, $\beta = -.51$, $t = -3.39$, $p < .001$. As expected, within the recurrent discrimination condition, greater attributions to prejudice
predicted lower personal self-esteem, $\beta = -0.39, t = 2.51, p < .02$. Within the rare
discrimination condition, greater attributions to prejudice predicted higher personal
self-esteem, $\beta = 0.34, t = 2.29, p < .03$ (see Figure 4.2).

**Discussion**

In line with the hypotheses, in Study 4.1 we found that the manipulation of
the Pervasiveness of Discrimination moderated the effects of Attributions to
Prejudice on negative self-directed affect and personal self-esteem. When gender
discrimination was presented as recurrent, greater attributions to the interviewer’s
prejudice for failure to obtain a job by women predicted more depressed affect and
lower levels of personal self-esteem. By contrast, presenting discrimination as rare
buffered participants from the negative impact of failure attributed to the perceived
prejudice of the interviewer: Attributions to prejudice were unrelated to depressed
affect and positively related to personal self-esteem. Regardless of whether
discrimination was perceived as recurrent or rare, attributions to prejudice were
related to more other-directed affect in the form of anger, a result consistent with
prior research indicating that being treated unfairly elicits other-directed negative
affect (Hansen & Sassenberg, 2006; Major et al., 2003).

Although we obtained the expected results in the recurrent discrimination
condition in line with research by Schmitt and colleagues (Schmitt et al., 2003), our
findings in the rare discrimination condition appear somewhat less consistent with
predictions derived from the discounting hypothesis (Crocker & Major, 1989;
Crocker et al., 1998). In the rare discrimination condition, greater attributions to the
prejudice of the interviewer for one’s failure to obtain the job were related to higher
personal self-esteem but were unrelated to depressed affect. Our findings of
somewhat stronger support for the discounting hypothesis in the rare discrimination
conditions for self-esteem than for depressed affect suggest a potentially productive
issue about the dynamics of discounting prejudice. Specifically, attributions to
discrimination that is perceived as rare may be more effective in terms of buffering
the negative consequences of bias (i.e., self-esteem, which is related to feelings of
efficacy beyond the immediate context) than the immediate experience of failure
(i.e., emotional reactions anchored to events in the context). The findings of the
present study suggests the value of exploring the different sensitivity of measures of
well-being to specific contexts of discrimination in future research.

Although the finding that attributions to prejudice are positively related to
self-esteem in the rare discrimination and negatively related in the recurrent
discrimination condition is compatible with our hypotheses, results for self-esteem when attributions to prejudice were low are unexpected. We anticipated that responses to the manipulation of recurrent versus rare discrimination would be equivalent when attribution to prejudice were low, because, in the absence of seeing the consequences of prejudice against the own group, information about the pervasiveness of discrimination would likely be seen as largely irrelevant to participants’ personal reactions. Instead, when attributions to the prejudice of the interviewer were relatively low, self-esteem was higher (see Figure 4.2) when discrimination was presented as recurrent rather than rare. Perhaps these participants who perceived little bias against them, despite their immediate experience of failure, may have perceived themselves to be more able than others who may be victimized by recurrent discrimination (which participants’ own attributions to prejudice indicated that they were not).

While we acknowledge the value of further investigating explanations for this unanticipated result, as well as pursuing further the different effects for self-esteem and depressed affect in the rare discrimination condition of Study 4.1, Study 4.2 focused on an underlying process that may help explain why attributions to prejudice when discrimination is perceived to be recurrent have negative consequences for well-being: the extent to which bias affects people’s beliefs about how the world functions. Although there is considerable research studying the processes underlying what we describe as perceptions of rare discrimination (Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003), to date little research has considered why perceiving negative future implications of discrimination has such detrimental consequences for targets’ well-being.

**Study 4.2**

Previous researchers have generally emphasized the expectation of future discrimination as the reason why targets suffer from more pervasive situations of discrimination (see also Kaiser, Major, & McCoy, 2004). One interpretation for this effect is that discrimination can be seen as directly hindering the achievement of personal goals, producing feelings of helplessness and thus increasing vulnerability to depression. We propose that another reason why experiencing the negative effects of group-based prejudice (i.e., making attributions to another’s prejudice for one’s failure) is detrimental to one’s psychological well-being when discrimination is perceived to be pervasive, and thus stable and global, within society is because it challenges an individual’s worldview, specifically the fundamental belief that the
world functions on the basis of principles of fairness and equality. Discrimination that is experienced as rare would, by virtue of its incidental nature, not be considered diagnostic of how the world normally functions and therefore not threaten people's worldviews.

In Study 4.2, we considered this issue of the psychological processes underlying the moderating role of the pervasiveness of discrimination on the relation between attributions to prejudice and self-esteem and depressed affect. We investigated the effect of giving people the opportunity to re-establish perceptions of the world as fair and just, but in a way that does not directly relate to the achievement of participants' personal goals. If indeed recurrent but not rare discrimination threatens people's beliefs in the world as fair and just, being exposed to events that can affirm these beliefs, even if the situation does not directly involve the participant, would likely counter the negative consequences of recurrent discrimination while not influencing responses to rare discrimination. The present study therefore integrates principles underlying research on people's worldview (specifically, the view of the world as fair and just) with work on the pervasiveness of discrimination by considering the extent to which the negative consequences of experiencing structural and recurrent discrimination can be countered by enabling targets to satisfy their need to see the world as just.

There is some evidence that the experience of discrimination perceived as pervasive indeed threatens people's worldviews. Research in this area has focused mainly on what can be referred to as status legitimizing (Major, Gramzow, McCoy, Levin, Schmader, & Sidanius, 2002) or system justifying (Jost & Banaji, 1994) worldviews, namely on beliefs in meritocracy, which represent the extent to which people believe the outcomes they and others achieve in life are based on individual merit. Instances of discriminatory treatment are likely to threaten meritocracy beliefs. For example, Major and colleagues (Major et al., 2007) found that attributions of situations to discrimination were negatively related to self-esteem when individuals had a strong belief in meritocracy, whereas they were positively related to self-esteem when individuals had a weak belief in meritocracy. The authors reasoned that for individuals who do not believe that the system is legitimate, the experience of discrimination may actually confirm their system legitimizing beliefs – even to the extent that individuals experience positive well-being in response to discrimination. By contrast, the experience of discrimination is threatening and has negative consequences for well-being when it counters individuals' system legitimizing beliefs.
It is important to note that meritocracy beliefs were measured in the Major et al. (2007) research as a composite scale of a Protestant work ethic (belief that success is linked to hard work) and an individual mobility scale (belief that one can leave one’s group). The reliance on this composite scale leaves open the question whether the incompatibility between one’s worldviews and discrimination lies in the inability to leave one’s group or the fact that one will not be treated fairly on the basis of merit. Nevertheless, these studies offer evidence that when discrimination can challenge people’s individually held worldviews, there will be negative consequences for well-being.

Consistent with our contention that the recurrent as opposed to the rare nature of discrimination may specifically threaten people’s worldviews, Foster and Tsarfati (2005) provided correlational evidence showing that the extent to which individuals reported past experiences of discrimination was related to lower levels of individually-held meritocracy beliefs. A later study by Foster, Sloto, and Ruby (2006) revealed a relation with well-being: For individuals who had little prior experience of discrimination, belief in meritocracy was positively related to personal self-esteem, whereas the opposite was the case when individuals reported many past experiences of discrimination. Although the studies by Foster and colleagues are correlational in nature and therefore cannot establish the precise direction of causality, they suggest that the past experiences of discrimination may affect how people view the world. Specifically, experiencing discrimination that is more widespread than incidental, and, in personal experience, more recurrent than rare, may lower beliefs in meritocracy. Taken together, these studies concerning individual differences in peoples’ beliefs in meritocracy (Foster et al., 2006; Foster & Tsarfati, 2005; Major et al., 2007) suggest that experiencing discrimination, particularly when it is perceived as recurrent, may adversely influence feelings of well-being because it challenges people’s worldviews.

Whereas the research by Major et al. (2007) and Foster and colleagues (Foster et al., 2006; Foster & Tsarfati, 2005) focused on the correlations between personal experiences of discrimination and individual differences in perceptions of meritocracy-related worldviews, Study 4.2 attempted to manipulate general perceptions of the world as fair by presenting participants with information that was unrelated to participants’ personal achievement. Specifically, we consider whether being able to re-establish perceptions of the world as just and fair can counter the threat posed to people’s worldviews by pervasive and recurrent (but not rare) discrimination. We propose that recurrent but not rare discrimination may, at a
more abstract level beyond the level of personal achievements, influence general views about how society functions and the extent to which societal processes are generally fair and just. 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. For instance, research in the tradition of just world beliefs posits a fundamental “need to believe in a world where people generally get what they deserve” (Lerner & Miller, 1978, p. 1030). This need is broader than one focused on immediate personal outcomes; rather, it represents a view on how the world (should) function. A wide range of events involving unjust treatment can threaten beliefs in a just world such as learning about victims of sexual assault, robbery or cancer (Hafer, 2000; Sherman, Smith, & Cooper, 1982-3).

In line with the research on meritocracy worldviews and perceived discrimination (Foster et al., 2006; Foster & Tsarfati, 2005; Major et al., 2007), we hypothesized that the experience of recurrent, but not rare, discrimination would pose a threat to people’s worldview of society as generally fair and just, which contributes directly to the negative effects of recurrent discrimination on well-being. In particular, we tested this hypothesis by, after manipulating personally experienced gender discrimination (i.e., rare or recurrent), providing female participants with information that affirmed or did not affirm a view of the world as fair and just in a domain that was unrelated to the experience of discrimination in a situation that did not have direct, material consequences for the participant (see also Braman & Lambert, 2001). If perceptions of recurrent but not of rare discrimination generally challenge a view of the world as just, information that affirms the world as fair would be expected to influence responses to recurrent but not to rare discrimination.

Specifically, in Study 4.2 we exposed participants to discrimination that, as in Study 4.1, was described as recurrent or rare. Subsequently, we presented participants with the description of a case that affirmed the world as fair and just (affirmation condition: a criminal who took someone’s life was killed in a car accident), challenged this worldview (no-affirmation condition: a surgeon who saved someone’s life was killed in a car accident), or did not directly affirm or challenge this worldview (control condition: a chef winning a prize for cooking). Because the control condition portrays a positive event, it also offers a comparison condition for differences in the general positivity in response to the incidents depicted in the affirmation and no-affirmation conditions. Pilot testing (n = 28) of the two cases intended to affirm or challenge perceptions of a the world as just
revealed, as anticipated, that participants perceived the criminal, relative to the surgeon, as more deserving of his fate, M = 5.14 vs. 1.29 on a 7-point scale, F(1,26) = 60.75, p < .001, and rated the fate of the criminal as more just than the fate of the surgeon, M = 3.36 vs. 2.17, F(1,26) = 9.82, p < .01.

We predicted in Study 4.2 that when discrimination is perceived as recurrent and beliefs that the world is just are threatened but targets are not able to affirm the world as just (i.e., participants in the control and no-affirmation [surgeon] conditions), attributions to prejudice would predict more depressed affect and lower personal self-esteem, as in Study 4.1. However, when targets are able to affirm the world as just (i.e., participants presented with the affirmation [criminal] condition), this would be expected to buffer participants from the negative consequences of experiencing discrimination such that attributions to prejudice would not affect levels of depressed affect or personal self-esteem. When discrimination is perceived as rare and thus seen as incidental, people’s fundamental view of the world is not significantly challenged. Here we expected that the relation between attributions to prejudice and self-esteem and depressed affect would not be influenced by the affirmation manipulation, and that we would replicate Study 4.1 across the affirmation conditions. We expected in the rare discrimination condition that, consistent with the discounting hypothesis, greater attributions to prejudice would relate to better well-being (as with the self-esteem measure in Study 4.1) or, reflecting a general buffering effect (as with the depressed affect measure of Study 4.1), show no systematic relationship with well-being.

**Method**

**Participants**

One hundred and forty-nine female participants took part in this study, which was conducted via internet. Participants could take part in a drawing for four $50 gift certificates to an online store for books, CDs, and other merchandise after completion of the study. The study employed a 2 (Pervasiveness of Discrimination: recurrent vs. rare) x 3 (Affirmation of the World as Just: affirmation [criminal victim]/no affirmation [surgeon victim]/control [no victim]) design.

**Procedure**

Participants were recruited for this study via the volunteer section of two internet sites (craigslist.com, backpage.com). Female respondents who indicated interest in the study were forwarded an online questionnaire.
The procedure for Study 4.2 was similar to that of Study 4.1 with a few minor changes to make the study more relevant for participants. We adjusted the job description (i.e., work for a highly renowned company) and alleged aim of the selection procedure test (i.e., assess competence in a work setting). The manipulation of Pervasiveness of Discrimination (recurrent vs. rare) occurred in the same way as in Study 4.1. Participants also received the same feedback as in Study 4.1.

Following the feedback, participants were told that the research involved the influence of selection procedures on reading comprehension, and thus participants were asked to carefully read newspaper articles that contained the Affirmation of the World as just manipulation. Participants read about an innocent victim who had been involved in a car accident in which he (the driver, Eric A.) had become unwell and veered off the road. The article stressed that the driver suffered pain and was trapped in the car for a considerable amount of time before eventually dying in hospital. This part of the story was constructed such that the driver of the car was not to blame for this (to be perceived as) tragic accident. This part of the story served to (in the case of recurrent discrimination further) threaten the world as just. In the affirmation condition participants then read that the driver of the car, Eric A., was a criminal who had brutally murdered a young woman but got let off his life long prison sentence due to a technicality. In the no-affirmation condition participants read the driver of the car, Eric A., was a surgeon who had recently miraculously saved the life of a young woman and had employed a new surgical technique in doing so. In the control condition, there was no mention of a fatal car accident or victim. Therefore, while unrelated to death, this story would be perceived as positive. The article explained that the chef had made a menu containing exquisite fish and different types of meat, followed by an outstanding range of desserts. Participants then read that the award winning chef was Eric A. who had become known statewide because of his excellent cooking skills.

After reading the newspaper article participants completed a set of dependent measures and were fully debriefed about the purpose of the study.

Dependent measures. Our manipulation check of pervasiveness of discrimination consisted of the same items as in Study 4.1, $r(142) = .66$. We analyzed the two items as a scale. With respect to the manipulation check for affirmation of the world as just, we measured comprehension of the newspaper article by asking participants to indicate whether the person, Eric A., described in the newspaper article was a cook, criminal or surgeon. Attributions to prejudice were assessed as in Study 4.1 by asking participants to what extent they found Mr. X...
prejudiced and sexist (α = .77). Affect was assessed with an other-directed affect measure, anger, that consisted of two additional items in comparison to Study 4.1 (i.e., cooperative, agreeable, both items reverse-scored, α = .75) and the same self-directed affect measure of depressed affect as in Study 4.1 (α = .87). Self esteem was assessed with same Heatherton and Polivy (1991) personal state self-esteem scale as in Study 4.1 (α = .86).

**Results**

*Manipulation checks*

A 2 (Pervasiveness of Discrimination: recurrent vs. rare) x 3 (Affirmation of the World as Just: affirmation/no affirmation/control) between subjects ANOVA on the manipulation check of pervasiveness of discrimination revealed only, as expected, a significant main effect of Pervasiveness of Discrimination, $F(1,136) = 29.91, p < .001, \eta^2 = .18$. Participants in the recurrent discrimination condition reported a greater likelihood of encountering people with similar backgrounds or views as Mr. X again in the future ($M = 4.60, SD = 1.37$) than participants in the rare discrimination condition ($M = 3.34, SD = 1.40$).

The manipulation check of the world as just, the measure of newspaper comprehension, revealed that six participants had incorrectly remembered the occupation of Erik A. (i.e., the main character in the newspaper article). These participants were not included in further analyses.

As in Study 4.1, an ANOVA on attributions to prejudice revealed no significant main or interaction effects, $Fs < 2.19, p > .12, \eta^2 < .03$. Therefore, as expected, our manipulations did not influence the extent to which targets experienced personal discrimination.

*Affect and self-esteem*

In order to test our main hypotheses for Study 4.2 concerning the influence of an affirmation of the world as just, we conducted regression analyses involving a continuous participant variable, Attributions to Prejudice, and two categorical independent variables: Pervasiveness of Discrimination (rare, recurrent) and Affirmation of the World as Just (affirmation, no affirmation, control). Attributions to prejudice were first centered and then these centered terms were used to calculate interactions with the categorical independent variable. The three-level affirmation condition was coded into two orthogonal vectors. One vector compared the control condition to the no-affirmation condition (0, +1, -1). The other vector directly tested our main prediction about the effects of re-establishing a just world;
it compared the combination of the control and no-affirmation conditions to the affirmation condition (+2, -1, -1). Interactions and subsequent analyses were conducted in accordance with procedures outlined by Aiken and West (1991). Note that based on our hypotheses we predicted a significant three-way interaction involving the vector comparing the affirmation condition to the combination of the no-affirmation and control conditions: The affirmation condition (but not the no-affirmation condition or control condition) was hypothesized to alleviate the threat to a just world posed by recurrent discrimination, whereas the affirmation condition would not be relevant under rare discrimination.

The regression analyses for other-directed affect, anger, revealed a significant main effect of Attributions to Prejudice only, $\beta = .36$, $t = 2.27$, $p = .03$. Greater attributions to prejudice predicted more anger. No other main or interaction effects were significant.

The regression representing the fully saturated model for depressed affect revealed a significant effect involving the vector comparing the no-affirmation and control conditions, $\beta = .25$, $t = 2.17$, $p < .04$. Participants experienced more depressed affect in the no-affirmation ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.24$) than in the control condition ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.51$). However, there were no interactions involving this vector.

Of primary relevance to our hypotheses, we also obtained the predicted three-way interaction involving the vector comparing the affirmation condition to the combination of no-affirmation and control conditions, pervasiveness of discrimination, and perceptions of prejudice, $\beta = -.42$, $t = -2.54$, $p < .02$. As illustrated in Figure 3, when discrimination was described as recurrent, across both the no-affirmation and control conditions, greater attributions to prejudice were related to higher levels of depressed affect, $\beta = .50$, $t = 3.87$, $p < .001$, the result we obtained in Study 4.1. Moreover, this effect was obtained separately for both the no-affirmation condition, $\beta = .59$, $t = 3.53$, $p < .002$, and the control condition, $\beta = .49$, $t = 2.53$, $p < .02$. However, in the affirmation condition, which was designed to re-establish the world as just, perceptions of prejudice were related to lower levels of depressed affect, $\beta = -.47$, $t = -2.65$, $p < .01$. 

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Figure 4.3 – Reported depressed affect as a function of attributions to prejudice and affirmation of the world as just for perceptions of rare and recurrent discrimination (Study 4.2)

As in Study 4.1, when discrimination was described as rare, perceptions of prejudice were unrelated to depressed affect. In particular, in the rare discrimination condition, the interaction between perceptions of prejudice and the vector representing the affirmation vs. no-affirmation and control conditions was
nonsignificant, $\beta = .05, t = 0.34, p < .73$, as well as the main effect for Attributions to Prejudice, $\beta = .22, t = 1.39, p < .17$.

The regression for personal self-esteem representing the fully saturated model revealed no significant effects. However, because we had a priori predictions about different patterns of results in the recurrent versus rare discrimination conditions, we examined the results within each of these conditions separately. The analysis for the recurrent discrimination condition yielded the anticipated interaction between perceptions of discrimination and affirmation condition (affirmation vs. no-affirmation and control), $\beta = .27, t = 2.25, p < .03$. As illustrated in Figure 4.4, when discrimination was described as recurrent, across both the no-affirmation and control conditions, greater attributions to prejudice were related to lower levels of personal self-esteem, $\beta = -.31, t = -2.17, p < .05$. Effects of similar magnitude were also observed when we considered the no-affirmation condition, $\beta = -.38, t = -1.96, p < .06$, and the control condition separately, $\beta = -.31, t = -1.43, p < .17$. By contrast, in the affirmation condition, which was designed to re-establish the world as just, perceptions of prejudice were not related to personal self-esteem, $\beta = .20, t = .99, p = .33$.

When discrimination was described as rare, perceptions of prejudice were unrelated to personal self-esteem. In particular, in the rare discrimination condition, the interaction between perception of prejudice and the vector representing the affirmation vs. no-affirmation and control conditions was nonsignificant, $\beta = .08, t = 0.48, p = .63$, as was the main effect for Attributions to Prejudice, $\beta = .17, t = 1.02, p < .31$.

Discussion

Study 4.2 integrates research on people’s worldviews with prior work on the pervasiveness of discrimination by considering whether discrimination that is perceived to be recurrent has negative psychological consequences for targets’ well-being because it threatens core elements in the way people view the world, namely their belief in the world as just. In support of this idea, the present study revealed that being able to affirm the world as just buffered targets from the negative consequences otherwise experienced when perceiving discrimination as recurrent. By contrast, affirmation of the world as just did not influence well-being when discrimination was perceived as rare. These findings thus indicate that being able to affirm the world as just can counter the negative consequences of experiencing discrimination as recurrent.
Figure 4.4 – Reported personal self-esteem as a function of attributions to prejudice and affirmation of the world as just for perceptions of rare and recurrent discrimination (Study 4.2)

Because our affirmation of the world as just manipulation likely influenced participants’ general mood, it is possible that different general mood across conditions, not the affirmation of the world as just per se, accounts for our effects.
Are well-being effects indeed due to the fact that participants experienced positive mood in response to what will have been perceived as a just death of a villainous cruel person (i.e., the criminal) and a negative mood in response to the “unjust” death of a heroic person (i.e., the surgeon)? Two findings speak against this alternative explanation. For one, we find similar well-being effects for both the surgeon condition (likely to induce negative mood) and the control condition, in which a cook wins a prize (a positive event). Furthermore, the different patterns of results for the affirmation manipulation between the recurrent and rare discrimination conditions are difficult to explain on the basis of general mood effects across affirmation conditions. Thus, although general mood might indeed have varied across conditions, these differences cannot readily account for the specific pattern of results we obtained. The present results therefore indicate that the confirmation of one’s views of the world as just is a positive experience even when it concerns a negative event.

Surprisingly, the effects of the affirmation of the world as just for self-directed indicators of negative affect were even stronger than we had expected: In this condition, attributions to prejudice not only no longer predicted more negative well-being but instead significantly predicted less depressed affect. The comparable effect for self-esteem was not significant, but it was also in the positive direction (β = .20). One reason why we find these positive effects on well-being for attributions to prejudice within the condition in which discrimination is portrayed as recurrent but a just world is affirmed may involve a contrast effect (e.g., Ric & Niedenthal, 2007). In particular, the clear message in the affirmation condition that the world is a just place in which nasty people (i.e., criminals) get what they deserve may be particularly reassuring to participants who just had a negative experience of a prejudiced person that they could not discount as an unusual incident.

Unlike Study 4.1, which found that attributions to prejudice related to higher self-esteem (but not to significantly lower depressed affect), the results of Study 4.2 revealed no significant relationship between attributions to prejudice within the rare discrimination conditions and both self-esteem and depressed affect. However, the results were generally compatible with our conclusion in Study 4.1 that the discounting effect in the rare discrimination condition occurs more strongly for self-esteem than for depressed affect, in part because the self-esteem reflects feelings of efficacy beyond the immediate context, whereas depressed affect may be partially anchored to the failure experience in the experimental context. In the rare discrimination condition of Study 4.2, greater attributions were positively related to
self-esteem ($\beta = .17$ compared to $\beta = .34$ in Study 4.1). However, in Study 4.2, in the rare discrimination condition attributions to prejudice also related to more depressed affect ($\beta = .22$ in Study 4.2 compared to $\beta = -.02$ in Study 4.1). The buffering effect for self-esteem is even clearer when only the control condition in Study 4.2 is considered. Whereas within the control condition for the affirmation of the world as just manipulation, attributions to prejudice related negatively to self-esteem in the recurrent discrimination condition, $\beta = -.31$, these attributions were positively related to self-esteem in the rare discrimination condition, $\beta = .21$. The comparable effects for depressed affect were $\beta = .03$ and $\beta = .49$. Thus, although it was not the main focus of the present research, our findings of somewhat stronger support for the discounting hypothesis for self-esteem than for depressed affect raise interesting theoretical distinctions concerning the self-protective potential of discrimination: Do attributions to discrimination that is perceived as rare buffer people from personal failure, as has been suggested by the discounting approach, or do these attributions (also) protect the self from the negative consequences otherwise experienced in response to discrimination. The findings of the present studies suggest the value of exploring the different sensitivity of measures of well-being to specific contexts of discrimination in future research.

In summary, the present study provides further evidence that different processes underlie responses to recurrent as opposed to rare discrimination. Furthermore, it extends knowledge concerning the processes underlying perceptions of pervasive discrimination, revealing that the experience of recurrent but not rare discrimination affects people’s core beliefs in how they think about the world. Prior research has provided indications that peoples’ individually held system legitimizing beliefs, specifically beliefs in individual merit, can influence how people respond to situations that can be attributed to discrimination (Foster et al., 2006; Foster & Tsarfati, 2005; Major et al., 2007). The present research indicates that the experience of recurrent discrimination can affect beliefs that are at a more abstract level that is unrelated to concrete aspects in the experience of discrimination.

**General Discussion**

The processes studied in the present research have basic implications for understanding the dynamics underlying responses to discrimination. Prior research has largely focused on adverse psychological responses to discrimination in terms of its direct personal relevance for one’s present and future outcomes. For instance, the discounting model (Crocker & Major, 1989) states that targets make attributions to
discrimination to protect the self; similarly, the rejection identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) builds on the idea that peoples' responses to discrimination are determined by the extent they pose a threat to part of one's identity, one's identity as a group member. More specifically, pervasive discrimination is thought to be harmful because it has negative future implications for the self.

Although the present research does not dispute this explanation, it suggests an additional possible influence. Within the area of just world beliefs, for example, Lerner and Miller (1978) argued that a threat to one's just world beliefs does not necessarily have to be self-relevant to induce a need to re-establish the world as a just place. To the contrary, just world beliefs are unlikely to be threatened "when the observer expects to be in a situation similar to that of the victim" (Lerner & Miller, 1978, p. 1041, see also Lerner & Simmons, 1966). Translating this perspective to our findings provides indications that responses to pervasive discrimination may not only be ego-motivated but also system-motivated, such as by the desire to see the world as a just place in which people get what they deserve.

Even if it is argued that perceiving the world as just is ultimately personally beneficial, in that it enhances the control one can have over one's fate, the distinction between ego-motivated and system-motivated responses (Jost & Banaji, 1994) offers potentially productive new avenues for future research on responses to discrimination. For instance, these processes may operate under different conditions. More specifically, instances of rare discrimination may induce more ego-motivated processes, and recurrent more system-motivated processes. Taking this a step further, people may be egoistically motivated in conditions that are more particularistic and not necessarily experienced as embedded within society. In the case of discrimination, this could be a situation in which the prejudice of another is seen as incidental. By contrast, system motivations are likely to arise in situations that are considered more systemic and institutional such as when discrimination is experienced as global and pervasive. This implies that responses to discrimination can be differentially activated depending on whether people are ego- or system-motivated, for example by making either ego- or system-motivations salient.

Although the idea that responses to discrimination may be explained by different types of motivation requires further investigation, we think it not only is an interesting avenue for future research (for example, future work examining the potential moderating role of individual differences in the strength of belief of the world as just) but can also provide a useful framework for conceptualizing discrimination.
The fact that recurrent discrimination poses such a substantial threat to people’s worldviews—even in a domain that is unrelated to discrimination—raises the question of the long-term consequences of perceiving recurrent discrimination for beliefs about the world. Literature in the area of just world beliefs provides strong evidence that people consistently try to re-establish their belief in a just world when this belief is threatened. This may not be feasible if people’s beliefs in the world as just are threatened on a daily basis, suggesting that in the long run, a more effective strategy may be to adjust one’s worldviews. Major and colleagues’ (2007) research on the relation between belief in individual merit and responses to discrimination revealed that those people who had a low belief in individual merit actually experienced more positive well-being when being discriminated against. The reason given was that low belief in individual merit is congruent with receiving unfair treatment; it confirms people’s belief system. Indeed one way of dealing with the long term costs for well-being of experiencing recurrent discrimination may be to alter one’s worldviews.

On a more positive note, our research suggests that reinforcing for people the idea that the world is just, may enhance action tendencies and the need to address the injustice of discrimination. Our results reveal that people who have been able to affirm the world as just experience lower levels of emotions associated with passivity (i.e., depressed affect) while nevertheless experiencing relatively high levels of emotions associated with action orientation (i.e., anger). Indeed, prior research indicates that anger may be an important first step in addressing (personal) injustice and engaging in collective action (e.g., Wright, 1997). In a similar vein, one might expect that affirmation of the world as just turns the experience of (recurrent) discrimination as a threat into a challenge. Although this type of response is difficult to establish via self-report measures, physiological measures could provide information about these processes.

In conclusion, the present research offers an integration of seemingly conflicting research findings indicating that the experience of discrimination can be both positively and negatively related to well-being. We have provided evidence that the personal experience of discrimination can have very different implications for well-being, depending on the (future) perspective it offers to targets. Our research complements prior research by extending knowledge concerning the processes underlying pervasive discrimination. It provides evidence that not only the future negative implications for the self of perceiving discrimination as pervasive, but also the fact that it communicates to targets that the world is not a
just place in which people get what they deserve, can account for the detrimental consequences of perceiving discrimination as recurrent.
Footnotes

1. This chapter is based on Stroebe, Dovidio, Barreto, Ellemers, & John (2008).
2. We did not necessarily expect attributions to prejudice or the manipulation of pervasiveness of discrimination to have overall (main) effects. Attributions could relate oppositely to psychological well-being in the recurrent and the rare conditions. Also, female participants may not necessarily generally apply information about discrimination against women to their personal experience (see research on the personal-group discrimination discrepancy; see Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994): only when they attribute their failure to some degree to the prejudice of the interviewer will the recurrent versus rare distinction have direct relevance for their well-being.
3. Not all participants completed the entire list of dependent measures. This accounts for variations in \( n \) between dependent measures.
Chapter 5 | Summary and Discussion

For targets of discrimination it can often be very unclear whether the (negative) treatment they are receiving is due to lack of, for example, personal deservingness or the prejudice of another with respect to one’s group membership. This state of attributional ambiguity with respect to the causes of one’s personal treatment can influence both the extent to which members of stigmatized groups perceive situations as discriminatory as well as (motivational) responses thereto. Attributing a situation to discrimination may be very unpleasant as it increases the realization of the negative future implications of one’s devalued group membership (referred to as the rejection identification model, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999) yet it may be relatively self-protective as one would otherwise blame the self, rather than the prejudice of another, for one’s negative outcomes (referred to as the discounting approach, Crocker & Major, 1989). Indeed both ideas have received considerable empirical support. The present dissertation focused on the processes underlying these seemingly equivocal findings and provided an extension of prior theoretical approaches in the area. As outlined in the introduction, one of the themes of this dissertation concerned the interplay between an individual and group level focus. In an individual level focus people are focused on aspects of the situation that relate to themselves such as making interpersonal comparisons and/or dealing with (possible) personal failure. In a group level focus people are focused on aspects of their (devalued) group membership such as the treatment of other ingroup members or the implications of their group membership for their personal future. As will become clear in the course of this chapter, it may be important to look beyond (as well as redefine) an individual and group level focus to consider system motivations (i.e., the need to perceive the world as a just place) in responses to subtle discrimination.

In Chapter 2 I considered how an individual level focus (i.e., self relevance of personal outcomes, need to search for information) influences information search that provides evidence of discrimination as well as studying the consequences of this evidence of discrimination for psychological well-being. In Chapter 3 I studied how an individual level (nature of personal outcomes) and a group level (treatment of the group) focus determine (motivational) responses to discrimination. In these two chapters I was in essence studying the motivational underpinning of discrimination.
that is self-protective from failure (Chapter 3) or harmful to the self because the devaluation of one’s group has negative (future) implications for the self (Chapter 2). In Chapter 4 I integrated these equivocal findings with respect to motivational processes by studying a possible moderator of the relation between attributions to discrimination and well-being, the pervasiveness of discrimination. Furthermore, I argued that in determining the processes underlying responses to discrimination it is important to go beyond concerns about the (individual/group) self and look at the extent to which discrimination threatens people’s basic view of the world as a place in which people are treated on the basis of principles of justice and equality. I proposed another more abstract and less self-relevant dimension that may be of importance in studying people’s responses to subtle discrimination: system motivated responses. Below I outline the results of the studies conducted in this dissertation, before providing a more comprehensive discussion of the theoretical implications of the research conducted in this dissertation.

Overview of the main findings

Chapter 2: When searching hurts: the role of information search in responding to subtle discrimination – an individual level focus on subtle discrimination

How do individuals come to realize they are targets of discrimination in situations in which it is unclear whether they are being treated on the basis of individual characteristics or their group membership? Many instances of discrimination concern evaluation settings in which individuals are likely to be very focused on their personal outcomes and specific individual attributes relevant to these outcomes, such as judgments of personal ability or competence. Yet in order to recognize discrimination individuals need to shift from this individual level focus to an awareness that personal outcomes may be caused by their (devalued) group membership. Also we know that the recognition of discrimination in many cases may require searching for additional information. Indeed prior research by Crosby and colleagues indicates that failure to perceive personal discrimination may be due to lack of information (Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, & Hemker, 1986; Rutte, Diekmann, Polzer, Crosby, & Messick, 1994). Targets typically only have information about individual cases of discrimination (e.g. their own treatment), whereas inferring discrimination may require the comparison of a larger number of cases (e.g., the treatment of other ingroup and outgroup members). Consequently, in many situations these inferences require an active search for additional information that
can help individuals shift from being focused purely on their personal self, to a focus on their group membership and the group self.

The first aim of the present chapter was to study conditions under which targets are motivated to actively search for information about the cause of the treatment they receive, when placed in a situation in which it is ambiguous whether or not they are victims of discrimination. In both studies of this chapter, the information paradigm I designed was such that the information individuals could search for provided the only indication that personal treatment might be caused by the prejudice of the evaluator. My research revealed that targets can be motivated to search for additional information than can provide indications of discrimination when personal outcomes (both negative and positive) are highly self relevant. Furthermore, targets can shift from being purely focused on the personal self to thinking about their group membership: Across both studies targets made attributions to prejudice after information search (Studies 2.1/2) but only when this information provided evidence of prejudice (Study 2.2).

A second aim of Chapter 2 was to consider how searching for evidence of discrimination affects targets' well-being, both at an individual (i.e., affect) and a group (i.e., collective self esteem) level. Does the realization that a personal outcome is due to discrimination rather than personal ability have positive or negative consequences for personal and group level well-being? And if viewing evidence of group level disadvantage has negative consequences for well-being, is this because individuals suffer from the fate of their group and the fact that other group members are disadvantaged, or because this disadvantage has negative implications for themselves (i.e., experiencing personal failure)?

In the present paradigm, the more information targets sought, the more cases of fellow ingroup members (women) they viewed who received unjust treatment with regard to outgroup members (men) by a male evaluator (who also evaluates the target). Therefore searching for information provides more and stronger evidence of discrimination. Both studies 2.1 and 2.2 revealed that searching for a lot of information had a negative influence on individuals' group level (i.e., collective self esteem) and individual level well-being (i.e., affect) but only when individuals experienced personal failure rather than success (Study 2.1) and when this information indeed revealed evidence of discrimination (Study 2.2). Therefore research reveals that viewing evidence of (pervasive) discrimination is harmful rather than self-protective of well-being.
By varying the nature of individuals’ personal outcomes in the face of group disadvantage I was also able to consider why having strong evidence of discrimination would have these negative consequences for well-being. Prior research (e.g., Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003) has focused on negative personal outcomes that can be attributed to the prejudice of another. Therefore, negative attitudes with regard to one’s (devalued) group always affected the self. Yet this research cannot discern why individuals suffer from the disadvantage of their group. In the present research I varied whether (i.e., personal failure) or not (i.e., personal success) the disadvantage of the group affected the self. This allowed me to consider possible reasons why having strong evidence of group disadvantage has negative consequences for well-being. On the one hand, individuals may experience negative well-being in the face of strong evidence of group disadvantage because the group is a central part of the self, and individuals empathize with and suffer from the fate of their fellow group members (empathy explanation). By contrast my research provided more support for an alternative explanation, namely that individuals suffer from group disadvantage because it has negative consequences for themselves, their personal outcomes (personal interest explanation): My findings indicate that even though individuals are able to perceive and report group disadvantage (i.e., attributions to discrimination), the disadvantage of the group only affected targets’ well-being when they had much as opposed to little evidence of group disadvantage and were personally affected by this disadvantage.

Overall Chapter 2 provides evidence that individuals can be motivated to search for evidence of discrimination even when they are very focused on personal outcomes and this information search may be harmful for well-being. Also, my results reveal that rather than protecting the self from personal failure, viewing more evidence of discrimination has negative consequences for well-being both at an individual and at a group level – even when targets may be motivated to self protect from failure because, for example, personal failure is highly self relevant. In Chapter 4 I further focus on the role of pervasiveness in determining well-being responses to discrimination. Note that in the present studies (2.1 and 2.2) individuals who sought less information also reported perceiving discrimination, yet did not suffer lower levels of well-being. Therefore this chapter provides initial evidence that the experience of ‘pervasive’ discrimination may be particularly harmful to well-being whereas less strong evidence of discrimination need not be so harmful for well-being. I come back to this in Chapter 4.
The present chapter also indicates that an individual level focus (i.e., self-relevant personal outcomes) need not preclude perceptions of discrimination. Furthermore, a stronger individual focus is not necessarily directly related to self-protective motivations. In Chapter 3 of this dissertation I was interested in addressing the relative influence of an individual and group focus on attributions to discrimination and well-being.

Chapter 3: For better or for worse: The congruence of personal and group outcomes on targets’ responses to discrimination – an individual and group level focus on subtle discrimination

Would the knowledge that you are a successful member of a disadvantaged group but that many other members of your group are less successful due to prejudice against your group membership dampen the positive experience of your personal success? Chapter 2 indicated that people suffer more from discrimination when it also affects themselves. Yet these studies tell us little about how knowing about the disadvantage of one’s group compares to not having information about group disadvantage. Would Bill Cosby, a successful African American actor have enjoyed his success more if he had not been African American and aware that many other African Americans would never reach this point due to discrimination? Does the knowledge of group disadvantage dampen the experience of personal success and enhance personal failure? In Chapter 3 I considered the relative influence of personal outcomes versus outcomes of one’s group on targets’ attributions, well-being and justice perceptions in response to discrimination. I focused on the three questions summarized below.

Firstly I considered whether people suffer or profit from the fate of their group in the face of actual discrimination and stigmatized group membership. That is, by contrasting situations in which people do or do not have information about group disadvantage (Study 3.1), I was able to study to what extent responses to personal outcomes are augmented or dampened by knowledge about group disadvantage. Specifically I focused on whether people discounted personal failure (i.e., made less internal and more group-based attributions) in the face of evidence of group disadvantage, and how this discounting affected well-being. Study 3.1 indicated that rather than suffering from the fate of one’s group, knowledge thereof actually served to discount failure, and to some extent, enhance personal success. Having information about the disadvantage of one’s group – as opposed to not being given this information – increased the extent to which individuals made internal
attributions for success. Similarly it allowed individuals to make less internal attributions for personal failure and increased personal well-being. Therefore this study provided evidence that having information about group disadvantage, rather than being harmful for well-being, can enhance the experience of personal success and help discount personal failure.

Secondly, I was interested in considering to what extent discounting (when personal and group outcomes are congruent) is the result of the motivation to self-protect from personal failure or whether this discounting is the result of information processing when individuals discover that personal outcomes are congruent with and should therefore be attributed to group membership. I studied these alternative explanations in Study 3.2 by comparing a 'standard discounting' setting (personal failure/group disadvantage) with a situation in which it would not be self-protective to discount and attribute personal outcomes to group membership: experiencing personal success that can be attributed to the advantaged position of one's group. I found that individuals engaged in more discounting of their personal outcomes when it served to self-protect from personal failure (i.e., personal failure that was congruent with group disadvantage) than when it implied that one could not attribute this personal success internally (i.e., personal success that was congruent with group advantage) (Study 3.2). This is not to say that individuals who experienced personal success did not perceive the disadvantage of their group, rather they did not translate this to an individual level (i.e., they did not make less internal attributions). In other words, people were highly motivated to attribute personal success internally, even when group level information indicated otherwise. It would seem that attributions to discrimination are not purely the result of individual and group level information processing but also contain a motivational element in which individuals make attributions that allow them to discount personal failure and enhance personal success and use group level information to achieve this effect.

As a third question I considered to what extent individuals recognize and report injustice against group members when they are not personally affected by this injustice (i.e., personal outcomes are positive but group is disadvantaged). Research in the area of procedural justice has repeatedly found what is referred to as the 'fair process effect', namely that perceived procedural fairness has a strong influence on how people respond to personal outcomes (Folger, 1977, Greenberg, 1987). At the same time research on the person-group-discrimination-discrepancy indicates that perceptions of group level injustice do not always translate into perceptions of personal disadvantage (e.g., D.M. Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990).
The fact that the present studies assess both general perceptions of procedural justice and more specific assessments of perceptions regarding personal outcomes can thus help to explore the interplay between justice perceptions and responses to personal outcomes that are, in some cases, the result of discrimination. Results across both studies conducted in this chapter indicate that not only personal outcome attributions but also perceptions of justice seem to be guided by individual level motivations. Indeed, looking at reports of group level injustice, I found that individuals reported more injustice with respect to treatment of their group members when this also matched their personal experiences (despite the fact that they did perceive/make attributions to the disadvantage of their group). These results indicate that individuals are more likely to perceive and report injustice when they also personally affected by this injustice. Overall the present chapter provides a picture of somewhat individualistic and egoistically motivated individuals who do not seem to suffer from the fate of other group members.

Does this mean that individuals never suffer from their disadvantaged group membership and generally experience relatively positive well-being when personal failure can be attributed to group membership? Chapter 2 already provided indications that this is not the case, showing that even when individuals are very focused on their personal outcomes, evidence of discrimination can be experienced as harmful. How can the differential findings across these chapters be explained? In Chapter 4 I studied the processes underlying these differential responses by considering a possible moderator, the perceived pervasiveness of discrimination. Furthermore I focused on the question whether responses to discrimination are generally egoistically motivated: do individuals profit (i.e., by discounting) or suffer (i.e., by becoming aware of the negative future implications thereof for the self) from discrimination because of its positive or negative implications for the self or are there elements in the experience of discrimination that do not relate directly to the self? In order to study this question I looked at whether the experience of discrimination that is perceived as structural and pervasive threatens targets’ view of the world as fair and just in which people get what they deserve.

Chapter 4: Is the World a Just Place? Countering the negative consequences of pervasive discrimination by affirming the world as just – beyond an individual versus group level focus

Not only the studies conducted in Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation but also research in the area of subtle discrimination has provided differential results.
with respect to targets' well-being responses to discrimination. For members of stigmatized groups attributions to discrimination under some circumstances can be self-protective because they enable targets to attribute personal failure to the prejudice of another, thus avoiding self blame (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Chapter 3 of this dissertation). Yet there is also strong evidence that attributions to discrimination can be harmful for well-being because the experience of discrimination indicates to targets that negative treatment on the basis of one’s group membership can also be expected in the future (Branscombe et al., 1999; Chapter 2 of this dissertation). In this fourth chapter I study the role of the pervasiveness of discrimination as a moderator of these processes. Prior research has revealed that discrimination that is perceived as more pervasive has more negative consequences for well-being than discrimination that is perceived as rare (Schmitt et al., 2003). Yet research so far has not provided evidence of the processes I suggest (but see also Schmitt et al. 2003) namely that the same situation of discrimination (i.e., being rejected by a prejudiced evaluator) can induce very different processes depending on people’s perceptions of pervasiveness of the discrimination they experience. Importantly, across both studies the experience of discrimination (i.e., personal outcome, prejudice of 'perpetrator') and therefore the extent to which individuals made attributions to discrimination was the same, only the extent to which this discrimination was expected to occur again in the future differed. I predicted that perceiving discrimination as rare, and thus incidental, may serve to buffer targets from the adverse consequences of negative treatment because it provides a convenient external attribution for failure and is relatively unlikely to occur again in the future. By contrast, discrimination that is perceived as pervasive may be harmful in part because it implies future negative treatment and outcomes on the basis of one’s group membership, which can lead to feelings of helplessness and depression (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002a; Schmitt et al., 2003). Importantly, in contrast to prior research that has manipulated discrimination that is contextually pervasive in the sense that the number of prejudiced persons in the specific context differed (see Schmitt et al., 2003), I manipulated discrimination that was personally experienced but differed in the extent to which it was likely to occur in the future (i.e., temporal pervasiveness: rare versus recurrent). In my view this covered the essence of discrimination as being threatening – as opposed to self-protective - when it provides targets with a negative perspective for the future.
Results across both studies revealed that overall the experience of discrimination, irrespective of whether it was perceived as rare or pervasive, increased levels of emotions not directed at the self but at the other, such as other-directed affect in the form of anger. Importantly, and in line with my predictions, when I considered self-directed indicators of well-being (i.e., feelings of self efficacy, self-directed affect), I found evidence that being able to make attributions to discrimination buffered individuals from the experience of personal failure when discrimination was perceived as rare. By contrast, discrimination that was perceived as pervasive had negative consequences for individuals’ well-being. Therefore the present studies provide strong evidence that very different mechanisms may underlie the same situation of discrimination.

A further question I considered in Study 4.2 was why pervasive discrimination is so threatening. I proposed that attributing a situation to discrimination when this discrimination is perceived to be pervasive may not only be threatening because it has negative (future) implications for the self, but also because it threatens peoples’ worldviews, such as the belief that the world functions on the basis of principles of equality and fairness. I hypothesized that being disadvantaged in a pervasive and enduring way on the basis of group membership threatens perceptions of the world as just, but that rare discrimination can be dismissed as an unusual aberration in a world that is still fundamentally fair. In this study I manipulated the pervasiveness of discrimination (rare/pervasive) and gave individuals the opportunity to reaffirm the world as just. Although prior research has not manipulated affirmation of the world as just to counter threat to just world beliefs, parallels are to be found in the area of self affirmation (Steele & Liu, 1983; Tesser & Cornell, 1991). I reasoned that if the experience of pervasive and structural discrimination threatens peoples’ beliefs in a just world, being able to reaffirm the world as just in a different domain (i.e., punishment of criminal) should counter the negative consequences of experiencing pervasive discrimination. By contrast, because discrimination that is perceived as rare can be viewed as an incidental occurrence that is not diagnostic of how the world functions, I did not expect any effect of just world affirmation in this case. Indeed, Study 4.2 revealed that being able to reaffirm the world as just countered the negative well-being consequences of pervasive discrimination – whereas it did not influence responses to discrimination that was perceived as rare. Therefore being able to affirm the world as just can buffer targets from the experience of pervasive discrimination.
Overall this research provided evidence that the extent to which discrimination is perceived as temporally pervasive can determine the extent to which the same ‘experience’ of discrimination serves to self-protect people from personal failure or has very negative consequences for well-being. Furthermore, Study 4.2 provided evidence that discrimination that is perceived as pervasive and recurrent threatens peoples’ beliefs in the world as a just place.

Theoretical implications

One of the main themes in the introduction of this dissertation concerned the question of when individuals switch from an individual level focus (i.e., focusing on personal failure), to a group level focus (i.e., perceiving group disadvantage, prejudiced behaviour of outgroup members). I argued that individuals may think at different abstraction levels and that this can determine the extent to which they focus on themselves (as individuals) with respect to other individuals – an individual level focus – versus making distinctions between themselves (as group members) and other groups – a group level focus. The present dissertation has addressed this theme in a number of ways. For one, it has considered how a focus on individual level aspects of a situation influences responses to information about the disadvantage of one’s group. Specifically, it studied whether an individual focus precludes perceptions of group disadvantage, how perceptions of group disadvantage translate into individual level responses (for example, in contexts in which personal and group outcomes are positive or negative) and finally, in linking personal outcomes to group treatment, whether individual motives determine attributions to personal discrimination. Secondly, building on the distinction between individual and group level focus, this dissertation moved a step further to consider the role of system motivations (i.e., the need to see the world as a just place) in responses to subtle discrimination. Below I outline in more detail the theoretical implications of the present dissertation.

Responding to information about the disadvantage of one’s group

a. From individual to group

The results reported in this dissertation provide important insights concerning how members of stigmatized groups respond to the disadvantage of their (fellow) group members. Whereas prior research has largely considered how targets respond to discrimination that is also ‘personally’ experienced (e.g., Major, Kaiser, & McCoy, 2003a; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrnowicz, & Owen, 2002c), in the present
dissertation (Chapters 2 and 3) I was interested in studying the relation between the fate of one’s group and individuals’ personal outcomes. The nature of discrimination as it occurs in real life is such that personal outcomes (i.e., negative treatment) are congruent with outcomes of attitudes with respect to one’s group (i.e., prejudice of an evaluator). By experimentally separating individual from group level treatment I was able to focus on whether individuals are able to link information about their personal outcomes to information about group level treatment. There are reasons to believe that this may be difficult for targets of discrimination. Research on the person-group discrimination discrepancy indicates that members of disadvantaged groups do not necessarily link information about their personal treatment to knowledge about the disadvantage of their group (D.M.Taylor et al., 1990, see D.M.Taylor, Wright, & Porter, 1994 for a review). In this case awareness of group disadvantage is not matched by reports of personal experiences of discrimination, suggestive of some self-protective mechanisms (see Crosby, 1984). In this dissertation I studied situations in which the relevance of individual characteristics seems primary (i.e., personal evaluation/selection settings in which positive/negative feedback is given) and considered how the provision of group level information then impacts interpretation of these outcomes and its effects on individual level well-being. This focus on individual outcomes might arguably also contribute to less awareness (or less perceived relevance) of group level treatment. Importantly, both Chapters 2 and 3 provide evidence that, irrespective of the extent to which personal outcomes are self relevant and the nature of these personal outcomes (i.e., success or failure), individuals do notice and report group disadvantage. In other words, individuals can be very focused on themselves, and need not personally be the target of discrimination to be aware of group disadvantage. But how do individuals respond to information group disadvantage? I consider this question below.

b. From group to individual: suffering from the fate of the group

A further implication of this dissertation is that it can inform us to what extent people actually suffer from the fate of their group (as opposed to suffering from negative personal outcomes that can be attributed to group membership). Prior research, as well as the research conducted in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, indicates that individuals may suffer from discrimination, especially when this discrimination is perceived to be pervasive within society (Branscombe et al., 1999). The research conducted in this dissertation provides evidence that people do not seem to suffer from the ‘fate’ of their group as such. In other words, knowledge that
other group members have received negative treatment need not in itself lead to individual suffering on behalf of the group. Indeed, Chapter 3 of this dissertation reveals that information about group disadvantage can help discount personal failure whereas information about personal success may enable individuals to positively contrast themselves from disadvantaged group members. This is not to say that group members never suffer from the disadvantage of their group, Chapters 2 and 4 reveal that when group disadvantage is perceived as pervasive – and also is combined with negative personal outcomes – this can induce lower levels of personal well-being (see also next section). Therefore, overall, I can conclude that in settings that are very individualistic and in which people are focused on averting negative personal outcomes, responses to information about group disadvantage are personally motivated such that people use group level information to interpret personal outcomes, rather than suffering from the devaluation of their group in general.

c. From group to individual: making attributions to personal discrimination

The present work provides insights concerning the relation between motives at an individual level and the extent to which individuals report being personally discriminated against (i.e., attributing the disadvantage of the group to their personal treatment). Within the literature on subtle discrimination it has been suggested that targets may be motivated to maximize (in order to self protect) or minimize (when perceiving discrimination is threatening) their attributions to discrimination (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker et al., 1991). My research does not provide evidence that personal motives determine levels of attributions to discrimination. Rather we see that personal motives (e.g., need to self-protect) determine the relation between perceptions of discrimination and well-being. Initial evidence for this idea is provided Chapter 3 of this dissertation. Results indicate that individuals who discount personal failure in favour of a group based attribution to discrimination do not make more attributions to group based treatment (rather they make less internal attributions) even though arguably they should have a greater need to do so than individuals who do not need to discount personal failure (because they experience personal success). Further evidence for the idea that personal motives do not determine levels of attributions to discrimination is provided by Chapter 4: Attributions to discrimination did not differ across pervasiveness conditions. In other words, targets do not minimize reports of discrimination when this is threatening (i.e., pervasive condition) or conversely maximize reports when
there is a potential to self-protect from failure by making these attributions (i.e., rare condition). Importantly, these differences in the pervasiveness of discrimination did influence the relation between attributions to discrimination and well-being: When attributions to discrimination can self-protect people from personal failure they experience positive well-being; when these attributions threaten system beliefs people experience negative well-being. This suggests that it is here that motivational processes (i.e., ego versus system motivation, see below) are taking place. In sum I would argue that the present dissertation provides initial evidence that motivational processes do not necessarily influence attributions to discrimination, but that they can moderate the extent to which attributions to discrimination affect well-being.

**Integrating the discounting approach and the Rejection Identification Model**

Considering the implications of this dissertation for how individuals cope with subtle discrimination, one of the main theoretical contributions of the present dissertation is that it provides insights on how to integrate - as well as moving beyond - two theoretical approaches that so far have provided seemingly equivocal results. The discounting approach argues that perceptions of discrimination can sometimes protect psychological well-being by allowing targets to attribute negative personal treatment and outcomes (e.g., job-related rejection) externally (e.g., due to another’s prejudice) rather than internally (e.g., self-blame for lack of ability) (Crocker et al., 1991; Major et al., 2003a). Yet there is also ample support for the idea posited by Branscombe and colleagues that perceptions of discrimination are harmful for psychological well-being because they threaten part of the self, the group or social self (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe et al., 2002c). Prior research has considered moderators of these effects such as levels of identification or meritocracy beliefs (e.g., McCoy & Major, 2003; Major, Kaiser, & O’Brien, 2007). In the present dissertation I considered pervasiveness of discrimination as a moderator of these effects.

Prior researchers have raised the idea that the extent to which discrimination is perceived to be pervasive and structural within society may determine the extent to which perceptions of discrimination are harmful for well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2003). These studies provided initial evidence suggesting that discrimination that is pervasive has more negative consequences for well-being than discrimination that is perceived as rare. In contrast to prior research I focus on discrimination that is not only contextually pervasive but also pervasive in that it provides targets with a negative future.
perspective in which one can expect to be discriminated against. This in our view more fully covers pervasiveness as a concept that permeates the lives of targets of discrimination, both in the present and in the future. Importantly, the present dissertation advances prior work considering the role of pervasiveness of discrimination (i.e., Schmitt et al., 2003) by providing evidence that the extent to which discrimination is perceived as pervasive can instigate different underlying processes that can be either self-protective or harmful. Although pervasiveness has been suggested as a possible moderator in the past, no research so far has actually provided evidence that differential motivational processes underlie responses to subtle discrimination. Some initial evidence for this idea is provided by Chapters 2 and 3 which differ in the extent to which discrimination is experienced as pervasive, and in line with my predictions, show these differential effects on well-being. In Chapter 4 I more directly tested my predictions by manipulating pervasiveness of discrimination. This research indicates that discrimination that is perceived as rare and incidental can be relatively self-protective whereas perceiving discrimination as pervasive has negative consequences for well-being even if mean levels of attributions to discrimination remain the same. The studies conducted in Chapter 4 therefore indicate that a situation that is entirely the same concerning the nature of prejudice the target experiences and the extent to which he/she makes attributions to prejudice, nevertheless can have very different consequences for well-being, depending on whether targets perceive the discrimination they experience to be rare or pervasive. I consider this even stronger evidence that indeed differential processes can underlie the same situation of discrimination. My research indicates that the processes proposed by these theoretical models are not mutually exclusive but depend on peoples’ perceptions of, in this case, the pervasiveness of discrimination.

**Ego- versus system-motivation**

Taking this research a step further, an important implication of the present dissertation lies in the type of motives that underlie responses to discrimination. In Chapter 4 I argued that prior research has largely considered responses to discrimination as ego-motivated. Ego-motivation refers to the idea that people’s actions are motivated by the desire to maintain a positive image of themselves (i.e., personal and group self) both in the present and the future (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001). The theoretical ideas developed in the area of subtle discrimination are in line with an ego-motivated approach: The discounting model (Crocker & Major, 1989) states that targets make attributions to discrimination to
protect the self, similarly, the research conducted by Branscombe and colleagues focuses on the idea that peoples' responses to discrimination are determined by the extent they pose a threat to part of one's own identity, namely one's identity as a group member (Branscombe et al., 1999). Indeed Chapters 2 and 3 of this dissertation took a more ego-motivated approach, showing that searching for more evidence of discrimination can be harmful to the self or that the nature of one's personal outcomes – and the need to self protect from failure or enhance personal success – determine how people deal with group disadvantage and the extent to which they report group level injustice.

Based on the research conducted in Chapter 4 of this dissertation I would like to suggest that responses to discrimination may not only be ego- but also system-motivated. System motivation refers to people's need to see the world as a place that is based on principles of justice and equality in which people are treated fairly and get what they deserve. 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 instance, research in the tradition of just world beliefs posits a fundamental "need to believe in a world where people generally get what they deserve" (Lerner & Miller, 1978, p. 1030). This need is broader than one focused on immediate personal outcomes; rather, it represents a view on how the world (should) function. A wide range of events involving unjust treatment can threaten beliefs in a just world such as learning about victims of sexual assault, robbery or cancer (Hafer, 2000; Sherman, Smith, & Cooper, 1982-3). In the present dissertation (Chapter 4) I argued and provided evidence that incidents of discrimination that are perceived as rare can be protective of the individual self, whereas discrimination that is perceived as pervasive and therefore diagnostic of how society functions, may threaten people's beliefs in the world as just. Therefore, responses to discrimination may be motivated not only by the concern to retain or affirm a positive view of the self (i.e., personal or social identity) but also by the concern to maintain a view of the world as just and fair.

An important implication of the distinction between ego and system motivated processes lies in the possibility of differentiating situations that are more likely to raise ego or system motivated processes. As indicated by the studies conducted as part of the fourth chapter, instances of rare discrimination may induce more ego-motivated processes, and recurrent more system-motivated processes. Taking this idea a step further, people may be egoistically motivated in conditions...
that are more particularistic and not necessarily experienced as embedded within society. In the case of discrimination, this could be a situation in which the prejudice of another is seen as incidental. By contrast, system motivations are likely to arise in situations that are considered more systemic and institutional such as when discrimination is experienced as global and pervasive. This implies that responses to discrimination can be differentially activated depending on whether people are ego- or system-motivated, for example by making either ego- or system-motivations salient.

**Limitations and future directions**

In Chapter 2 I considered how information search influences perceptions of discrimination, arguing that more evidence of discrimination increases perceptions of pervasiveness. An interesting avenue for future research is to reverse the direction of causality to study how perceptions of discrimination as pervasive influence information search, or at a more abstract level to consider the following question: Do individuals who perceive discrimination to be pervasive view their surroundings differently than those who perceive discrimination to be rare and incidental? Very little research in the area of subtle discrimination has focused on the types of comparisons individuals make in order to judge the causes of their personal treatment when it is unclear whether this treatment is due to personal ability or group membership. Research in the area of relative deprivation provides indications that individuals become aware of the deprivation and disadvantaged position of their group by making more intergroup social comparisons (see Walker & Smith, 2002 for an overview). Although I think a focus on intergroup social comparisons may in many cases explain why some individuals (i.e., those high in stigma sensitivity) perceive more discrimination than others, it may not necessarily explain differences in the types of judgments those who perceive discrimination to be chronic versus incidental make. Indeed if differences in social comparisons would explain differences in responses to pervasive versus rare discrimination, one would expect individuals who perceive discrimination to be pervasive also to make more attributions to discrimination. Yet the studies conducted in Chapters 2 and 4 all provide evidence that the extent to which discrimination is perceived as pervasive need not necessarily be coupled with a greater awareness of (i.e., attributions to) discrimination. In essence, pervasive discrimination communicates *remaining rather than being* in a disadvantageous position. This may imply that in addition to focusing on the nature of social evaluations and comparisons, it may be important to
consider the kinds of temporal comparisons those who perceive discrimination to be pervasive make. Temporal comparisons may occur both with respect to the past and the future, and they may be essential in determining how individuals respond to situations in which they are the target of discrimination. I suggest that different perspectives of targets of discrimination (i.e., prior experience of discrimination as rare or pervasive) may determine the types of comparisons targets make in judging situations of discrimination that are ambiguous. Possibly those that perceive discrimination to be pervasive are more focused on the past and future whereas individuals who perceive discrimination to be incidental focus more directly on the context at hand, making only within context social evaluations and comparisons.

Moving from perceptions of to responses to discrimination, the distinction between ego and system motivated responses introduced in Chapter 4 provides a number of interesting avenues for future research. Although I discussed situations of discrimination that may be more likely to induce ego versus system motivated responses, more empirical work is needed to fully conceptualize these motivations. I touch on some issues relevant to this dissertation in the following paragraphs.

In this dissertation I defined ego-motivation as the need to have a positive view of oneself and the group one is a member of. Yet in my work the focus so far has largely been on the extent to which attributions to discrimination allow individuals to retain a positive view of the self by attributing personal failure more externally, to the prejudice of another. In Chapter 2 I do touch on another type of ego-motivation, the need to protect one’s social identity and view of one’s group. Indeed research in line with the rejection identification model provides ample evidence that discrimination can threaten people’s social identity thus inducing negative well-being in response to discrimination (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2002c). Although in some cases the negative well-being group members experience after feeling threatened in their social identity may be due to a more abstract threat at the system level, social identity threat should not be equated with a system motivation. I here, for ease of reference, refer to this social identity threat as group-motivation (see also Jost & Burgess, 2000) but consider it part of an ego-motivated process. People are more likely to be ‘group motivated’ when the group is a central part of themselves (e.g., McCoy & Major, 2003; Major et al., 2003b). Indeed, research indicates that those who identify highly with their group suffer more from discrimination than low identifiers for whom discrimination can self-protect from failure (i.e., ego-motivation) (McCoy & Major, 2003). I think the distinction between these different types of ego-motivation (that have been
recognized but not considered integrally or conceptualized as ego-motivated in the past) and system motivation are an important step in providing a more integral theoretical model of individuals (motivated) responses to subtle discrimination. With the present basis I can start considering questions such as the following:

How can we determine which motivation will be induced in response to discrimination? From the perspective of subtle discrimination this is an important question because it can provide a more integral framework to determine under which circumstances individuals are relatively likely to be more threatened at the personal, group or system level. Although there is a lot of evidence that these processes are taking place, and even know factors that may induce these processes, the area lacks an integral model considering determinants of these processes. An important first step may be to consider how these motivations relate to on another. Research in the area of system legitimizing beliefs provides indications that motivations at different levels of abstraction may be in conflict with each other. Jost and Burgess (2000) studied conflicts between the group and the system and revealed that members of low status groups, but not those of high status groups, who witnessed discrimination against their ingroup reported more ambivalence with respect to their ingroup the higher their need to legitimize the system. The process underlying this ambivalence were reasoned to be a conflict between the need to maintain a positive view of one’s group and the need to perceive the system as just and therefore to view the low status of one’s group as justified. Concerning the relative strengths of ego, group or system motivations, my research provides some indications that system motivations may overrule ego-motivation: When people experience personal failure, the need to avert the negative consequences of personal failure (i.e., ego-motivation) is overruled by threats to the world as just (i.e., system motivation) – in other words, attributions to discrimination only self protect from failure when people’s worldviews are not threatened. In order to provide a more integral model of how targets of discrimination respond to subtle discrimination I believe it is important to focus on the interplay between these motivations, and to further study the processes underlying them. In my research an important step in doing so has been to consider the processes underlying system motivated responses by considering the role of pervasiveness in responses to discrimination.

One of the most important contributions of this dissertation was the finding that people can be made resilient to the experience of pervasive discrimination: Affirming the world as just can counter the negative consequences of pervasive and recurrent discrimination. Yet although my research provides evidence of these
processes, it also raises a number of questions with regard to how system affirmation actually worked. My research indicates that 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. At the same time targets still report anger with respect to the discrimination they experience. In considering more in depth the mechanisms underlying these findings, I reasoned that being able to affirm the world as just might turn the experience of pervasive discrimination from being a threat into a challenge. Challenge occurs when individuals have sufficient resources to meet the demands of a situation, whereas threat occurs when individuals cannot (i.e., have insufficient resources) meet the demands of the situation (Blascovich & Tomaka, 1996). This type of response is difficult to establish via self-reports, but has frequently been studied with the aid of physiological measures (e.g., Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, & Salomon, 1999; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005). Indeed, there is even evidence revealing that people with high individually held beliefs that the world is just, in this case high just world beliefs, appraise stressful tasks as more challenging than low believers (Tomaka & Blascovich, 1994). Although it is important to distinguish individually held beliefs (in situations of discrimination, see Major, Kaiser, & O’Brien, 2007) from the contextual affirmation I want to study, this research provides initial indications that peoples’ views of the world may be related to appraisals of threat and challenge. The use of physiological measures would make it possible to test whether, as I predict, it is possible to transform a threat response in the face of pervasive discrimination into a challenge response by affirming the world as just.

At a more abstract level, an important avenue for future research lies in understanding the processes determining system motivated responses. The research conducted in this dissertation (Study 4.2) provides indications that discrimination that is perceived as pervasive threatens individuals because this type of discrimination is inconsistent with people’s need to see the world as a just place. In line with dissonance theory, there is reason to believe that individuals may have the need to solve this inconsistency between their worldviews and pervasive discrimination (Festinger, 1957). One way of doing so, I have argued, is to reaffirm the world as just – thus creating resilience with respect to pervasive discrimination. Yet, drawing a parallel to dissonance theory, another way of doing so may in the long run be to adjust ones worldviews to encompass pervasive discrimination. Research by Major and colleagues indicates that when pervasive discrimination is
consistent with people’s worldview (i.e., low belief in meritocracy), this actually induces higher levels of well-being (Major et al., 2007). I believe it is important to distinguish between short and long term threats to one’s worldviews and to consider what happens to individuals whose beliefs in the world as just are threatened on a daily basis. Indeed, whereas research in the area of just world beliefs indicates that in the short term individuals are motivated to re-establish the world as just, we know very little about the long-term consequences of having one’s worldviews threatened on a daily basis. It is possible that people who experience pervasive and structural discrimination, in the long run adjust their worldviews to accommodate the experience of discrimination. In other words, from challenging the system individuals may move to acquiescence in which they accept the world (and thus discrimination) as it is. One implication of this ‘acquiescence’ is that individuals are unlikely to address discrimination, let alone engage in collective action to counter group devaluation.

A first step in considering how individuals respond to long term daily threats to system beliefs (via pervasive discrimination) would be to study whether those who perceive themselves to be structurally discriminated against have different worldviews (i.e., lower beliefs in a just world) than those who incidentally experience discrimination. At a more abstract level, I would argue future research should consider circumstances that induce resilience versus acquiescence with respect to discrimination.

**Practical implications**

The example of the African American post office attendant who felt his client reacted aggressively to his jokes because of his ethnicity at the beginning of this dissertation described one incident of discrimination; unfortunately this type of experience may be part of the daily life of many members of stigmatized groups. The present dissertation does not provide answers with respect to how to prevent discrimination, or how to address it when it does occur. Yet looking at how targets recognize and cope with discrimination, as has been the focus of this dissertation, can provide indications on how to give members of stigmatized groups the possibility of becoming more aware of, coping with and possibly increasing the ability to address discrimination.

Not all members of stigmatized groups may be as likely to make attributions to discrimination as the post office attendant. How can we ensure that targets of discrimination make this transition from perceiving negative treatment to be due to
Throughout this dissertation it has become clear that individuals are very focused on their personal outcomes, even in the face of group disadvantage. At the same time the present dissertation reveals that even when individuals are very focused on their personal outcomes and, in first instance, have no cues regarding possible group disadvantage they nevertheless can search for and process information containing evidence of group disadvantage. This means that individuals potentially should be able to recognize when and whether ambiguous situations can be attributed to discrimination. Yet in order to realize that the self and other group members are being disadvantaged on the basis of group membership, it is very important that this information about treatment of other group members is available. In the present research (Chapter 2) individuals sought information and recognized discrimination on the basis of aggregate information about the treatment of other ingroup and outgroup members. Prior research reveals that it is essential for individuals to have aggregate information, in fact when provided with piecemeal information (i.e., treatment of separate cases of males or females) individuals are unlikely to perceive discrimination (e.g., Crosby et al., 1986). Yet aggregate information may not always be available. For example at an organizational level it would require publishing salary information of men versus women or White versus African American employees. From the perspective of creating awareness of discrimination, it may be very important to encourage organizations to publish this kind of data. Beyond merely publishing, this data needs to be easily accessible to individuals. My research (Chapter 2) indicates that individuals are likely to process information about personal outcomes, but they may be less likely to do so once this information processing becomes too effortful or does not seem personally relevant enough. Even if Chapter 2 indicates that individuals are able to perceive discrimination when they are less motivated to search for information (and engage in less information search), information was easily available in the paradigm I employed. This may mean that individuals who are not motivated to search for information may not even attempt to access information that is not readily at hand.

In sum if we consider how members of stigmatized groups can be aided in becoming more aware of discrimination that is very subtle it is important that information be provided, for example at an organizational level, about the relative treatment of ingroup and outgroup members. Furthermore, this information needs to be provided in aggregate form and should be easily accessible to individuals. Although we also know that information search that provides evidence of
discrimination may have very negative consequences for individuals’ psychological well-being, in the long run awareness of discrimination is essential in addressing this injustice.

The present dissertation has a number of implications with respect to helping individuals to cope with knowledge of the disadvantaged status of their group in general and personal discrimination in particular. For one, it makes very clear that targets’ perceptions of group disadvantage and personal discrimination may differ. When targets experience the disadvantaged position of their group or the prejudice of another as something that is pervasive and likely to affect them again in the future, this has far more negative consequences for well-being than discrimination that is perceived as a one-off incident (which it may not necessarily be). Furthermore the fact that pervasive discrimination threatens people’s beliefs in the world as just ultimately may have more far-reaching consequences with respect to individuals’ attitudes towards society. As outlined in early work by Lerner and Miller (1978), without a belief in the just world it “would be difficult for the individual to commit himself to the pursuit of long-range goals or even to the socially regulated behaviour of day-to-day life” (p. 1030). Translating this back to members of chronically stigmatized groups, one might expect chronic discrimination to, in the long run, induce societal disengagement as people come to believe that whatever they do, society is unlikely to treat them on the basis of fairness and equality. This could become a vicious circle, as the less members of stigmatized groups conform to societal norms, the more likely they are to be treated negatively or even discriminated against. This has implications within society when one considers the fact that for some low status groups or group members, discrimination may be (experienced as) more chronic than for others. It means that some groups may not only suffer more discrimination, they may also suffer more from discrimination. Therefore it is important to pinpoint which groups or group members within society are most likely to experience discrimination as pervasive and to make sure the possible ways of coping with group disadvantage that I outline below are focused on these groups or group members.

The present dissertation suggests one concrete intervention that may help individuals cope with (pervasive) discrimination: Buffering targets from the experience of pervasive discrimination by (re-)affirming the world as just (see Chapter 4). Indeed, my research indicates that this type of affirmation counters the threat posed to beliefs in the world as just by pervasive discrimination. Although people may continue to experience discrimination, affirmation of these beliefs can
occur in a different domain than the one in which discrimination is experienced. For members of stigmatized groups this may mean creating environments in which they see that people (and they themselves) are treated on the basis of fairness and equality.

The consequence of this affirmation, as also discussed in prior sections, may be that individuals experience lower levels of emotions associated with passivity (i.e., depressed affect) while nevertheless experiencing relatively high levels of emotions associated with action orientation (i.e., anger). In other words, from the perspective of the individual target, affirming the world as just may provide (temporary) relief from the experience of discrimination while nevertheless, given action oriented emotions such as anger, inducing a readiness to possibly address this personal injustice. This may be essential in preventing victims of structural discrimination from disengaging themselves from society. But, it is important to be aware of the fact that this intervention although providing short term relief, may have a number of long term drawbacks. For one, one cannot be sure to what extent affirmation of the world as just works in the long run. Can the experience of daily societal level injustice be countered by the experience of a just world and just procedures in other domains? And to what extent is this affirmation advantageous if one considers the collective interest of the group? As discussed above, it may be the case that people who generally see the world as just are less likely to perceive unjust procedures such as societal discrimination. Therefore, whereas affirmation may make individuals feel better, it may actually harm, or at least not improve, the position of the group.

Focusing on further practical implications concerning how targets can cope with the disadvantaged status of their group, the present dissertation stresses the importance of creating opportunities for members of disadvantaged groups. Throughout this dissertation it has become evident that even in the face of group disadvantage individuals are very focused on their personal outcomes. The research presented in this dissertation reveals that those who experience personal success suffer less from the disadvantage of their group – even when this disadvantage is perceived to be fairly pervasive (see Chapter 2). At a more abstract level this means that individuals are able to think at different levels, at the personal (or individual) level with respect to their personal outcomes, at the group level with respect to the disadvantage of their group. With this knowledge in mind I would like to stress the importance of emphasizing opportunities for personal success as well as success experiences of other group members. Giving members of disadvantaged groups the
feeling that they can be successful, and making salient success experiences of other group members, may release group members from the debilitating feeling of being a member of a disadvantaged and stigmatized group with little personal opportunities. This can be done in different ways, by emphasizing domains in which members of devalued groups are successful (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006), by providing more opportunities for success (e.g., addressing scarcity of work experience places specifically for members of low status groups such as Moroccans in the Netherlands) and by ‘creating’ role models (e.g., women/ethnic minority members in top positions). Knowledge of individual level success can help live with, or perhaps even counter, being a member of a disadvantaged group.

Concluding Remarks

The research presented in this dissertation aimed to provide more insights into how members of devalued groups cope with situations in which is unclear to them whether they are being treated on the basis of their individual characteristics and behaviours or on the basis of their devalued group membership. On the on hand I have shown that in settings that are very individualistic, group members do not necessarily suffer from the plight of their group, in fact information about group devaluation or personal discrimination may even help to (positively) interpret personal outcomes. On the other hand this dissertation provides evidence that when individuals view substantial evidence of discrimination against other group members, or expect to experience considerable prejudice in the future they suffer from the experience of personal discrimination. This dissertation contributes to prior work in the area of subtle discrimination by providing more insight into the motivational processes underlying these responses to discrimination. Furthermore, the focus of this dissertation on discrimination that is not only ego-motivated but at a more abstract level, also motivated by the need to maintain a view of the world as a just place provides interesting avenues for (re)conceptualizing the area of subtle discrimination.
Footnotes
1. Although from the perspective of individual targets of discrimination perceiving a situation to be due to discrimination may not always be desirable because it, among others, induces negative psychological well-being, from the perspective of addressing collective injustice it is important that targets recognize and report discrimination within society.
2. Note that this research stresses the importance of also valuing domains in which high status groups are successful, otherwise members of low status groups may disengage from these domains.
3. From the perspective of addressing collective injustice, research indicates that those who achieve successful positions (i.e., tokens) are unlikely to help other more disadvantaged members of their groups (e.g., Ellemers, Heuvel, Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004). On the other hand, once more members of disadvantaged groups achieve successful positions, this may change the (negative) image that high status members may have with respect to these groups – thus ultimately decreasing the likelihood of discrimination and further increasing chances of success.
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Samenvatting

Voor leden van gediscrimineerde groepen kan het onduidelijk zijn of de (negatieve) behandeling die zij ervaren het gevolg is van, bijvoorbeeld, gebrek aan eigen kwaliteiten of het vooroordeel van een ander. Stel je voor dat je Marokkaans bent en je hebt solliciteerd op een baan waar je jezelf geschikt voor acht. Vervolgens hoor je dat je bent afgewezen. Maar waarom? Hoe weet je zeker dat je bent afgewezen doordat je niet de juiste kwaliteiten had voor deze baan? Het zou immers ook kunnen dat je het slachtoffer bent van discriminatie en vooroordelen. Wat zouden de gevolgen zijn van deze verschillende attributies (ik mis de juiste kwaliteiten versus ik ben gediscrimineerd) voor hoe je je over jezelf voelt? Deze staat van attributieele ambiguïteit met betrekking tot de oorzaken van eigen uitkomsten kan zowel de herkenning van discriminatie, als ook de gevolgen voor psychologisch welzijn beïnvloeden. Hoe dit precies in zijn werk gaat heb ik in dit proefschrift bestudeerd.

De herkenning van discriminatie

Hoewel veel eerder onderzoek (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003) de gevolgen van discriminatie voor welzijn heeft bestudeerd, weten we vrij weinig over de omstandigheden waaronder slachtoffers discriminatie herkennen. Veel gevallen van discriminatie betreffen situaties waarin personen individueel geëvalueerd worden - zoals bij een sollicitatie - en slachtoffers van discriminatie kunnen daardoor zeer op zichzelf en hun eigen gebreken gericht zijn. Zoals ik in dit proefschrift beargumenteer is het om discriminatie te herkennen nodig dat slachtoffers kunnen overschakelen van een focus puur op zichzelf (zoals op de eigen persoonlijkheid en gebreken; individual level focus) naar een focus op hun lidmaatschap van een (mogelijk gediscrimineerde) groep (group level focus). Eerder onderzoek toont aan dat slachtoffers discriminatie vaak niet herkennen door gebrekzorging voor zorg (Crosby, Clayton, Alksnis, & Hemker, 1986; Rutte, Diekmann, Polzer, Crosby, & Messick, 1994). Slachtoffers hebben veelal alleen informatie over individuele gevallen van discriminatie (bijv., zichzelf). Zo kan een vrouw het salaris van zichzelf en een naaste vrouwelijke collega weten. Hoe komt deze vrouw erachter dat vrouwen in haar bedrijf structureel minder loon ontvangen dan mannen in vergelijkbare posities? Herkenning van discriminatie vereist juist dat men van een groter aantal groepsleden weet dat zij eveneens anders behandeld zijn dan leden van een niet-gediscrimineerde groep. Met andere
woorden, de vrouw in bovenstaand voorbeeld moet haar loon kunnen vergelijken met dat van andere vrouwen en mannen in vergelijkbare posities. Deze informatie is uiteraard niet altijd beschikbaar, en de herkenning van discriminatie vereist dan ook vaak dat men op zoek gaat naar aanvullende informatie.

In hoofdstuk 2 van dit proefschrift heb ik een informatie-zoekparadigma ontwikkeld om te bestuderen in hoeverre slachtoffers op zoek te gaan naar aanvullende informatie over mogelijke discriminatie. Ik keek naar discriminatie bij selectieprocedures. Stel je bent afgewezen voor een baan die je zeer belangrijk vindt. Je bent nadenken over je eigen (gebrek aan) vaardigheden. Maar ga je ook kijken naar hoe anderen het hebben gedaan, en zo ja, maak je een onderscheid in of het gaat om, bijvoorbeeld, mannen versus vrouwen? In mijn onderzoek zocht ik antwoord op deze vragen. Ik wilde weten in hoeverre vrouwen die net door een mannelijke interviewer afgewezen (of aangenomen) voor een baan gemotiveerd zijn/ kunnen worden om actief naar informatie te zoeken die meer inzicht kan geven in de oorzaak van deze afwijzing. Ik varieerde de mate waarin de uitkomst van de sollicitatie relevant (hoog/laag) was voor deze vrouwen. Hierdoor kon ik bestuderen of vrouwelijke proefpersonen, wanneer ze sterk op zichzelf gericht zijn (hoge zelfrelevantie van uitkomsten), op zoek gaan naar aanvullende informatie over hun uitkomsten, en ondanks hun focus op zichzelf in staat zijn om te herkennen dat ze op basis van hun vrouw-zijn anders behandeld zijn.

De aanvullende informatie die vrouwen konden bekijken gaf informatie over hoe andere mannen en vrouwen het in dezelfde sollicitatieprocedure hadden gedaan. Als je de informatie bekeek kon je zien dat veel mannen zijn aangenomen, terwijl andere vrouwen, ondanks gelijke geschiktheid, juist afgewezen waren. Mijn onderzoek laat zien dat vrouwen gemotiveerd zijn om aanvullende informatie over eigen uitkomsten te zoeken, juist als uitkomsten (zowel positieve als negatieve) zeer zelf-relevant zijn. Hoewel je dus zou kunnen denken dat wanneer vrouwen juist op zichzelf gefocused zijn ze juist niet openstaan voor informatie in hun omgeving en daardoor niet herkennen dat ze gediscrimineerd zijn, laat mijn onderzoek het tegendeel zien. Bovendien kunnen slachtoffers overschakelen van een gerichtheid op het persoonlijke zelf naar een focus op hun groepslidmaatschap. Beide studies lieten zien dat slachtoffers herkennen dat ze gediscrimineerd zijn (studies 2.1/2.2).

Het is trouwens niet zo dat ze in het wilde weg aantijgingen van discriminatie zouden maken, ze rapporteerden alleen dat ze gediscrimineerd waren als de aanvullende informatie daadwerkelijk evidentie gaf voor discriminatie (studie 2.2). Ik vind geen bewijs voor het gangbare idee dat leden van lage status groepen discriminatie als mooi excuus voor hun eigen falen gebruiken.
Gemotiveerde reacties op discriminatie?

Hoe voel je je als je erachter komt dat je bent afgewezen omdat je een vrouw of een Marokkaan bent? In alle hoofdstukken van dit proefschrift heb ik bestudeerd wat voor gevolgen de ervaring van discriminatie heeft voor het *psychologisch welzijn van een slachtoffer*. Eerder onderzoek laat zien dat het toeschrijven van een negatieve uitkomst aan discriminatie zeer onprettig kan zijn omdat je beseft dat je lid bent van een gedevalueerde groep, bijvoorbeeld de groep vrouwen. Ook wordt duidelijk dat dit groepslidmaatschap negatieve implicaties voor de eigen toekomst heeft – een keer afgewezen worden omdat je een vrouw bent belooft immers niet veel goeds voor de toekomst (Branscombe et al., 1999). Maar, aan de andere kant, het eigen falen aan discriminatie kunnen toeschrijven betekent dat een slachtoffer de schuld voor falen niet alleen bij zichzelf (bijv. gebrek aan eigen vaardigheden) hoeft te leggen. In plaats daarvan kan het slachtoffer immers iets anders, om precies te zijn het vooroordeel van de ander, de schuld te geven voor de eigen afwijzing (Crocker, & Major, 1989). Met andere woorden: ontdekken dat je gediscrimineerd bent kan prettig zijn omdat je niet aan jezelf of je eigen kunnen hoeft te twijfelen. In dit geval is het toeschrijven van een uitkomst aan discriminatie *zelfbeschermend voor het welzijn van het slachtoffer*.

Er is vrij veel empirische steun voor beide benaderingen. Maar *wanneer* is het toeschrijven van een uitkomst aan discriminatie daadwerkelijk schadelijk of zelfbeschermend voor het welzijn van slachtoffers? In het huidige proefschrift geef ik inzicht in deze vraag door de processen te bestuderen die ten grondslag kunnen liggen aan deze tegenstrijdige resultaten. Ik laat zien dat discriminatie voornamelijk zelfbeschermend is als het als incidenteel gezien wordt, terwijl het besef dat discriminatie aanhoudend kan zijn en ook in de toekomst vaak zal plaatsvinden negatieve gevolgen heeft voor hoe je je voelt (hoofdstuk 2 en 4). Met andere woorden, als je afgewezen wordt voor een baan dan kan het prettig zijn om deze afwijzing toe te schrijven aan discriminatie in plaats van aan jezelf wanneer je denkt dat deze negatieve uitkomst incidenteel is. Maar als je verwacht dat je in de toekomst ook vaak afgewezen gaat worden, niet omdat je niet geschikt bent voor een baan, maar vanwege het feit dat je bijvoorbeeld een vrouw bent, zul je je een stuk minder goed voelen wanneer je de uitkomst toeschrijft aan discriminatie.

Op basis van het onderzoek in dit proefschrift geef ik bovendien een uitbreiding van eerdere theoretische benaderingen in dit vakgebied door niet alleen een mogelijke moderator (aanhoudendheid van discriminatie) van dit proces te bestuderen maar ook door dieper in te gaan op motivaties de ten grondslag liggen aan reacties op discriminatie. Hieronder behandel ik eerst de mogelijke motivaties die kunnen bepalen hoe mensen op discriminatie reageren.
Waar richten mensen zich eigenlijk op als ze gediscrimineerd worden?

Denk je aan jezelf en de implicaties van deze gebeurtenis voor jezelf (personal interest), of denk je ook na over het lot van je groep, het feit dat veel andere groepsleden eveneens negatief behandeld worden (group interest)? En hoe zit het als je zelf succesvol bent maar weet dat andere groepsleden benadeeld worden. Hoe voelt het bijvoorbeeld om Bill Cosby of rapper Ali B te zijn – succesvol maar lid van een benadeelde groep? Deze vragen heb ik in hoofdstuk 3 bestudeerd. Ik vond weinig bewijs dat succesvolle of benadeelde leden van een gestigmatiseerde groep lijden onder het lot van de rest van de groep. In dit onderzoek bekeek ik hoe succesvolle of niet succesvolle vrouwen zich voelden als ze wisten dat ook andere groepsleden (vrouwen) benadeeld en gediscrimineerd waren. Mijn vrouwelijke proefpersonen bleken voornamelijk bezig met hun eigen uitkomsten (personal interest verklaring): Als vrouwelijke proefpersonen informatie hadden over de benadeling van andere vrouwen voelden ze zich juist beter over zowel hun persoonlijk succes (ik deed het beter dan andere vrouwen) als over hun persoonlijk falen (het ligt niet aan mij maar aan mijn vrouw-zijn dat ik afgewezen ben). Extra ondersteuning voor deze personal interest verklaring was dat als ik vrouwen vroeg of ze de benadeling van andere vrouwen (los van hun eigen behandeling) illegiètem vonden, ze hier alleen bevestigend op antwoordden als ze zelf ook benadeeld waren (m.a.w. zelf negatieve uitkomsten bereikten). Bovenop het feit dat vrouwen niet leden onder het lot van andere vrouwen, waren ze ook alleen in staat om dit ‘lot’ als illegiètem waar te nemen als ze zelf ook nadelig behandeld waren – ze profiteren ervan omdat ze zichzelf geen schuld meer hoeven geven voor eigen falen, en hun eigen succes kunnen spiegelen tegen het falen van andere leden van de groep.

Betekent dit dat mensen nooit lijden onder de benadeling van hun groep en in feite altijd profiteren als andere groepsleden benadeeld worden? Er zijn genoeg voorbeelden uit de praktijk die deze constatering niet aannemelijk maken. Ook het huidige proefschrift biedt evidentie dat mensen wel degelijk lijden onder discriminatie. In tegenstelling tot onze bevindingen in hoofdstuk 3, laat hoofdstuk 2 juist zien dat vrouwen zich minder goed voelden als ze veel informatie over de benadeling van hun groep (vrouwen) hadden gezocht, en ze zelf ook benadeeld waren als gevolg van discriminatie. Hoe kunnen we deze verschillende resultaten verklaren? Hoofdstuk 4 biedt uitkomst op deze vraag. Hier bekijk ik de rol van aanhoudendheid van discriminatie. Om een voorbeeld te geven: Als men een
afwijzing voor een baan kan toeschrijven aan discriminatie, wetende dat het onwaarschijnlijk is dat men in de toekomst gediscrimineerd gaat worden, dan heeft deze attributie het voordeel dat men zichzelf niet de schuld voor afwijzing hoeft te geven, en ook niet bang hoeft te zijn voor de verdere gevolgen van discriminatie. Als men aan de andere kant de afwijzing aan discriminatie toeschrijft, wetende dat men ook in de toekomst negatieve uitkomsten zal ervaren zonder dat naar eigen kunnen gekeken wordt, dan is de kans dat deze attributie zelfbeschermend is een stuk kleiner. Dit is inderdaad wat ik vond in hoofdstuk 4. Ik varieerde in hoeverre slachtoffers dezelfde situatie van discriminatie (vrouwen worden door een man afgewezen voor een baan) als incidenteel of als aanhoudend waarnemen. In twee studies liet ik zien dat als vrouwen hun afwijzing als eenmalig en incidenteel ervoeren, ze zich beter voelden als ze een afwijzing aan discriminatie konden toewijzen. Als vrouwen echter het idee hadden dat zij ook in de toekomst gediscrimineerd zouden kunnen worden, voelden ze zich slechter als ze hun afwijzing aan discriminatie in plaats van eigen falen toeschreven. In dit geval is een attributie aan discriminatie dus schadelijk voor welzijn. Deze twee studies laten zien dat als we willen weten in hoeverre discriminatie zelfbeschermend of schadelijk voor welzijn is, het van belang is om te kijken of het slachtoffer zijn discriminatie als aanhoudend en structureel waarneemt. Als je dit in de praktijk toepast zie je helaas veel groepen waarbij dit het wel het geval is.

*Gemotiveerde reacties op discriminatie: ego- of systeem-motivatie*

In hoofdstuk 4 wilde ik verder uitdiepen waarom slachtoffers lijden wanneer ze discriminatie als aanhoudend ervaren. Eerder heb ik aangestipt dat mensen nogal egoïstisch lijken te reageren op discriminatie: ze lijden er alleen onder wanneer ze zelf gediscrimineerd zijn en schijnen zich niet veel van het lot van hun groep aan te trekken. Als je deze 'egoïstische' redenering doortrekt naar de vraag waarom mensen lijden onder aanhoudende discriminatie dan zou je voorspellen dat het komt doordat het negatieve implicaties voor hun toekomst heeft: hoe goed je ook bent, je wordt toch niet aangenomen. In dit hoofdstuk laat ik zien dat er ook andere redenen zijn waarom slachtoffers lijden onder aanhoudende discriminatie: Hoe mens op discriminatie reageren heeft niet alleen te maken met een 'ego' focus op (bescherming) tegen eigen falen of het besef dat men gedevalueerd wordt op basis van groepsidentiteit. Discriminatie is ook op een minder zelf-relevante manier (m.a.w. niet direct aan het zelf of groepsleden-macht ge legally) van invloed op welzijn – omdat het bedreigend is voor hoe slachtoffers denken dat de wereld in elkaar zit.

Onderzoek toont aan dat mensen een sterke basisbehoeftte hebben om de wereld als eerlijk te zien. Dit wereldbeeld houdt in dat je ervan

Ik redeneerde dat het ervaren van discriminatie die men als aanhoudend, en dus als onderdeel van deze samenleving ziet, een bedreiging vormt voor het wereldbeeld van slachtoffers. Immers, aanhoudende discriminatie geeft in feite aan dat jij en andere medegroepsleden systematisch (nu en in de toekomst) oneerlijk en onrechtvaardig behandeld worden. Discriminatie zou dus voornamelijk het wereldbeeld van slachtoffers moeten bedreigen wanneer het als aanhoudend (en dus diagnostisch voor deze wereld): in plaats van als incidenteel gezien wordt. Ik heb al uitgelegd dat discriminatie negatieve gevolgen heeft voor welzijn als het als aanhoudend ervaren wordt. Als dit komt doordat het wereldbeeld van mensen bedreigd wordt, wat gebeurt er dan als we mensen ‘verzekeren’ dat hun wereldbeeld wel klopt? Stel je voor je bent net heel onredelijk tegen een student geweest en twijfelt of je beeld van jezelf als lief en aardig persoon wel klopt. Als je op dat moment een collega kan helpen (en dat ook doet) en deze heel dankbaar is dan kan dat je beeld van jezelf als lief en aardig weer herstellen (zie ook Steele, 1988). Hetzelfde principe voorspelde ik in deze studie. Als je slecht voelt omdat aanhoudende discriminatie je wereldbeeld bedreigt dan zou een actie die je wereldbeeld herstelt ervoor moeten zorgen dat je je minder slecht voelt. Dat is precies wat ik in studie 4.2 ook vond.

Dit hoofdstuk biedt dus vernieuwende theoretische inzichten. Aan de ene kant omdat het conflicterende theorieën op het gebied van discriminatie integreert door inzicht te bieden in wanneer discriminatie zelfbeschermend of schadelijk voor slachtoffers is. Aan de andere kant doordat het dieper ingaat op de verschillende krachten die reacties op discriminatie kunnen beïnvloeden: Reacties die meer op het zelf en bescherming tegen eigen falen (ego-gemotiveerd) gericht zijn versus, op abstracter niveau, gericht op het behoud van een beeld van de wereld als eerlijk en rechtvaardig zijn (systeem-gemotiveerd).
Een paar praktische implicaties

Maar wat kunnen we in de praktijk met deze kennis? Hier ga ik in hoofdstuk 5 uitgebreid op in; voor nu zal ik een paar belangrijke implicaties aanstellen. Het feit dat discriminatie die als structureel en aanhoudend ervaren wordt niet alleen negatieve gevolgen voor psychologisch welzijn van slachtoffers heeft omdat het hun toekomstige middelen (e.g., het verkrijgen van een baan) bedreigt maar ook omdat het invloed heeft op de basale behoeften van mensen om de wereld als eerlijk en rechtvaardig te kunnen zien heeft verregaande praktische implicaties. Wanneer men structureel oneerlijk behandeld wordt, zo laat mijn onderzoek zien, is het moeilijk om de wereld nog als eerlijk en rechtvaardig te blijven zien. Zoals Lerner en Miller (1978) zeer treffend beschrijven, wanneer we de wereld niet meer als eerlijk en rechtvaardig waarnemen dan “zou het moeilijk zijn voor individuen om zich te committeren aan het navolgen van lange-termijn doelen of zelfs aan het sociaal gereguleerde gedrag van het dagelijkse leven” (p.1030).

Immers, als je weet dat je toch in deze samenleving niet krijgt waar je recht op hebt en op dagelijkse basis onrechtvaardig behandeld wordt, waarom zou je dan nog je best doen, en sterker nog, waarom zou je je nog willen houden aan de regels van deze samenleving? Met andere woorden, op de lange termijn kan het ervaren van structurele discriminatie leiden tot terugtrekking uit de samenleving – iets wat we in bepaalde groepenregeringen al zien. Helaas kan dit leiden tot een vicieuze cirkel, immers, des te minder leden van gestigmatiseerde groepen zich aan sociale normen houden, des te groter de kans dat zij negatief behandeld en/of gediscrimineerd worden. Om dergelijke gevolgen te voorkomen is het belangrijk om na te gaan welke groepen in de huidige samenleving zich structureel gediscrimineerd voelen. Uit mijn proefschrift blijkt dat wanneer je zelf wel positieve persoonlijke uitkomsten ervaart, je minder lijdt onder het lot van zijn groep. Een manier om structureel benadeelde groepen weer in de samenleving te integreren kan zijn om hun kansen op persoonlijk succes te benadrukken – en deze kansen ook te bieden. Dit kan op verschillende manieren gebeuren, door de domeinen waarin leden van gestigmatiseerde groepen wel succesvol zijn te benadrukken (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006), door meer mogelijkheden voor succes te bieden (bijv. meer werkervaringsplekken creëren, tegenwoordig een probleem voor Marokkanen in Nederland) en door rolmodellen saillant te maken (zoals vrouwen of etnische minderheden die hoge posities bekleden). De wetenschap dat persoonlijk succes mogelijk is kan leden van gestigmatiseerde groepen helpen om te gaan met hun benadeelde status. Misschien dat het op lange termijn het onderliggende probleem zou oplossen: het gevoel dat je structureel binnen de samenleving gediscrimineerd wordt. Ik vrees alleen dat hier meer werk voor nodig is, niet aan de kant van het
slachtoffer maar van de samenleving, zowel in houding als in beleid ten aanzien van benadeelde groeperingen.

**Conclusie**

*Stel je voor je bent Marokkaans en je hebt gesolliciteerd op een baan waar je jezelf geschikt voor acht. Vervolgens hoor je dat je bent afgewezen.*

Ik begon mijn samenvatting met dit voorbeeld en mijn proefschrift met het doel om meer inzicht te bieden in de vraag of en wanneer leden van gestigmatiseerde groepen discriminatie herkennen en hoe ze op deze herkenning reageren. Aan de ene kant laat mijn proefschrift zien dat zelfs in situaties waarin mensen zeer gericht zijn op zichzelf en weinig oog hebben voor het feit dat ze ‘ook’ lid zijn van een gedevalueerde groep, ze wel in staat zijn om informatie te vergaren die hen duidelijk maakt dat ze gediscrimineerd zijn.

Hoe reageren slachtoffers op discriminatie? Wat motiveert deze reacties?

Mijn onderzoek laat zien dat als je eigen falen aan discriminatie kan toeschrijven dit tot op bepaalde hoogte zelfbeschermend kan zijn. Je hoeft immers niet meer alleen jezelf de schuld van je falen te geven. Ik stel in mijn proefschrift dan ook dat mensen enigszins egoïstisch gemotiveerd zijn, je zou immers discriminatie ook erg kunnen vinden omdat het wel betekent dat je groep gedevalueerd en in het algemeen slecht behandeld wordt. Mijn onderzoek laat zien dat groepsleden niet lijden onder de kom van hun groep (devaluatie). Sterker nog, informatie over de devaluatie van de eigen groep, of over persoonlijke discriminatie, kan zelfs de mogelijkheid bieden om de eigen persoonlijk uitkomsten in een positievere licht te plaatsen – ik ben beter dan mijn groepsleden. Maar, dit is niet het hele verhaal. We weten uit eerder onderzoek dat mensen wel degelijk kunnen lijden onder discriminatie. Wat we nog niet wisten is wanneer slachtoffers lijden onder discriminatie, en wanneer discriminatie relatief zelfbeschermend is. Mijn onderzoek biedt inzicht in deze vraag door te laten zien dat de aanhoudendheid van discriminatie een belangrijke rol speelt. Discriminatie kan zelfbeschermend zijn als het als incidenteel wordt ervaren, het is schadelijk voor welzijn als je ook in de toekomst verwacht op structurele basis gediscrimineerd te worden. Maar waarom is aanhoudende discriminatie schadelijk voor welzijn? Dit hangt af van de motieven die ten grondslag liggen aan de reactie op discriminatie. Ik laat zien dat mensen niet alleen egoïstisch gemotiveerd en gericht op zichzelf en eigen prestaties zijn. Een reactie op discriminatie kan ook op een abstracter niveau gemotiveerd zijn, namelijk door de behoefte om de wereld als eerlijk en rechtvaardig te blijven zien. Discriminatie heeft niet alleen invloed op jezelf en je eigen uitkomsten, maar ook op hoe je de wereld waarnemt. Dit is in feite een schokkende
conclusie, het betekent dat de ervaring van discriminatie belangrijke gevolgen heeft die verder gaan dan we in het verleden wellicht dachten.
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Looking back on this dissertation I see how much I learnt, where I began and where I am now. The nice thing about finishing your dissertation is that you can briefly enjoy this feeling (before becoming aware of all you still need to learn). And in this reflection you also appreciate (even) more the contribution to this dissertation of those surrounding you.

One of the most important aspects in being able to develop is knowing that wherever you go, some people will always be there to support and love you. That is why my first thank-you goes to my parents. Throughout my entire academic career you have always been there for me, a caring and loving support while at the same time respecting my need to be an independent Stroebe psychologist. Thank you.

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My dissertation did not only take place in Leiden, I also spent 4 months in Connecticut: Laura (and Bailey), you not only looked after me very well (i.e. route maps) but far more importantly, made it so much fun to be there. I look forward to
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Bernard, mijn lief, omdat je er altijd bent, en zult zijn. Gelukkig.
Curriculum Vitae

Katherine Stroebe was born in Marburg, Germany. She received her master’s degree in Social Psychology at Utrecht University in 2000. After one year outside academia she started her PhD at the Organizational Psychology faculty of the University of Amsterdam in 2001. Realizing that her heart lay in social psychology, she stopped working on this project and continued work as a teaching and research assistant at the same department until 2003. In 2003 she started her PhD with Dr. Manuela Barreto and Prof. Naomi Ellemers at the University of Leiden. During this time she spent a 4-month period working with Prof. Jack Dovidio at the University of Connecticut. Since 2008 she has a position as assistant professor at the Social and Organizational Psychology department of the University of Groningen.
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