Valuing Social Identity: Consequences for Motivation and Performance in Low-Status Groups

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Presented is our perspective on the role of social identity in the motivation and performance of members of stigmatized groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, women in traditionally male-dominated fields). We discuss how stigmatized group members pursuing upward mobility face significant threats in out-group environments through the numerical dominance of the higher status out-group, the negative views held by the out-group of the low-status group, and the emphasis in out-group settings on domains on which the stigmatized group is outperformed. In these settings, emphasis on positive in-group domains protects social identity, and enhances motivation and performance on status-relevant domains. Moreover, upwardly mobile low-status group members show important benefits of social identity through in-group support for their upward mobility. As such, social identities can be viewed not as problematic factors needing to be minimized, but can be drawn on to increase positive societal outcomes and improve low-status group status.

Social identity plays an important role in the connection that individuals feel with groups, in their wish to distinguish themselves from others, and in group behavior such as the more positive treatment of members of one's own group as opposed to members of other groups (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Spears, Oakes, Ellemers, & Haslam, 1997). As a result, the way a group is treated and evaluated in society can impact upon the well-being and behavior of members of that group. In contrast to some societal views of social identity as distracting and harmful to societal outcomes, our work addresses how valuing and acknowledging

social identity can contribute positively to maintaining motivation and performance in low-status groups. Thus, rather than minimizing the influence of social identities through assimilationist-type policies in an attempt to mobilize members of low-status groups for full participation in work, education, and citizenship, we argue that valuing social identities actually protects these outcomes, increasing well-being, motivation, and performance in low-status groups.

Of primary concern here are individuals who are members of groups that face negative stereotypes, low expectations, prejudice, and discrimination. There are various such groups in most societies, such as ethnic and religious minority groups, lower social class or caste groups, and women in traditionally male-dominated professions. In many societies members of these groups show lower outcomes than the higher status or majority group in domains relevant to societal status such as educational and work achievement. Using experimental and correlational methods, with real and minimal groups in the laboratory and out in the field, we have been working to obtain a better understanding of the role of social identity in the motivation and performance in low-status groups. We have worked with a number of low-status groups that are found in Dutch society. These include Muslim women, women in traditionally male-dominated fields, as well as ethnic minority groups. In addition, various minimal groups were created in the laboratory to allow more control over the assumed causal variables. Here we provide an overview of these different lines of research on the value of social identity for motivation and performance in low-status groups. First we discuss our work on the effects of out-group contexts on motivation and performance in work and educational settings. These contexts—in which the out-group is numerically dominant—are the settings in which members of low-status groups pursue upward mobility. Next we discuss our work on the value of social identity in motivation and performance in these threatening out-group settings, showing how (1) value for domains of importance to the in-group and (2) in-group support impact the pursuit of upward mobility. Finally, we discuss some of the policy implications of the work (see also Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2007a).

The Effects of Out-Group Contexts on Motivation and Performance

The first line of research we discuss focuses on how out-group contexts present a threat to members of low-status groups. Members of low-status or stigmatized groups have an extra difficult task in maintaining positive views of the self given their objectively lower outcomes and the negative expectancies and stereotypes held by others around them. This more negative perception of the group is what we refer to as identity threat. Although members of low-status groups may not necessarily make intergroup comparisons or be negatively affected by these comparisons (see Leach & Smith, 2006; Smith & Leach, 2004 for a discussion), intergroup comparisons are highly salient in the contexts that we examine. Work in the

social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and stigma traditions (e.g., Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Heatherton, Kleck, Hebl, & Hull, 2000; Levin & Van Laar, 2006; Swim & Stangor, 1998) shows that rather than being passive victims, members of low-status groups actively try to protect their identity, by pursuing multiple goals and using creative and flexible strategies to maintain positive views of the self and the in-group. Nevertheless, the challenges faced by members of low-status groups can impact on their well-being, motivation, and performance. Work on stereotype threat, for example, has shown that the mere presence of negative stereotypes, even in the absence of a discriminating individual or person, is sufficient to lower performance in important academic domains (Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardstein, 2002; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

The concept of status-defining domains—or out-group domains—is key in our approach, and we contrast these with alternative or in-group domains. Status-relevant domains are performance domains such as education and work that are primary in determining societal status. It is on these domains that members of the high-status group usually outperform the low-status group. We thus call these out-group domains. We show the importance of in-group or alternative domains for the low-status group. These in-group or alternative domains are domains on which the low-status group has positive outcomes and self-views compared to the high-status group, such as cultural or religious domains (in the case of ethnic minority groups), or verbal ability and social skills (in the case of women). We consistently examine the impact of out-group environments and in-group and out-group domains on well-being, self-reported performance motivation in different life domains, and actual performance.

In our research we addressed three aspects of the threat inherent in out-group environments: the numerical dominance of out-group members, the devaluation and discrimination members of low-status groups perceive in these environments, and the emphasis on out-group domains on which the low-status group under-performs in these settings. We first conducted a field study in elementary school classes in the Netherlands among students of former immigrant groups (of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, and Antillean origin). In the Netherlands these groups evidence lower educational and work outcomes than their native Dutch counterparts. The natural variation in the number of out-group members (between 0% and 94%) in the classes and in their immediate peer group in school was assessed, as well as their well-being and motivation in the school domain. As expected, the results showed that out-group presence was associated with more negative outcomes: as there were more native Dutch children in their classes and within their immediate peer group in school, the former immigrant students had lower global self-esteem and indicated feeling less motivated than their counterparts in classes with fewer native Dutch students (Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2010).

Experimental studies extended these findings in more controlled settings by allowing us to compare how members of low-status groups performed among

in-group (e.g., women in an all-female group) or among out-group members (e.g., women in an all-male group), on a (fictitious) domain in which they had low status compared to the out-group. Results of these studies showed that women reported lower self-esteem on this domain and held more negative attitudes toward the performance situation when they had to perform in an all-male environment than when they had to perform in an all-female environment. Also, whereas the all-female context induced the women to spend energy toward increasing success on the domain on which they were outperformed by the males, the all-male context made them feel more agitated and induced the women to spend time toward avoiding failure. Moreover, the women in the all-male context showed evidence of social identity protection by attaching higher value to an alternative domain on which they outperformed the males (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006; see also Inzlicht & Ben Zeev, 2000). Thus, across these different settings we found that the mere presence of out-group members lowered motivation to perform well on the domain on which the low-status group is traditionally outperformed by the high-status group.

Moving on from mere out-group presence, we delved deeper into what it is about out-group environments that is threatening to social identity. We first examined the threat inherent in out-group environments through the devaluation and discrimination low-status groups perceive in these contexts. In an Internet survey among ethnic minority employees in the Netherlands (of Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, and Antillean origin) employees were asked about their experiences at work and their work motivation was assessed. The results showed that the more ethnic discrimination these employees indicated experiencing in their work environment, the lower job motivation they reported, the less meaningful they found their jobs to be, the less they identified with the (Dutch) majority employees in their company, and the less committed they were to the company's goals (Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2010). The threat these employees experienced in their work environment was thus related to suboptimal outcomes for both themselves and the company they worked for. A longitudinal study allowed us to be more confident about the causal direction of these effects, covarying out preexisting differences in motivation and performance and examining effects over time. The study was conducted among first-year former immigrant university students in the Netherlands (of Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese, and Antillean origin), who make up less than 5% of the student body. The students filled out standardized surveys assessing their experiences, and motivation and performance at college during three points during their first year in college (Van Laar, Derks, Ellemers, & De Vos, 2010). The results showed that compared to native Dutch students, during this year former immigrant students came to feel that their ethnic group was less valued in the university. The longitudinal analyses showed that over time this low value for the in-group negatively affected well-being and motivation at university. Stronger perceptions of discrimination and fear of confirming negative stereotypes

of their group also over time negatively impacted the degree to which the former immigrant students identified with their university education. This again suggests that threats to social identity led these students to become less motivated and less able to perform well in their education.

Another way in which out-group environments can present a threat is through the emphasis on status-relevant or out-group domains in these environments. Because low-status groups are typically outperformed in these domains by high-status groups this can result in a threatening performance environment for members of low-status groups. This is exactly what we observed in a minimal group study in which participants were placed in environments in which the low-status in-group or the high-status out-group was numerically dominant. The results showed that the status-relevant domain was indeed perceived to be highly valued in the contexts in which the out-group was numerically dominant, while in-group domains were less valued (Derks et al., 2006). We then manipulated the value afforded to the status-relevant domain, to examine how this affects motivation and performance in low-status groups. The results showed that as the status-relevant domain was more valued by others in the context, female students showed lower self-esteem on that domain and reported a more negative attitude toward a performance situation involving the domain. They also focused their performance on the avoidance of failure rather than on obtaining success (Derks et al., 2006). Converging results were obtained in a field study among banking employees in which female participants consider working in a (fictitious) firm (Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2010). When the status-relevant domain was highly valued in the fictitious company, women felt more threatened and less positively challenged. They were more inclined to focus on alternative domains such as social interactions.

In summary, out-group contexts can involve threats to members of low-status groups through the mere presence of members of the high-status group, through the devaluation and discrimination low-status groups perceive in these contexts, and through the higher perceived value attached to status-relevant domains in these contexts. In this way, out-group settings implicitly and explicitly communicate to members of low-status groups that their social identity and the domains associated with their group are of low value. The results of a number of studies in the lab and field show that these aspects of out-group environments have negative effects on the well-being, motivation, and performance of members of low-status groups. Now that we have established these negative effects of out-group contexts, an important question is what can be done to diminish or counter these effects.

Valuing Social Identity through Value for In-Group Domains

The research reviewed above shows how out-group contexts can present various threats to members of low-status groups. Here we focus on how these threats may be reduced. One way to maintain the motivation and performance of members

of low-status groups on status-relevant domains is by drawing attention away from aspects of the stigmatized identity, and instead focus on aspects that make members of stigmatized groups individual and unique. Research has indeed shown that when the attention of members of low-status groups is drawn toward unique aspects of the self, they are less likely to be affected by the negative stereotypes about their group (e.g., Ambady, Paik, Steele, Owen Smith, & Mitchell, 2004; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2006) and perceive less discrimination directed against this group (Eccleston & Major, 2006). Nevertheless, there may be important costs associated with this strategy, as attention is drawn to unique aspects of the self and away from the social self while members of low-status groups benefit in important ways when they identify with their low-status group. Groups can, for example, satisfy the need to belong, provide important sources of support (as will also be shown later), and buffer against the negative effects of perceived discrimination on well-being (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Levin, Van Laar, & Foote, 2006).

Taking these beneficial effects of social identity into account, our work has focused on finding ways to alleviate the detrimental effects of threats to social identity, not by deemphasizing the importance of social identity, but instead by offering members of low-status groups ways to protect and express this identity (see also related work on creating identity-safe environments, Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Thus, we aim to specify conditions under which members of low-status groups are less likely to withdraw their motivation and performance from threatening performance settings and will maintain high performance on status-relevant domains. One of the key tenets of work in the social identity tradition is that members of low-status groups can protect their identity by paying attention to positive aspects of their group, such as their higher performance in alternative performance domains on which the group does well (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; also see Crocker & Major, 1989). Women can, for example focus on the presumed superior verbal or social skills of their group; ethnic or religious minorities can focus on cultural or religious domains in which their group excels. Previous work addressed the maintenance of well-being through such social identity protection. We set out to show that attention to positive in-group domains can not only maintain well-being, but can also actually maintain motivation and performance on the status-relevant domain on which the group is outperformed by the higher status out-group. The basis of this argument if that affirming the self through drawing attention to positive aspects of one's (social) self-concept reduces feelings of threat and facilitates the experience of challenge, which helps maintain motivation and performance (see Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2009).

We first examined whether members of low-status groups under social identity threat focus on in-group domains to protect the self. In the study among former immigrant children in elementary school that was discussed earlier out-group

presence was associated with lower well-being and motivation. The results also showed, however that as the presence of native Dutch children in the school increased, alternative in-group domains (cultural and religious identity in this case) became more important in predicting motivation in school. In schools with high presence of native Dutch children, former immigrant children were thus motivated to perform well in school to the extent that they personally valued alternative in-group domains such as their religion—in addition to the status-relevant (school) domain. When they did not personally value the in-group domain they indicated being less motivated to perform well in school (Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2010).

A series of experimental studies in which new domains unfamiliar to the participants were introduced further supported these findings. As noted earlier, in these studies female participants were presented with a (fictitious) status-relevant domain on which they were outperformed by men and a (lower status) in-group domain in which women performed better. The group context was then varied by telling them that they would be tested on their performance in the company of either all men (an out-group context) or all women (an in-group context). As expected, the results showed that women increased the value they attached to the in-group domain, and that they did so to deal with the threat posed by an out-group context (Derks et al., 2006). In further studies, we explicitly induced participants to believe that the in-group domain was highly valued (or not) by others present in the experimental context. The results show that as the in-group domain was more valued by others, participants felt less threatened, more cheerful, and less dejected in thinking about the upcoming status-relevant task, and were less focused on avoiding failure and more focused on success in the task (Derks et al., 2006). Importantly, they also actually showed higher persistence and better performance on the status-relevant task (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2007b). Thus, the acknowledgment they received for their social identity from others helped them to remain motivated in an otherwise threatening intergroup performance context.

Converging effects were obtained in an Internet study that we conducted among Muslim women recruited through websites targeting Muslim women and Muslim issues (Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2010). As in many Western societies, Muslim individuals in Dutch society have been facing increased pressure to assimilate, and negative attitudes toward their group have been growing since the September 11 events in the United States. The degree to which the Muslim women felt that domains of importance to their group were valued by the Dutch White majority was examined. The results showed that contextual value for in-group domains has positive effects: As the Muslim women perceived that the Dutch (White) majority valued in-group domains such as their religion and culture more, they reported higher expectancies and motivation on the status-relevant domain (work/education) and stronger identification with the Dutch White majority group. Mediation analyses showed that these positive effects were because value for in-group domains led the women to feel less threatened.

In a field experiment among Muslim women recruited through mosques in various cities in the Netherlands, contextual value was manipulated instead of measured, by presenting participants with information indicating whether the status-relevant (work) domain and in-group domains (cultural and religious identity) were highly or low valued in a fictitious company. Interest and motivation in working for that company was then examined. The results again showed that contextual value for the in-group domain had positive effects. Specifically, when they were led to believe that there was not only value for the status-relevant domain but also value for the in-group domain (manipulated independently), the Muslim women showed higher motivation on the status-relevant (work) domain, higher work-related-esteem, and higher expectations for their work performance (Van Laar, Derks, & Ellemers, 2010; see also work on how transformational leadership—which more generally is attentive to the needs of subordinates—positively affects motivation and performance, Bass & Riggio, 2006; Koh, Steers, & Terborg, 1995).

In summary, these results show that acknowledging social identity by valuing in-group domains has positive effects on the well-being, motivation, and performance of members of low-status and stigmatized groups. When members of low-status groups in threatening out-group contexts perceive that their social identity is valued (either because they themselves or others in the context value in-group domains), they feel better, become more motivated to improve performance on domains on which they have traditionally been outperformed by the high-status out-group, and actually perform better on these domains. They also show continued identification with the larger majority group and with the organization or performance setting around them. Thus, social identities do not necessarily stand in the way of motivation and performance but can actually be acknowledged and drawn on to increase motivation and performance on important status-relevant domains. We next discuss our work on the protective value of in-group support in the motivation and performance for the upward mobility of members of low-status groups. This work further underlines how important it is that members of low-status groups are able to express their social identity as this ensures them of continued support from their own in-group when pursuing individual mobility.

Increasing Motivation for Status Improvement through In-Group Support for Upward Mobility

Whereas the work discussed in the previous section shows how social identities affect motivation through in-group domains, the work discussed in this section shows how social identities affect motivation to improve status through in-group support for individual upward mobility.

Apart from value expressed by out-group members for in-group domains, a second way in which social identity can motivate people to improve their status through individual upward mobility is through the social support that comes from identification with the low-status group. Our research shows that rather than the in-group presenting an obstacle, the well-being, motivation, and performance of members of low-status groups pursuing upward mobility benefits from support from their own in-group, especially under conditions of out-group opposition. In a series of field and lab experiments, and correlational studies, members of low-status groups were placed in an upward mobility situation in an out-group environment (Van Laar, Bleeker, & Ellemers, 2010b). We manipulated whether the in-group opposed or supported the upward mobility. The results showed that when upwardly mobile members of low-status groups received support (vs. opposition) from their in-group for the pursuit of upward mobility in out-group environments they felt more included in the in-group, showed less depressed affect and perceived upward mobility in the out-group environment as more feasible. Mediational analyses showed that in-group support (vs. opposition) for upward mobility had such positive effects because support increased perceived acceptance by the in-group (see Postmes & Branscombe, 2002, for related findings).

Given that in-group support has these positive effects on members of low-status groups in their pursuit of higher status, one potential problem for low-status group members is that their quest for individual mobility may lower the willingness of their group to support them. In effect, members of low-status groups pursuing upward mobility face a dilemma: On the one hand they need to pursue upward mobility in out-group environments in which they are evaluated by members of the out-group who have certain ideas and expectations of them. As the research reviewed here shows, in these environments they expect to have to focus on domains of importance to the out-group and to adapt their behavior to the out-group norms. This adaptation can, however, bring them into conflict with the in-group as these out-group adaptive behaviors deviate from and even can be seen to denounce the in-group prototype (Marques, Abrams, Paez, & Martinez Taboada, 1998). Such opposition from other members of the low-status in-group to upwardly mobile individuals has been found in work on "acting White" (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and in the common use of various terms disparaging those who move away from the group ("oreo" or "bounty"). We expected, however, that the in-group may be less likely to oppose the upward mobility of its members if these members pursue upward mobility in a way that is in agreement with the in-group identity. In a series of studies we examined these ideas. These studies show that expressing social identity plays an important role in the degree to which group members are willing to support individual mobility by members of their group.

We first examined whether the in-group is indeed more likely to support individual mobility when it is pursued in a way that clearly demonstrates continued identification with the in-group and its concerns. For example, in a study

among members of former immigrant groups in the Netherlands participants were presented with a description of a (fictitious) upwardly mobile individual of their ethnic group. We manipulated whether the individual was described as accepting a high position in a department that was consistent with the interests of the in-group (antidiscrimination department of Ministry of Justice) or the same high position but in a department that would be more likely to act in the interests of the Dutch White majority (immigration regulation department at Ministry of Justice). As expected, the results showed that the upwardly mobile individual received less support for his upward mobility when accepting a position that was inconsistent with the minority social identity than when accepting a job that could be construed as benefiting that identity and protecting concerns of importance to the group (Van Laar, Ellemers, Derks, & Zikos, 2010). Specifically, the participants showed more negative and less positive affect toward the upward mobility and expected the upwardly mobile individual to be given less in-group support, when he pursued the position that would serve majority interests. Also, the results showed that the decreased support was mediated by lower perceived loyalty of the upwardly mobile group member, his lower perceived identification with the in-group, and the perception that he was less concerned with in-group benefit.

In another series of studies we examined whether members of low-status groups are more likely to benefit from the support of their in-group for upward mobility if they continue to express identification with the in-group while pursuing upward mobility in out-group environments. Manipulating the degree to which the upwardly mobile in-group member expressed continued identification with the low-status group, these studies showed that upwardly mobile in-group members who continued to demonstrate identification were more accepted by the low-status group as a group member, and were perceived as making a larger contribution to the welfare of the group, than those who failed to emphasize their continued identification with the in-group while pursuing upward mobility in out-group environments. As a result, in-group members indicated a greater willingness to support them in their upward mobility attempts (Van Laar, Bleeker, & Ellemers, 2010a). Mediation analyses revealed that the expression of continued in-group identification increased the willingness of other in-group members to support upward mobility attempts because it increased acceptance of the upwardly mobile group member as a true in-group member, and enhanced the perception that he was contributing to the group.

These results thus show how social identity plays a key role in guiding and protecting the pursuit of higher status among members of low-status groups. Apart from the motivation low-status group members in out-group settings can draw from focusing on in-group domains, the support they receive from their fellow in-group members to pursue individual mobility also enables them to maintain their motivation and performance. This support is most likely to ensue for those upwardly

mobile members of low-status groups who continue to show identification with the low-status group.

Conclusions

The research reviewed here illustrates the importance of social identity for motivation and performance in low-status groups. Members of low-status groups often strive for position improvement in somewhat hostile out-group environments. In these environments they are outnumbered by members of the dominant high-status group, and face the negative views of these individuals towards their group. Also, out-group environments are characterized by a focus on the status-relevant domain in which the low-status group is outperformed by the high-status out-group. Our research shows that these aspects of out-group environments present a significant threat to the social identity of members of low-status groups, resulting not only in lower well-being but also in lower (self-reported) motivation and actual task performance.

Whereas this may be seen as an indication that members of low-status groups can only suffer from their devalued social identity, we have presented evidence to show that social identity processes also offer scope to protect well-being and can help maintain motivation and performance on the status-relevant domain. Results of a series of studies using different groups, methodologies, and measures converge to show that valuing in-group domains and ensuring individuals of the continued support of the in-group can provide effective social identity protection, and help maintain well-being, motivation, and performance on the status-relevant domain. That is, upwardly mobile members of low-status groups can personally increase their identification with in-group domains to protect social identity. Additionally, contextual value for in-group domains also proves effective: When in-group domains are made available and are explicitly valued in the context in which the upwardly mobile in-group member pursues upward mobility, they are used to protect the self, resulting in higher well-being, and stronger motivation and performance on the status-relevant domain.

When examining the effects of in-group support we further showed the importance of social identity in understanding the motivation and performance of members of low-status groups. Upwardly mobile members of low-status groups face the diverging demands of the high-status out-group that is dominant in the environment in which they pursue upward mobility, as well as the concerns of their in-group that they continue to express their commitment to and identification with the low-status group. As a result, members of the low-status group may actually oppose upward mobility to the degree that they feel it deviates from or conflicts with the in-group identity. Our research shows that upward mobility is indeed opposed when it is pursued in domains considered at odds with the in-group identity, and when the upwardly mobile members of the low-status group display low

identification with the in-group. However, the pursuit of upward mobility in ways that can be seen as being in line with the group's identity, and the reassurance of the upwardly mobile individual that he or she continues to care about the low-status group helps enlist the support of the low-status group for upward mobility. This in-group support in turn helps members of low-status groups to pursue upward mobility: Upwardly mobile members of low-status groups who receive in-group support demonstrate higher well-being and perceive upward mobility as more feasible than those who do not receive such support. As such, allowing members of low-status groups to express their identity and focus on in-group domains not only helps them to protect their social identity, but also ensures them of the continued support of their own group in their quest for improved outcomes and status.

The results of this program of research thus highlight the importance of social identity in understanding upward mobility in low-status groups. In this sense, they extend existing work showing the key role that the in-group plays in the lives of members of low-status groups (Correll & Park, 2005; Ellemers, Doosje, & Spears, 2004; Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005; Marques et al., 1998; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002), and the importance of creating identity-safe environments to allow members of low-status groups to pursue gains on societally important domains (Davies et al., 2005; Steele et al., 2002). Our work also highlights the dilemmas faced by upwardly mobile members of low-status groups. Whereas previous work on motivation and performance in low-status groups has focused on the barriers to status improvement provided by the out-group through stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, the current work highlights the important role of the in-group in facilitating or hindering upward mobility attempts.

The processes examined here should be relevant to any group that has low status and faces negative stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination in the pursuit of upward mobility. Work on social identity has shown that it is these conditions that lead individuals to seek solace in the protection of their own groups (Crocker et al., 1998; Levin et al., 2006; Postmes & Branscombe, 2002; Sidanius, Van Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2004). The work reviewed here shows that rather than fighting these social identity processes and attempting to move individuals away from their low-status group, social identity can actually be harnessed to maintain well-being and increase motivation and performance. As such, this research is relevant to recent societal debates in many Western nations with regard to the role of social identity in motivation and performance. In contrast to the assimilation policies favored by many nations, including the Dutch government, these results suggest that social identities are not obstacles to be overcome but can be utilized to protect the motivation and performance of members of low-status groups in important status-relevant domains. Discussions in the Netherlands, Europe, and the Western world more generally, have, for example, in recent years highlighted the dangers of Islamic identities for various societal goals. Having a strong Islamic identity

is increasingly viewed, by both the population at large and by political leaders, as at odds with the goals of a successful society. Various Western countries are considering taking action to reduce or forbid symbols of Islamic identity in an effort to reduce assumed negative consequences of identification with low-status social groups.

Such actions are based in part on the assumption that having a strong identification with a subgroup is at odds with full participation in society and with high societal outcomes. Our research suggests this is a misunderstanding of the important role that social identities play for members of low-status groups, and for the effects of these identities on motivation, performance, and societal participation. Instead, the research reviewed suggests that allowing room for social identities and domains of importance to members of low-status groups can not only make them feel better, but also actually improves motivation and performance in exactly those areas that matter to society at large: motivation and performance on important domains that allow one to improve one's status, such as education and work. Moreover, respecting and valuing social identities actually increases low-status group members' identification with the higher status out-group and the larger society in which they live. In terms of social policies, the results suggest that identities should not be presented as zero-sum but should be seen as important sources of inspiration and support, especially for members of groups under threat. Identification with one (subgroup) identity is not only not necessarily at odds with a larger superordinate identity, but also as the results presented here show, may actually increase superordinate identification at the larger societal or organizational level. Also, the results highlight the importance of expressing value for social identity in social and organizational contexts. This can be done through explicit expressions of value in the societal and organizational dialogue for the low-status group and domains of importance to that group, as well as reflected in societal and organizational policies that are friendly to low-status groups (Derks et al., 2007b; for an extended discussion see Derks et al., 2007a). Such expressions of value may be particularly critical from individuals who hold central and high-status positions in the society or organization. In the long run, we hope that such an understanding of the role of social identity in motivation and performance can help to reduce existing inequalities between groups.

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