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The path of most resistance

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General Introduction



In societies that are characterised by social inequality, belonging to groups is not always positive. While some groups are relatively well-off and advantaged, others are relatively disadvantaged, and this can have a profound impact on the lives of group members. Disadvantaged groups face poverty, reduced access to education, and poorer health outcomes (Creed, Hood, & Leung, 2012; Pickett & Wilkinson, 2010; Siegrist & Marmot, 2004; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2008). Moreover, disadvantaged groups often face considerable prejudice and discrimination: members of these groups are considered less valuable and less worthy than members of advantaged groups. The social groups to which we belong (“in-groups”) form an important part of our identity, and as such the realisation that an in-group is devalued in this way can be a negative and threatening experience, leading to *social identity threat* (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Breakwell, 1986). How group members respond to these experiences is the central question underlying many theories of intergroup relations. Crucially for this dissertation, however, social identity threat can arise as a result of very subtle cues, and can even occur outside of conscious awareness. How members of disadvantaged groups deal with such *implicit* social identity threat is an issue that has been neglected in existing theoretical frameworks. This dissertation addresses this question, and focuses specifically on the possibility of resistance against implicit social identity threat. Examining whether implicit social identity threat can be resisted will allow us to better understand resilience amongst members of disadvantaged groups in the face of subtle disadvantage and stereotyping.

In many Western societies, there is evidence that social devaluation of disadvantaged groups is becoming increasingly subtle (Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). For instance, changes in societal norms mean that it is considered increasingly unacceptable to express stereotypical or prejudicial attitudes explicitly (but see e.g. Betz & Johnson, 2004 on how political parties with populist, right-wing messages in Europe capitalize on this trend by “saying what we’re not allowed to say” and rejecting political correctness). However, the fact that these attitudes are not expressed explicitly does not mean they have disappeared. Research has demonstrated that processes that contribute to social devaluation, such as stereotyping, can occur implicitly (Blair, 2002; Cañadas, Rodríguez-Bailón, Milliken, & Lupiáñez, 2013; Devine, 1989). That is, behaviour and cognition can be significantly biased without the either the “perpetrator” or the victim being consciously aware of it. Amongst the victims of these biases such

experiences can lead to implicit social identity threat: social identity threat that occurs *outside* of conscious awareness. Consider, for example, the experience of a woman who is overlooked for a promotion at work, and praise by a neighbour for her efforts in the home. While neither of these experiences is in itself sexist, at an implicit level they may convey information about her suitability for certain social roles, in line with social stereotypes.

Fortunately, a great deal of research has demonstrated that members of disadvantaged groups are resilient, and have a variety of strategies at their disposal to cope with social identity threat (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Leach & Livingstone, 2015; Major & Eliezer, 2011). However, at the implicit level, social identity threat is more difficult to recognise and to address directly, and research suggests that this undermines resilience (Kray, Thompson, & Galinsky, 2001; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003). Indeed, there is evidence that exposure to implicit stereotypes leads to stereotype-conformity (Chen & Bargh, 1997). When women were exposed to explicit gender stereotypes in a negotiation setting, they became angry and countered stereotypes by performing better than their male peers. However, when gender stereotypes were implicit, women performed *worse* than their male peers, in line with stereotypic expectations (Kray et al., 2001). Thus, previous research indicates that resilience to identity threat is possible to some degree, but as threat becomes more subtle, or even implicit, resilience is reduced.

This dissertation describes a line of research that examines the hypothesis that members of disadvantaged groups are nevertheless able to resist social identity threat, even when it occurs at the implicit level. This hypothesis is derived from research that has highlighted the sophisticated nature of implicit information processing. People do not merely perceive implicit information; they also evaluate and interpret it, for instance in terms of goal congruence (Glaser & Knowles, 2008). Likewise, there is evidence that responses to implicit information are affected by motivation (Glaser & Knowles, 2008; Moskowitz & Li, 2011). Such findings suggest that members of disadvantaged groups can cope with implicit social identity threat in active, motivated ways.

The five empirical chapters of this dissertation demonstrate that members of disadvantaged groups can indeed resist implicit social identity threat, and that resistance can take a number of different forms. As such, they show that members of disadvantaged groups are more resilient than previously thought. Before turning to the empirical chapters, though, this first chapter introduces the central concepts of this dissertation. Firstly, in the section on

intergroup relations, I¹ discuss the structure of disadvantage that characterises many Western societies, including our own, and describe processes through which inequality is brought about and maintained. Subsequently, I outline prominent theories of intergroup relations that have studied how members of disadvantaged groups perceive and deal with social inequality and group-based devaluation. I discuss evidence that perceptions of in-group devaluation can give rise to social identity threat, and then turn to resistance, describing strategies that can be used to resist social identity threat. I then outline evidence that social identity threat can also occur implicitly and consider whether such implicit social identity threat can be resisted and, if so, what form such resistance might take. Finally, I provide an outline of the empirical chapters of the dissertation, describing how each chapter contributes to the understanding of resistance to implicit social identity threat.

Intergroup inequality

In our own society, disadvantaged groups include many ethnic groups (Williams & Mohammed, 2009), women (Swim, Hyers, Cohen, & Ferguson, 2001), religious minorities (Strabac & Listhaug, 2008), the LGBTQI-community (Herek, 2007), the poor and the unemployed (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001), the lower educated (Kuppens, Spears, Manstead, Spruyt, & Easterbrook, 2017), the homeless (Cikara, Farnsworth, Harris, & Fiske, 2010), those suffering from mental illnesses (Corrigan & Watson, 2002), obese people (Crandall, 1994) and the elderly (T. D. Nelson, 2004). Though the precise nature of the inequality faced by each of these groups can differ substantially, what unites them is that, at a societal level, members of these groups are considered less valuable and less worthy than members of dominant groups. This devaluation is expressed through prejudice and discrimination towards people who are members of these groups (Crocker & Quinn, 2000; Major & Schmader, 2001). Prejudices are (usually negative) attitudes held about a person on the basis of their group membership, while discrimination is the tendency to act upon such beliefs (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010). For instance, prejudiced views of those with working-class backgrounds as less intelligent can lead to discrimination in the educational system: recent data from the Netherlands has shown that children who receive identical test scores are perceived as less intelligent by their teachers when they come from work-

¹ In this chapter I use the personal pronoun “I”, but the research and ideas reported in this dissertation were developed in collaboration with my co-authors, Russell Spears, Toon Kuppens and Soledad de Lemus – as indicated by the use of “we” in subsequent chapters.

ing-class backgrounds compared to middle-class backgrounds (CBS, 2016).

Importantly, however, the devaluation of a group can be expressed through positive attitudes as well. This effect is illustrated in the literature on gender and benevolent sexism (e.g. “women are wonderful”, Eagly & Mladinic, 1994). Benevolent sexist attitudes express views and behaviours towards women that are superficially positive, but ultimately reflect a patriarchal system in which women are seen as dependent on men. Examples of benevolent sexism include chivalrous behaviour such as opening doors for women, or offering to carry heavy items. Importantly, the positive views expressed towards women are typically reserved for those women who behave *in line with* patriarchal expectations (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Thus, even though this type of behaviour can stem from good intentions, it ultimately reinforces inequality and patriarchal group relations. However, the positive phrasing of these attitudes means that women are unlikely to object: while hostile forms of sexism motivate collective action, benevolent sexism undermines it (Becker & Wright, 2011). In fact, there is evidence that women may perceive benevolent sexism positively (Bohner, Ahlborn, & Steiner, 2010; Montañés, de Lemus, Moya, Bohner, & Megías, 2013; Moya, Glick, Exposito, de Lemus, & Hart, 2007). These findings on benevolent sexism thus demonstrate that positive attitudes can also contribute to inter-group inequality.

Once social inequality is established, there are many processes that maintain, reinforce and legitimise it. One major process by which inequality is maintained is stereotyping. Stereotypes attribute traits and characteristics to people based on their membership in certain social groups (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Importantly, a group’s status often determines the stereotypes associated with them rather than the reverse (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990). That is, stereotypes ascribe valued traits to groups that are already dominant or high in status, and non-valued traits to low status groups (Ridgeway, 2001). In line with this reasoning, research on gender stereotypes has shown that, in cultures that value individualistic traits, men are seen as individualistic: men are stereotyped as more ambitious and self-reliant than women. Conversely, in cultures that value collectivistic traits (like many Asian cultures), men are seen as collectivistic: they are stereotyped as more sincere and helpful than women (Cuddy et al., 2015). This underscores that stereotypes ascribe traits to groups as a way of attributing higher social value to the advantaged group. A consequence of this process is that stereotypes *justify and legitimise*

social inequality, because they lead people to believe that inequality between groups results from *real* differences in the traits these groups possess, and that the groups who possess the most valued traits, are rightly considered higher in status (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jost & Kay, 2005; Rudman & Glick, 2008; Tajfel, 1981). The power of this process lies in the fact that people typically perceive the causal relationship between a group's traits and social status *the other way around* from how the process in fact occurs. The reason for this is that traits are perceived as stable, and therefore *causal* factors for outcomes (e.g. "they are poor because they are lazy", Kressel & Uleman, 2015). This means that the inferences people make about the "why" of social relations often draw upon stereotypical traits and characteristics as legitimate and justifiable reasons for intergroup inequality.

In sum, relations between different social groups are often characterised by substantial inequality and devaluation, which is pervasive and structural. How the individuals who live within these systems are affected by and respond to social disadvantage, is the fundamental question underlying many theories of intergroup relations.

Theories of Intergroup Relations

Many theories of intergroup relations attempt to understand how members of disadvantaged groups are affected by and respond to social inequality, and they can be differentiated by how optimistic they are about the possibility for social change. Some theories are more pessimistic and focus on how intergroup inequality is maintained and reinforced, such as Social Dominance Theory (SDT, Sidanius & Pratto, 2001; Sidanius, Pratto, Van Laar, & Levin, 2004). SDT proposes that hierarchical relationships and inequality are maintained because people are psychologically orientated toward dominance and desire *unequal* group relations (i.e., their social dominance orientation; SDO). According to SDT social dominance is reproduced not only at the individual level, but also for instance through the organisation of societal institutions. This makes social inequalities difficult to change. A related argument suggests that many people tend to believe that the world in which they live is fair and just (Lerner, 1980), and as such are motivated to explain intergroup inequalities in ways that make them seem fair. Research has shown that those who report high belief in a just world respond more negatively to groups who violate such beliefs, such as innocent victims of crimes (Hafer, 2000). System Justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) goes even

further and proposes that members of disadvantaged groups are inclined to *accept and defend* the inequality and devaluation they face, because they are motivated to see aspects of the overarching social system as good, fair, and legitimate.

At the other end of this spectrum are intergroup theories that are more optimistic, and focus on circumstances under which members of disadvantaged groups come to challenge inequality and devaluation, and ultimately achieve social change. On this view, social devaluation is a stressor and source of threat and will trigger coping responses, in line with appraisal theories of coping with stressors more generally (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). For instance, Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT, Campbell, 1958; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961) describes how intergroup relations become strained and problematic when groups compete for resources, and people will challenge intergroup relations when they conflict with the interests of the in-group. Relative Deprivation theory (RDT, Walker & Pettigrew, 1984) suggests that the tendency to challenge existing intergroup relations can also be inspired by a sense of *relative*, rather than absolute, deprivation. RDT proposes that people will challenge intergroup relations when they perceive that their group “has less” than what they ought to have, and that this perception is largely independent of the group’s objective position. In RCT and RDT, the tendency to challenge intergroup relations arises directly out of perceptions of group conflict. Social Identity Theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1979) was formulated to complement this perspective. SIT argues that direct conflict or competition between groups is not always necessary to trigger the desire to challenge intergroup relations; it can also arise out of identity management concerns, such as the desire for positive group identity (Branscombe et al., 1999; Pickett & Brewer, 2001). According to SIT, unequal intergroup relations can threaten the social identity of disadvantaged group members, and motivate them to challenge intergroup inequality, as a means of re-establishing positive group identity.

All of the theories described here discuss how group members cope with the negative and threatening experience of social inequality. Some focus on tendencies to accept unequal intergroup relations, while others focus on resistance and social change. Crucially, however, none address how people cope when threat occurs outside of conscious awareness. In this dissertation I draw on SIT to examine responses to threat that occurs at the *implicit* level.

Social Identity Threat

According to SIT, when group members become aware that the in-group is disadvantaged compared to an out-group, this can lead them to experience *social identity threat*: a negative appraisal of one's social identity that results from the in-group being devalued or inferior (Branscombe et al., 1999; Breakwell, 1986). People may experience threat to social identity on the basis of incidental experiences, for instance, a sports fan may experience social identity threat when their favourite team loses to their rival (Wann & Grieve, 2005). However, social identity threat can also be chronic and a structural component of daily life. If a social group has chronically low status within the social system, its members are repeatedly confronted with this fact. SIT argues that such experiences of social identity threat can motivate members of disadvantaged groups to maintain positive social identity by *challenging, rejecting and resisting* the harmful social system.

Addressing social identity threat. In line with predictions by SIT, research has documented diverse strategies that members of disadvantaged groups can use to manage identity threat arising from social devaluation, broadly divided into categories of social mobility, social creativity and social competition (Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993; Spears, Jetten, & Doosje, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social mobility strategies are individual strategies, in which individuals try to gain positive identities by leaving the original group and attempting to join a higher status group (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). Social creativity strategies are group-based strategies, including re-appraising the threatening information and trying to reinterpret it more positively ('we may be poor but we are happy', Becker, 2012; Glick & Fiske, 2001; Kay & Jost, 2003). Similarly, the experience of social identity threat can be reduced by allowing group members to affirm a positive aspect of group membership in another domain (Sherman, Kinias, Major, Kim, & Prenovost, 2007). Social competition strategies challenge identity threat more directly: the disadvantaged group tries to compete with the advantaged group to try to achieve social change or higher status. Two classic forms of social competition are collective action and intergroup bias. Collective action can take the form of demonstrations, or other actions in which group members work in together to attempt to achieve social change (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012). Intergroup bias refers to the tendency to evaluate one's own group and its members more positively, and treat them more favourably, than members of out-groups (Brewer, 1999;

Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002). Such social competition strategies most closely resemble what in this dissertation is defined as “resistance”.

Resistance. Resistance is defined here as a motivated response that counteracts threat to social identity. Many social competition strategies would fall under this definition of resistance, but resistance is also broader than social competition, because it allows for the possibility that one can confront social identity threat in ways that do not necessarily involve direct competition with the out-group. This is crucial because we will examine resistance in the implicit realm, and direct competition with out-group (e.g. collective action) is difficult to realize when considering the implicit domain. Social mobility strategies, such as leaving the group, do not constitute resistance by our definition. Even though social mobility might serve to *cope* with social identity threat, it does not *counteract or challenge* the threat but rather avoids it.

Responses that counteract social identity threat can include evaluative strategies such as in-group bias. Previous work has shown that, when the positivity of group membership is threatened, people can re-establish positive in-group identity by evaluating the in-group more favourably (Cadinu & Cerchioni, 2001; Oakes & Turner, 1980; Voci, 2006). Likewise, people can resist threats to social identity through behaviour. For instance, exposure to stereotypes can elicit behaviour that attempts to *disprove* stereotypes. Specifically, it has been shown that exposure to gender stereotypes motivates women to persist in counter-stereotypical domains, such as spatial reasoning (de Lemus, Spears, Lupiañez, Moya, & Bukowski, 2017) or a negotiation task (Kray et al., 2001). Likewise, Nussbaum and Steele (2007) show that African American students persisted at a difficult task when they were told that that it was diagnostic of academic ability (a domain where African American students are stereotyped). Additionally, it is worth noting that whether a particular response constitutes resistance can differ across circumstances. Leach and Livingstone (2015) argue that resistance should be seen as any response that helps members of disadvantaged groups to maintain positive identity in the face of devaluation, and as such resistance strategies can be tailored to a specific situation. Taken together, these findings show that the experience of social identity threat can lead to a variety of coping responses, and those that serve to directly counteract social identity threat are defined here as resistance.

Implicit identity threat

Overall, then, there is a great deal of evidence that members of disadvan-

tagged groups are resilient in the face of social identity threat. At the same time, however, there is evidence that, in many Western societies, social devaluation of disadvantaged groups is becoming increasingly subtle, in part because changes in societal norms mean that it is often considered unacceptable to explicitly express prejudicial or stereotypical attitudes (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Beach, 2008; Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997; Swim et al., 1995). However, the fact that explicit forms of prejudice and discrimination are perhaps less common does not mean that the processes underlying these effects have disappeared. Crucially, the processes that underlie social devaluation and inequality can take place outside of conscious awareness (Blair, 2002; Devine, 1989). Stereotyping, for instance, is deeply ingrained in the automatic stages of cognitive processing. This is illustrated by research on lexical processing which has shown that verbal expressions that violate stereotypes (the electrician – she) are processed in the same way as verbal expressions that violate semantic rules (the king - she) (Canal, Garnham, & Oakhill, 2015; Osterhout, Bersick, & McLaughlin, 1997). Thus, the processes that are at the core of social inequality continue to exist and shape our social interactions, even when we are not consciously aware of it (Swim et al., 1995). For instance, stereotypes of certain ethnic minorities being criminal may no longer be voiced explicitly, but people may still unconsciously clutch their belongings when a member of such a minority group passes them by. In such a case, cues of social devaluation are present at the implicit level.

When considering the options for resistance to such implicit cues of social devaluation, two conditions must be met. It is relevant to note here that these two conditions are similar to those of stress-and-coping models (Lazarus & Folkman, 1991). Firstly, people must appraise the implicit information as threatening (the “primary appraisal” in the stress-and-coping model) and secondly, people must have the resources to address that threat (the “secondary appraisal” in the stress-and-coping model). With regards to the first stage, Allport noted more than 50 years ago that people who belong to socially disadvantaged groups may become especially attentive and vigilant to cues that their social identity is discredited (Allport, 1954; Kaiser, Major, & McCoy, 2004; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). Crucially, it has been shown that people are able to pick up on devaluation cues that occur outside of conscious awareness (Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2006), and such experiences of implicit social identity threat have been shown to lead to anxiety (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005) and reduced self-esteem (Major et al., 2003). Yet, studies have also demonstrated

that this is not equally true for all members of a disadvantaged group. The experience of implicit social identity threat may depend, for instance, on *identification with the group*. Those who are highly identified with the group find the group more important, are more concerned for the group's well-being and experience threat to the group more acutely (Spears et al., 1997)². Such increased sensitivity to social identity threat also made people more likely to pick up on threat cues that are presented outside of conscious awareness (Kaiser et al., 2006). This suggests that those who are highly identified with the in-group are more susceptible to implicit social identity threat, because the intergroup context, and threat arising from it, is more salient to them. In sum, research has shown that members of disadvantaged groups can experience social identity threat at the implicit level, and that such experiences are intensified by factors like group identification.

Addressing implicit social identity threat. When we consider coping resources, the second requirement for resistance, it is interesting to note that, until now, the consensus has been that when social identity threat is implicit, there is little people can do to resist (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010; Kray et al., 2001; Major et al., 2003). Though many researchers recognise that threat can occur implicitly, they argue that the second stage in which threat is managed requires conscious effort, as demonstrated by findings that cognitive load hampers resistance (Martiny & Kessler, 2014). Put differently, previous research suggest that the rejection of threatening information is a conscious process, which means that the individual must become consciously aware of the threatening information before they can reject it. Thus, when threatening information is presented outside of conscious awareness, people are unable to resist that information and instead are forced to passively accept it.

Such a “passive” explanation of how implicit threat cues come to affect members of disadvantaged groups is supported by research showing that implicit threat often elicits conformity rather than resistance. For instance, after exposure to subtle or implicit gender stereotypes, women were more likely endorse stereotypical self-descriptions and to self-handicap, than after exposure to explicit gender stereotypes (Barreto, Ellemers, Cihangir, & Stroebe,

²Note that this likely depends to some extent on the *type* of threat. While high identifiers have been shown to be more sensitive to group devaluation (with which we are concerned in this dissertation), *low* identifiers may be more susceptible to *categorisation threat*, that is, being categorised as a member of a group to which one does not want to belong (Branscombe et al., 1999).

2009). Likewise, implicit stereotypes lead women to adopt more submissive bodily postures (de Lemus, Spears, & Moya, 2012), and request more dependency-oriented help (Shnabel, Bar-Anan, Kende, Bareket, & Lazar, 2015). Similarly, implicit stereotypes affect behaviour: interacting with White partners who hold implicit anti-Black biases had a detrimental effect on Black participants' academic performance (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). These findings indicate that implicit stereotypes function as "self-fulfilling prophecies" (Chen & Bargh, 1997; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977), such that individuals who are exposed to implicit stereotypes of their in-groups behave in ways that fit the stereotype. Based on these findings, then, it seems that when threatening information is presented implicitly, this elicits assimilation, acceptance and conformity.

Resistance to implicit identity threat

In this dissertation we contrast the passive view of responses to implicit identity threat with an active, motivated account, which suggests that disadvantaged groups are active participants in social structures (in line with critiques of "false consciousness", see Abercrombie, Hill, & Turner, 1983). This approach is supported by research that has highlighted the sophisticated nature of implicit information processing. Early on, Bargh's (1990) auto-motive model suggested that subtle cues from the social environment can implicitly activate goals and motivations, which can then run to completion outside of conscious awareness (Bargh, Gollwitzer, Lee-Chai, Barndollar, & Trötschel, 2001; Cesario, Plaks, & Higgins, 2006). For instance, research has shown that implicitly triggering the motive to behave in egalitarian ways leads to reduced stereotype activation (Glaser & Knowles, 2008; Moskowitz, Salomon, & Taylor, 2000), highlighting that implicit information can trigger motivation which in turn affects cognition and behaviour, without need for conscious intervention (Moskowitz & Li, 2011). Applying the insights from this line of research to the current dissertation would suggest that if members of disadvantaged groups are motivated to maintain positive identity, and motivation can be triggered and affect responses implicitly, then resistance to implicit social identity threat should be possible. In this dissertation, I examine this issue.

The literature on implicit cognition, then, has provided some indication that resistance to implicit identity threat may indeed be possible. At the same time however, the fact remains that previous research studying this question has found little evidence for resistance against implicit social identity

threat. This discrepancy may be the result of the fact that previous research has mostly focused on explicit indicators of resistance. It is likely that such explicit outcome measures do rely on a degree of conscious evaluation. If we consider collective action, for instance, it seems unlikely that one would engage in collective action when they are not consciously aware of a threat. If we want to examine resistance to identity threat when conscious awareness is absent, it is likely that such resistance would be expressed through responses that do not rely on conscious awareness. That is, implicit identity threat is likely to be resisted through implicit routes.

Implicit resistance. Crucially, recent research has demonstrated that there are resistance responses that can be employed without conscious awareness (de Lemus, Spears, Bukowski, Moya, & Lupiáñez, 2013; Ramos et al., 2015). Such implicit resistance to social identity threat might be conceived of as functioning like resistance in the physical immune system (vanDellen, Campbell, Hoyle, & Bradfield, 2011), fighting disease without the individual's awareness or conscious intervention. For instance, women who are exposed to stereotypical gender roles (e.g., women in the kitchen, men in the office) were found to implicitly associate their in-group with counter-stereotypical attributes (de Lemus et al., 2013). Likewise, women associated their in-group with counter-stereotypical attributes after observing sexist interactions between men and women (Ramos et al., 2015). Additionally, there is evidence for implicit evaluative in-group bias following social identity threat, whereby participants associate their own in-group more readily with positive attributes after exposure to social identity threat (de Lemus et al., 2017). In this dissertation I examine whether such implicit resistance strategies can be employed to resist *when the identity threat also occurs at the implicit level*.

It is worthwhile to distinguish implicit resistance from other responses that can counteract implicit information, such as compensation or contrast effects. Resistance differs from compensation-related processes (Glaser & Kihlstrom, 2005; Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010), in that it occurs in response to self-relevant social threat, while compensation can occur following any negative event. That is, resistance to identity threat does not imply automatic contrast to any negative stimulus, but rather targeted contrast to those stimuli that are threatening to social identity. This motivational basis also distinguishes resistance from contrast effects, which are typically produced by cognitive or perceptual processes such as anchoring (Bless & Schwarz, 2010) or comparison (Mussweiler, 2003). Likewise, in the Just-Say-No para-

digm (Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000), participants learn to counteract stereotypes through training. This mechanism is imposed by the experimenter, rather than being internally motivated.

Regarding the measurement of implicit resistance, the measures we use in the empirical chapters of this dissertation rely on reaction times. Participants are presented with a target stimulus, and are required to respond as quickly as possible. When the target requires a response that is in line with participants' attitudes, the response will be facilitated, resulting in shorter reaction times. In this way, measuring reaction times can provide insight into participants' attitudes towards certain stimuli, even those of which participants are not consciously aware. Implicit resistance would be evident from implicit attitudes or tendencies that counteract implicit social identity threat.

Dissertation outline

Across five empirical chapters³, this dissertation aims to demonstrate that members of disadvantaged groups can resist implicit social identity threat. I examine resistance to implicit social identity threat in the context of gender identity (Chapters 2-4), national identity (Chapter 5), and regional identity (Chapter 6). The final chapter of this dissertation (Chapter 7) summarises the research findings of the five empirical chapters, and outlines conclusions and implications of the research conducted. The empirical chapters are summarised below.

Chapter 2. As a prelude to the central question of whether implicit threat to gender identity can be resisted (Chapters 3 and 4), Chapter 2 examines how women think about gender group membership. Specifically, we are interested in the factors that predict whether women perceive that their social group faces inequality and disadvantage. Results show that these perceptions are predicted by both feminist identification and identification with women more generally. Specifically, in Studies 2.1 we show that women's identification reflects attitudes towards the socially constructed meaning of group membership, while feminist identification reflects the belief women as a group are devalued in the larger social system. These identities have only a small positive correlation, and based on this finding we propose a taxonomy of four prototypical gender identity subgroups. In Study 2.2, we examine whether this taxonomy can predict resistance-type responses, such as moder-

³ The empirical chapters of this dissertation (Chapters 2 to 6) were written as separate journal articles. As a result, these chapters may show some overlap with the introduction and with one another.

ate and radical collective action. Indeed, results showed that radical collective action on gender issues is endorsed most strongly by women who are highly identified with feminists, but not with the broader group of women (“distinctive feminists”). In Studies 2.3 and 2.4 we further show that this taxonomy predicts critical attitudes towards gender stereotypes. Using a community sample (Study 2.3) and a student sample (Study 2.4), we show that critical attitudes towards gender stereotypes are most prominent amongst distinctive feminists.

In sum, Chapter 2 showed that women’s attitudes towards gender group membership are governed by two distinct identity dimensions: women’s identification and feminist identification. Critical attitudes towards gender stereotypes, and endorsement of resistance strategies like radical collective action, are strongest amongst distinctive feminists. Subsequently, we examined resistance at the *implicit* level.

Chapters 3 & 4. In Chapters 3 and 4 we use the taxonomy developed in Chapter 2 to examine whether women can resist implicit social identity threat. Chapter 3 describes the first evidence for resistance to implicit social identity threat. Women were exposed to implicit associations reflecting gender stereotypes, or counter-stereotypes. Results show that responses to implicit stereotypes depended on feminist identification and women’s identification: resistance occurred amongst distinctive feminists only. That is, those who were shown, in Chapter 2, to find gender stereotypes most problematic, were also found, in Chapter 3, to resist stereotypes when they are presented at the implicit level. Resistance was evident from an implicit in-group bias, whereby positive targets were associated with the in-group (women) more than the out-group (men). Moreover, there was evidence for a behavioural resistance strategy: distinctive feminists showed increased persistence in a counter-stereotypical, but not a stereotypical, performance domain. This suggests that implicit social identity threat arising from stereotypes motivates these women to prove their competence in a counter-stereotypical domain (math). Together, these studies show that resistance to implicit social identity threat can occur through both evaluative and behavioural responses.

Chapter 4 extends evidence from Chapter 3 by showing that resistance to implicit identity threat can also occur through out-group focused responses, such as out-group derogation, that is, harsher treatment of the out-group (in this case, men). To the extent that implicit stereotypes imply that men are valued over women, this could be resisted by *boosting* women, or by *down-*

grading men. Indeed, Chapter 3 showed evidence for the former strategy: distinctive feminists show implicit in-group favouritism following exposure to implicit stereotypes. In the current study, we examine whether implicit gender stereotypes can also be resisted through out-group derogation, that is, by downgrading men. We use a Moral Choice Dilemma paradigm, in which participants are faced with moral dilemmas in which hypothetically sacrificing the life of one individual (manipulated to be either female or male) can save the lives of a number of others. Across two studies, women who identify strongly with feminists, but not women, found it easier to sacrifice men after exposure to implicit stereotypes (compared to exposure to counter-stereotypes). As such, Chapter 4 shows evidence for out-group derogation as a strategy to resist implicit stereotypes, amongst women who are highly identified with feminists but not women.

Taken together, Chapters 3 and 4 showed that women can *resist* implicit social identity threat, through implicit in-group bias, out-group derogation, and persistence in counter-stereotypical performance domains.

Chapter 5. In Chapters 3 and 4 there was evidence that resistance to implicit stereotypes occurred specifically amongst those who interpreted stereotypes as most threatening to identity (distinctive feminists). In Chapter 5, we leave the context of gender identity behind, and turn to the context of national identity to *manipulate* the interpretation of stereotypes. In doing so, we examine how the interpretation of implicit stereotypes affects resistance, and expect that resistance will occur specifically when implicit stereotypes are threatening to identity. In this way, we hope, firstly, to replicate our findings on resistance in the context of national identity, and, secondly, to gain more insight in the role of implicit identity threat in resistance.

Chapter 5 describes two studies in the context of national identity in Spain. Above, we have argued that one important reason why stereotypes are threatening to identity is because of the role they play in legitimising the group's disadvantage. In the current Chapter, we therefore exposed participants to one of four different conditions: implicit in-group stereotypes, implicit reminders of intergroup inequality, implicit in-group stereotypes that *legitimise* intergroup inequality, or a control condition. We expect that resistance is most pronounced in the condition where implicit social identity threat is strongest, that is, when stereotypes legitimise intergroup inequality.

Indeed, results show that when implicit stereotypes legitimise intergroup inequality, resistance arises, in the form of implicit in-group bias, and implicit

out-group derogation. That is, Chapter 5 replicates the findings of Chapters 3 and 4 in the context of national identity. Moreover, Chapter 5 shows that resistance is triggered in response to implicit information that legitimises intergroup inequality, thereby providing further evidence for the role of implicit social identity threat as a trigger for resistance.

Chapter 6. In Chapter 6, we attempt to replicate findings of Chapter 5 in the context of regional identity in the Netherlands. Participants from the province of Groningen were exposed to implicit associations reflecting stereotypes that legitimise in-group disadvantage or a control condition. However, results of this study showed no evidence for implicit resistance to implicit identity threat. This absence of resistance is likely due to the limited salience of the intergroup context. Though preliminary, findings suggest that, if participants are not familiar with the context of threat in their daily lives, they do not build up resilience, and implicit forms of that threat are less likely to be resisted. This interpretation suggests an important role for previous exposure to identity threat as a factor that allows members of disadvantaged groups to resist implicit social identity threat. In sum, this chapter offers a cautionary note, illustrating that the salience of the intergroup context represents an important boundary condition for resistance to implicit identity threat.

