The dark side of subtle discrimination : how targets respond to different forms of discrimination

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Chapter 4

When “they” help more than “us”

The impact of ingroup and outgroup opinions on self-views, performance and protest within a subtle discrimination context

One unfortunate consequence of the social sanctioning of blatant discrimination is that people tend to discriminate more and more in subtle ways. As a consequence, discriminatory behavior can be displayed without being identified as such (e.g., Devine, Plant, & Blair, 2001; Dovidio, 2001; McConahay, 1983; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Tougas, Brown, Beaton, & Joly, 1995). Much research has been carried out in the past years to attempt to uncover the factors that hinder or facilitate perceptions of discriminatory treatment when people are confronted with subtle discrimination (e.g., Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Carvallo & Pelham, 2006; Major, Gramzow, McCoy, Levin, Schmader, & Sidanius, 2002; Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Sechrist, Swim, & Stangor, 2004). Research in this area has focused on identifying the factors that lead individuals to perceive they are discriminated against, and examining the subsequent effects of perceived discrimination on their self-views. This research demonstrated that perceiving discriminatory treatment can have both positive and negative consequences for self-views (see Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002 for reviews). In addition, claims of discriminatory treatment can affect interpersonal relations (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; 2004), as well as commitment to particular life domains (Major & Schmader, 1998).

Despite the different consequences that perceiving discrimination can have, researchers in this area agree that investigating the factors that may facilitate detection of discrimination is both theoretically and practically important because it constitutes a first step towards challenging discriminatory treatment (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Major et al., 2002). For this reason, a first goal of the present research is to examine one of the factors that may

influence perceptions of discrimination: the opinion of others. In particular, we examine whether others who indicate discriminatory treatment - instead of approving of the treatment received (Study 1) or denying discrimination (Study 2) - increase the victim's perception that discrimination lies at the root of their negative outcomes when they are subtly discriminated against. We also examine whether the identity of these others, i.e., whether they are ingroup or outgroup members, affects perceptions of discrimination.

The second goal of this paper is to examine how the opinion of other ingroup or outgroup members impacts upon the self-views of those who are exposed to subtle discrimination. While past research has addressed people's self-views as a consequence of the treatment they received (see Major et al., 2002; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002), we focus on how the *opinions of others* regarding this treatment affect self-views. In this way we hope to provide further insight into the factors that affect the well-being of targets of subtle discrimination. In Study 2 we also go one step further and examine how the opinions of others about the treatment received affect subsequent task performance and protest behavior. In what follows we examine each of these goals in turn.

Social Influence and Detection of Discrimination

Although the factors affecting perceptions of discrimination have been a focus of much attention in the past years, it is remarkable that the role of others in shaping perceptions of discrimination has been under-researched. However, it is fair to say that victims of discrimination are often confronted with group-based mistreatment in the presence of other people. These other people are likely to have their own interpretation of the situation, which they may share with each other and with the target of discrimination. Even when other people are not actually present during the discriminatory event, they may be available so that victims of discrimination may resort to their opinion to help interpret the situation. Past research has already examined how others react to one's claims of discriminatory treatment (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; 2004). In addition, some other research examined how perceived social support from others affected the extent to which people were willing to report discriminatory treatment (Ruggerio, Taylor, & Lydon, 1997; Stangor, Swim, van Allen, & Sechrist, 2002; see also Swim

Cohen & Hyers, 1998; Swim & Hyers, 1999). In sum, past research has focused on the role of others in *reports* of discrimination, but it has so far not focused on whether others can play a role at an earlier stage – when targets come to the decision of whether or not discrimination may be the cause of the negative treatment.

The opinion of these others should be of great importance for the understanding of the situation by the victim when discriminatory treatment is ambiguous. As we know from the social influence literature, the phenomenon that other people influence our opinions, attitudes and behavior is widespread (see Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004 for a review). This is not limited to ambiguous social settings (e.g., Sherif, 1936) but has been shown to occur in non-ambiguous situations as well (Asch, 1952). Nevertheless, the ambiguity of the situation increases the motivation of the individual to take into account the opinions of others (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1954). When the situation is ambiguous people lack information to interpret the social event, and the uncertainty resulting from this lack of information can be reduced by taking cues from others. These cues from others (e.g., their opinions) will help people construct meaningful and coherent definitions of the ambiguous circumstances they face (Festinger, 1954). It is thus very likely that others’ opinions will be valuable in situations involving subtle discrimination.

In the present studies we examine the direct influence that other people’s opinion about the situation can have on the victim’s perception of the situation as being discriminatory. We hypothesize that when others raise the possibility that discrimination is the reason of the negative outcome, victims will be more likely to make attributions to discrimination compared to situations where these others do not raise such a possibility. We argue that others who indicate the possibility of discrimination should have this facilitating role irrespective of their group membership. In fact, the process underlying this effect is that when others indicate the possibility of discrimination, this will act as a situational cue which will facilitate the interpretation of the situation by the victim as discriminatory, irrespective of its source. Accordingly, we hypothesize that when others indicate discrimination, individuals will be inclined to attribute their rejection to discrimination and less to their personal failure than when others approve of the procedure (Study 1) or deny the possibility of discrimination (Study 2).

Source of social influence and self-views

A great deal of research in this area has focused on how targets' self-views are affected by their perceptions of discriminatory treatment (see Major et al., 2002; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002 for reviews). One of the important findings in this area is that when individuals receive a negative outcome they tend to benefit from not seeing themselves as solely responsible for that negative outcome (see Major et al., 2002 for a review). That is, even though perceiving oneself as a target of discrimination can have important drawbacks (see Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002 for a review), it may protect personal self-esteem when the alternative is to solely blame oneself for the negative outcome.

Since past research found that perceiving discriminatory treatment can protect targets' self-views by decreasing personal responsibility for a negative outcome, it may be argued that factors that facilitate the perception of discrimination positively affect self-views. Although we partially agree with this view, we argue that this is not always the case, as we posit that self-views may be differentially affected by other factors even when perceptions of discrimination are similar. In particular, we predict that while others indicating discrimination may similarly raise perceptions of discrimination irrespective of whether they are ingroup or outgroup members, targets' self-views will be differentially affected by ingroup and by outgroup members who indicate discrimination. That is, we predict that because the source of influence (ingroup vs. outgroup) relates differently to the self, the opinions voiced by this source are likely to have different implications for people's self-views.

The question of how others opinions about discriminatory treatment to which the self is subjected affect people's self-views, has not been addressed in previous research. However, past research has examined how people react when others claim to be victims of discriminatory treatment. This research shows that people tend to dislike others who claim discriminatory treatment *against themselves or their own group* (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; 2004). Participants in that research saw claims of discrimination as self-serving attempts to avoid accepting responsibility for a negative outcome. Importantly, this effect was even stronger when those who claim discriminatory treatment were ingroup members – for example, when women evaluated other women who claimed they were victims of gender discrimination (Garcia, Horstman, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe

(2005). This effect has been explained by reference to the so-called Black Sheep Effect (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). This tendency to reject ingroup members who display undesirable behavior is seen to derive from the fact that ingroup members’ behavior is reflected on the self. Therefore ingroup members who behave negatively must be distanced from the self. Garcia et al. (2005) in fact showed that when ingroup members made attributions to discrimination, people showed decreased identification with the ingroup, while this was not the case when outgroup members attributed their failure to discrimination.

In line with Garcia et al.’s (2005) findings, we expect that when other ingroup members indicate discriminatory treatment, this will reflect negatively on the self. In line with previous findings, the opinions of outgroup members are not expected to have this negative effect. In fact, we expect outgroup members who indicate discrimination to actually have a positive effect on the self. It is important to note that this has not yet been examined in prior research. In fact, prior studies examined reactions to ingroup and outgroup members who indicated discrimination against *their own group*. In this paper we focus on the impact of ingroup and outgroup members who express opinions *about the treatment received by the ingroup.* In this context, the behavior of ingroup members is parallel to that examined in prior research (Garcia et al., 2005), and is expected to have a negative impact on self-views. However, the behavior of outgroup members is not. Outgroup members who indicate discriminatory treatment of the target and the target’s ingroup cannot be seen as self-serving. In fact, contrary to ingroup members, they may be seen as making such claims despite (and not because) of their own self-interest.

As such, the opinions of outgroup members who indicate discrimination are more likely to be taken as legitimate and as offering a ray of hope for fair treatment. By contrast, the motivations of ingroup members who indicate discrimination may be more dubious, and may include self-interest and avoidance of responsibility. We thus expect that while ingroup members who indicate discriminatory treatment against the ingroup are likely to have a negative impact on self-views, outgroup members who indicate discriminatory treatment against the target’s ingroup are actually likely to have a positive impact on self-views. No such source effect is expected when there is no indication of discriminatory treatment.

The self-views we examine in this paper are self-stereotyping and self-handicapping. Self-stereotyping indicates the degree to which people tend to describe themselves in terms of group stereotypes. Defining oneself in these stereotypical ways when confronted with subtle discrimination is disadvantageous to the self (see also Cihangir, Barreto, & Ellemers, 2007). Since stereotype use is the cause of negative outcomes in discriminatory contexts, self-stereotyping would justify this discriminatory treatment instead of challenging group based views of the self as inaccurate. Self-handicapping refers to the tendency for individuals to claim or even create performance undermining circumstances in order to cope with anticipated failure. Although it is argued that the use of self-handicapping strategies can help to psychologically protect the self from the consequences of an anticipated negative outcome (Tice, 1991), it nevertheless reveals negative self-views because it reflects a negative expectation about one's future performance.

These predictions are examined in two studies. In Study 1, we examine the impact of ingroup or outgroup members, who indicate or approve of discriminatory treatment, on attributions to discrimination, attributions to personal failure, and self-views. In Study 2, we replicate these results and additionally examine how indication vs. denial of discrimination by ingroup and outgroup members affect individuals' subsequent behavior.

Study 1

We constructed an interview situation where people supposedly applied for an attractive position but were rejected. Depending on experimental condition, female participants then heard that other ingroup/outgroup members either approved of the experimental procedure, or indicated sexist treatment of women. We expected that when information from others indicates the possibility of sexist treatment, this would increase the extent to which female targets consider sexism as a possible cause of the rejection. Regardless of the group membership of the others, this should lead to more attributions of the rejection to discrimination and less attributions to personal failure (Hypothesis 1). However, we hypothesized the group membership of others who indicate discriminatory treatment to affect

targets’ self-views. Specifically, we expected that female participants would hold less negative self-views (less self-stereotyping and less self-handicapping) when male participants indicate discrimination than when other female participants indicate discrimination (Hypothesis 2). No such source effects are expected when there is no indication of discriminatory treatment.

Method

Participants: Participants were 78 female students at Leiden University with a mean age of 21. Each session of the experiment lasted approximately 40 minutes, after which all participants were fully debriefed and received 4 Euros (approximately 4.80 USD) for their participation.

Design and Procedure: The study consisted of a 2 (Others’ opinion about the procedure: indicate discrimination vs. approval of procedure) X 2 (Group membership of source: outgroup/male vs. ingroup/female) between-participants factorial design. All participants were seated in separate cubicles and were equipped with personal computers. We used a bogus job-interview paradigm (see also Cihangir et al., 2007) in which participants were asked to act as though they were being interviewed for a job in order to help us train interviewers. After the computer made a (simulated) connection with the interviewer but prior to the interview, some personal information about the interviewer was provided to the participant (Last name and title: Drs. Zomeren; 30 years old). Next, participants received the 10 interview questions (see also Cihangir et al., 2007) which indirectly referred to the participants’ gender identity (e.g., do you dress yourself attractively in order to influence other people). Once the interview was finished, the interviewer indicated that some time was needed to decide whether the participant in question would be selected. While they ostensibly waited for the interviewer’s decision, we told the participant that she could use the computer to chat about the interview with three supposedly other interviewees who allegedly participated in the same interview procedure. We used three common Dutch female names in the condition where the source was female, and three common Dutch male names in the condition where the source was male. Participants were then asked to enter their names into a login screen. Next, they saw three other names and their own name appearing below a screen which contained a chat-room. The *Others’ opinion about the procedure* was manipulated by the content of

information these three other interviewees allegedly gave. In the indicate discrimination condition, the messages of others contained information which made clear that they disliked the interview procedure because it was placing women at a disadvantage, disliked the interviewer who seemed to be unfriendly toward women and thought the interview questions were not appropriate for women who were applying for the position. In the approval of procedure condition, the others told that they approved of the interview procedure because it seemed appropriate, considered the interviewer to be an experienced person to conduct this kind of interview, and found the interview questions appropriate for selecting people for this kind of position. In both conditions, we also included interview irrelevant information to the messages (e.g., “I feel like having a coffee, anyone joining me when this is finished?”) in order to increase the credibility and to avoid demand characteristics. After three rounds of information exchange, the session was ended and the participants were asked to answer some questions about the other people with whom they had supposedly been chatting. These questions included some filler questions and questions that were meant to check for the effectiveness of the *Others' evaluation of the procedure* manipulation. Next, we told participants that the interviewer had come to a decision and the connection with the interviewer was renewed. The interviewer told participants: “I am sorry to inform you that you are not selected. You did not answer the crucial questions properly”. We used this ambiguous rejection on the basis of gender-biased interview questions to induce subtle discrimination in all experimental conditions. After participants read that they were rejected, the connection with the interviewer was supposedly terminated and the participants were asked to answer a set of questions (manipulation checks and dependent variables) about the interview procedure. We explained that these questions would serve to improve the selection procedure, assured participants that neither the interviewer nor the other interviewees could see their answers, and we urged them to respond honestly to all questions.

Dependent variables: All dependent measures were taken under anonymous conditions, and this was made clear to participants. This was done because we were not interested in examining public compliance with opinions of others about the situation, but instead our interest was to investigate the impact of others' judgment of the situation on the individual's own perceptions of

discrimination. All responses were made on 7 point rating scales ranging from (1) “not at all” to (7) “very much” unless otherwise indicated. We checked for the effectiveness of the manipulation of *Others' opinion about the procedure* by asking participants to what degree others disliked the interviewer, disliked the interview procedure and were satisfied with the interview questions (recoded; α = .99). To check the effectiveness of the source manipulation, we asked the participants to indicate the gender of the other interviewees with whom they had been chatting. Next, we measured attributions on two dimensions: Attributions to discrimination and attributions to personal failure. A principal components analysis confirmed that attributions to discrimination and attributions to personal failure loaded on different factors that together explained 76.93 % of variance in the individual items. Attributions to discrimination were measured with 4 items (e.g., the selection decision that was made was due to gender discrimination, α = 91) and attributions to personal failure were measured with 2 items (e.g., the selection decision that was made was due to my effort, α = .60; r = .43, p = < .001).

The measurement of self-handicapping is best achieved if it refers to an upcoming task. Accordingly, to measure self-views, we first informed participants that we were interested in ascertaining to what extent the interviewer had made a correct decision and that they would be asked to perform an additional task in order to help us to do that (see also Cihangir et al., 2007). We told participants that we needed some information about themselves before they could start to work on the performance task. The questions for additional information contained the self-handicapping and self-stereotyping measures. Self-handicapping was measured with 12 items adapted from Rhodewalt (1990; see also Cihangir et al., 2007) which consisted of items such as “I am nervous about the upcoming test” (α = .80). The self-stereotyping measure consisted of nine female stereotypical traits which were adapted from the Dutch version of the Bem sex role inventory (Bem, 1974; Willemsen & Fischer, 1997). The traits were: dependent, considerate, understanding, indecisive, emotional, over-sensitive, romantic, sentimental, and caring (α = .68). After participants answered the dependent variables, they were fully debriefed, thanked and paid for their participation.

Results

All variables were analyzed with 2 (Others' opinion about the procedure: indicate discrimination vs. approval of procedure) X 2 (Source: male vs. female) between participants analyses of variance unless otherwise indicated.

Manipulation checks: Participants indicated that the three other interviewees were more satisfied with the procedure, with the interviewer and the interview questions when they approved of the procedure (M = 6.42, SD = 0.68) than when they indicated discrimination (M = 1.31, SD = 0.40), F (1, 74) = 1616.18, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .96$. All participants correctly indicated the gender of other interviewees with whom they had been chatting. The manipulation of Others' opinion about the procedure and the manipulation of Source can be considered successful.

Attributions: We submitted attributions to discrimination and attributions to personal failure to a between participants MANOVA. These analyses only revealed a multivariate main effect of Others' opinion about the procedure, F (2, 73) = 11.11, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .23$. At the univariate level, the main effect of Others' opinion about the procedure was reliable for both dependent variables. As expected, participants attributed their own rejection more to gender discrimination when others indicated discrimination (M = 4.47, SD = 1.30) than when others approved of the procedure (M = 3.31, SD = 1.40), F (1, 74) = 14.20, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .16$. Accordingly, participants attributed their rejection less to personal failure when others indicated discrimination (M = 2.45, SD = 1.37) than when others approved of the procedure (M = 3.18, SD = 1.41), F (1, 74) = 5.96, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$. Importantly, these effects were not qualified by an interaction effect, as predicted.

Self-views

Self-stereotyping: An ANOVA on this measure revealed no reliable main effects. However, as predicted, it revealed a reliable interaction between the two factors F (1, 74) = 7.47, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$. Inspection of means (see Table 4) revealed the predicted pattern: participants self-stereotyped less when a male source indicated discrimination than when a female source indicated discrimination F (1, 75) = 5.70, $p < .05$. There was no such source effect when the procedure was approved by others F (1, 75) = 2.25, $p > .05$, ns.

Table 4. Self-views in Study 1

	Men		Women	
	Indicate	Approve	Indicate	Approve
Self-stereotyping	4.19[b]	4.59[ab]	4.67[a]	4.29[ab]
	(0.48)	(0.58)	(0.81)	(0.59)
Self-handicapping	2.44[b]	2.99[a]	2.95[a]	2.46[b]
	(0.80)	(0.74)	(0.95)	(0.63)

Self-handicapping: We submitted the self-handicapping measure to a between participants ANOVA. This analysis revealed no main effects. However, the two-way interaction between the two factors was reliable, $F(1, 74) = 8.43$, $p < .005$, $\eta^2 = .10$. The means in Table 4 show that, as predicted, when men indicated discrimination lower levels of self-handicapping tendencies were reported than when other women indicated discrimination, $F(1, 75) = 4.04$, $p < .05$. Interestingly, the opposite pattern was observed within the approval of procedure condition. When women approved of the procedure, lower levels of self-handicapping tendencies were reported than when men approved of the procedure, $F(1, 75) = 4.47$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

Corroborating our predictions, the results of this study show that when discrimination is subtle, perceptions of discrimination and attributions of a negative outcome to personal failure are affected by the opinions of others. Participants attributed their negative outcome more to discrimination and less to personal failure when discrimination was indicated by others than when others approved of the procedure. Also as predicted, this pattern did not depend on the identity of the source. However, as hypothesized, *the identity of the source* had an important effect on participants’ *self-views*. Specifically, when men indicated discrimination, this positively affected participant’s self-views as they self-handicapped and self-stereotyped less compared to when women indicated discrimination and compared to when men approved of the procedure. Or stated differently, when other women indicated discrimination, this resulted in relatively more negative self-views as this led participants to describe themselves more in

gender stereotypical terms, and caused them to more clearly anticipate failure (as is evident from their self-handicapping tendencies).

Study 2

In Study 2, we wished to replicate and extend the findings of Study 1 with more symmetrical manipulations. For that reason we compared a situation in which others indicate discriminatory treatment to a situation where others likewise consider the possibility of sexist treatment, but deny the occurrence of discrimination. Similar to Study 1, we expected more attributions to discrimination and less attributions to personal failure when discrimination is indicated by others than when others deny discrimination, and anticipated that this would occur regardless of the group membership of the others (Hypothesis 1). Again along similar lines as in Study 1, we expected more beneficial effects of *indication of discrimination* by outgroup members for the self-views of the targets compared to the situation in which ingroup members indicate discrimination (Hypothesis 2).

We also wished to extend the findings of Study 1 by examining participants' behavioral responses to subtle discrimination to assess the extent to which they actually try to improve their current and future outcomes. Specifically, we assessed how our experimental manipulations affected subsequent behavior of participants that might help challenge the rejection decision they had received. First, we measured participants' expression of their performance abilities. To measure this we used an adaptation of the *performance state self-esteem* subscale of Heatherton and Polivy (1991). Following this, we looked at the actual task performance of participants by examining their performance on an IQ-test. While *performance state self-esteem* indicates participants' subjective confidence, the performance task offers a more objective measurement of actual effort invested to improve future outcomes and disprove the legitimacy of the current procedure. Finally, we examined protest behavior against the selection procedure that was used. We expected that when outgroup members indicate discrimination participants would not only hold more positive self-views, but should also be inclined to show higher *performance state self-esteem* and improved task

performance as well as increased protest behavior compared with the situation where ingroup members indicate discrimination (Hypothesis 3).

Method

Participants: Participants were 90 female students at Leiden University with a mean age of 20. Each session of the experiment lasted approximately 45 minutes, after which all participants were fully debriefed and received 4.50 Euros (US $ 5.40) for their participation.

Design and Procedure: The design and the procedure of this study were identical to those of Study 1 except for the manipulation of the opinion of others in the *approval of procedure condition*. As in Study 1, participants were asked to take part in the interview and after they were finished with the interview, we asked them to use the computer to chat with three other (bogus) interviewees while ostensibly waiting for the decision of the interviewer. The same messages as in Study 1 were used to manipulate the condition *indicating discrimination*. However, the condition where others approved of the procedure in Study 1 was changed into *denial of discrimination* in Study 2. This denial manipulation was identical to the manipulation to indicate discrimination, except that the procedure was explicitly evaluated as fair towards women (instead of being judged as putting women at a disadvantage). Thus, in the denial of discrimination condition the others explicitly indicated that they liked the interview procedure because the procedure was well designed for women as well as for men, that they liked the interviewer who seemed to be friendly toward women, and that the interview questions seemed appropriate for women who were applying for the position. When the chat session containing these manipulations had ended, the connection with the interviewer allegedly was renewed and all participants received the same message as in Study 1 to induce subtle discrimination (see Study 1). After the connection with the interviewer was supposedly terminated, the participants were asked to answer a set of questions about the interview procedure. We explained that although their answers would remain anonymous, these questions would serve to improve the selection procedure, and we urged them to respond earnestly to all questions.

Dependent measures: All responses were made on 7 point rating scales ranging from (1) “not at all” to (7) “very much”. We checked with the same items

as in Study 1 for the effectiveness of Others' opinion about the procedure manipulation (α = .97) and we checked the effectiveness of the source manipulation by asking participants whether they have been chatting with men or women. The same scales as in Study 1 were used to measure *attributions* (attributions to discrimination: α = .94; attributions to personal failure: α = .59; r = .39, p = .001).

To measure *self-views*, we followed the same procedure as in Study 1 (see also Cihangir et al. 2007). We used an abbreviated version of the self-handicapping scale (5 items; α = .64) and the same self-stereotyping scale as in Study 1 (α = .68). After participants completed these scales, we assessed their behavioral responses to the situation in different ways. We first measured *performance state self-esteem* as a subjective statement of ability (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991; α = .80). Second, as a more objective evidence of ability, we assessed the *performance* of participants on an IQ-test consisting of 15 items that were selected from existing IQ-test questions, measuring verbal ability, math ability and logical reasoning. All participants received 10 minutes to complete the task. We stressed that this performance task would help us to evaluate the decision of the interviewer and that their performance on this task would potentially enable the participant to be selected despite the interviewers' decision.

After they finished this performance task (or after the time allotted for this task had elapsed), we presented participants with a binary choice to *protest* or not to protest against the selection decision. When participants indicated a wish to protest, we informed them about different possibilities to display protest behavior. We informed the participants that one possibility to protest was sending a complaint to the experimenter about the interview procedure through the computer, and another possibility was to write and sign a letter to be sent to the responsible instances. We made clear that participants could write a letter, send a complaint, or do both to express their grievances about the interview procedure. Thus, if participants indicated a wish to protest, they were first given the opportunity to indicate whether they wished to send a complaint *to the experimenter* ("Yes, I wish to complain" or "No, I do not wish to complain"). If they indicated that they wished to complain, they were given the opportunity to write a short message and supposedly send this to the experimenter. Then, all participants were asked to indicate whether they wanted to write a letter to be

sent to the people who were supposedly *responsible for the training of the interviewer* (“Yes, I wish to write a letter” or “No, I do not wish to write a letter”). If participants indicated a wish to write a protest letter, they were given the opportunity to write a short letter to indicate the aspects of the interview procedure they disliked and put their name under the letter. When the participant completed this letter and pressed a “send” button, the letter was supposedly sent to the responsible people. After completion of these measures, all participants were thanked and paid for their participation, and fully debriefed.

Results

All variables were analyzed with a 2 (Others’ opinion about the procedure: indicate discrimination vs. denial of discrimination) X 2 (Source: male vs. female) between participants analysis of variance unless otherwise indicated.

Manipulation check: Participants reported that the three other interviewees were more satisfied with the procedure, with the interviewer and with the interview questions when they denied discrimination (M = 6.42, SD = 0.70) than when others indicated discrimination (M = 1.47, SD = 0.74), F (2, 86) = 1039.73, $p < .0001$, $\eta^2 = .92$. All participants correctly indicated the gender of the other interviewees with whom they had been chatting. The manipulation of Others’ evaluation of the procedure and the manipulation of source of influence can be considered successful.

Attributions: We submitted attributions to discrimination and attributions to personal failure to a between participants MANOVA. These analyses revealed a multivariate main effect of Others’ opinion about the procedure, F (2, 85) = 9.10, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .18$. This main effect was reliable at the univariate level for both dependent variables. As predicted and consistent with the results of Study 1, female participants attributed their rejection more to gender discrimination when others indicated discrimination (M = 4.68, SD = 1.38) than when others denied discrimination (M = 3.31, SD = 1.72), F (1, 86) = 17.20, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .17$. Accordingly, participants attributed their rejection less to personal failure when others indicated discrimination (M = 2.23, SD = 1.29) than when others denied discrimination (M = 2.86, SD = 1.34), F (1, 86) = 4.97, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$. Consistent with Study 1 and in line with hypothesis 1, these main effects were not qualified by the group membership of the source.

Self-views

Self-stereotyping: We submitted the self-stereotyping scale to a between participants ANOVA. This analysis revealed no main effects. However the two-way interaction between the 2 factors was reliable F (1, 86) = 4.47, $p < .05$, η^2 = .05. Inspection of means (see Table 5), revealed the pattern predicted in Hypothesis 2: when discrimination was indicated by men, female participants reported lower levels of self-stereotyping than when women indicated discrimination, F (1, 87) = 7.98, $p < .01$. When men or women denied discrimination, the group membership of the source did not affect self-stereotyping tendencies, F (1, 87) < 1, ns.

Table 5. Self-views in Study 2.

	Men		Women	
	Indicate	Deny	Indicate	Deny
Self-stereotyping	4.21^{b}	4.47^{ab}	4.75^{a}	4.44^{ab}
	(0.64)	(0.77)	(0.62)	(0.53)
Self-handicapping	2.34^{b}	2.63^{ab}	2.84^{a}	2.39^{ab}
	(0.63)	(0.89)	(1.02)	(0.86)

Note 1: Standard deviations are reported between parentheses below each mean.
Note 2: Means with different superscripts within each row differ reliably from each other.

Self-handicapping: The between participants ANOVA on self-handicapping revealed no main effects. However, the predicted two-way interaction between the 2 factors was reliable F (1, 86) = 4.19, $p < .05$, η^2 = .05. Inspection of means (see Table 5) revealed that female participants self-handicapped reliably more when discrimination was indicated by women than when men indicated discrimination, F (1, 87) = 3.96, $p < .05$. There was no such an effect of source within the denial of discrimination condition, F (1, 87) < 1, ns. This is consistent with Hypothesis 2 and the results of Study 1.

Behavioral Responses

Performance related self-confidence: We submitted the Performance State Self Esteem (PSSE) scale to a between participants ANOVA. This analysis revealed the predicted interaction effect, F (1, 86) = 4.64, $p < .05$, η^2 = .05. Consistent with the pattern predicted in Hypothesis 3, female participants

reported higher levels of PSSE when men indicated discrimination (M = 5.63, SD = 0.74) than when women indicated discrimination (M = 5.00, SD = 0.83), F (1, 87) = 5.94, $p < .05$. The group membership of the source did not have any effect on PSSE within the denial of discrimination condition, M_{male} = 5.27, SD = 0.94; M_{female} = 5.43, SD = 0.97), F (1, 87) < 1, *ns*.

Individual task performance: The between participants ANOVA on the number of correct answered items revealed a reliable two-way interaction between Others’ opinion about the procedure and Source F (1, 86) = 5.04, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, inspection of means revealed that when men indicated gender discrimination, female participants showed reliably better task performance (M = 11.23, SD = 2.33) than when women indicated gender discrimination (M = 9.78, SD = 2.54), F (1, 87) = 4.23, $p < .05$. There was no such effect of source in the denial of discrimination condition (M_{male} = 9.55, SD = 2.46; M_{female} = 10.30, SD = 1.94), F (1, 87) 1.15, $p = .29$, *ns*.

Protest: To test our hypothesis that indicating discrimination by men will increase willingness to protest, we created a dichotomous variable with the value 1 for participants who showed at least one of the two protest behaviors and with the value 0 indicating participants who did not protest at all. We then performed a logistic regression analysis on this measure. This analysis revealed a reliable interaction between Others’ opinion about the procedure and Source, B = 1.87, Wald’s $\chi 2$ (1, N = 90) = 4.50, $p < .05$. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, when men indicated discrimination, participants were more likely to engage in protest behavior than when women indicated discrimination, B = -1.59, Wald’s $\chi 2$ (1, N = 45) = 6.09, $p < .05$. Engagement in protest behavior was not affected by the group membership of the source in the denial of discrimination condition, B = 0.28, Wald’s $\chi 2$ (1, N = 45) = 0.22, $p > .05$, ns.

Discussion

In line with the findings of Study 1, the results of this study showed that opinions of others affect attributions to discrimination and attributions to personal failure. Using a more symmetrical manipulation of other’s opinions, this study demonstrated that in a situation when discrimination is ambiguous, targets attribute their failure more to discrimination and less to personal failure when discrimination is indicated by others than when others deny discriminatory

treatment. Moreover, as predicted in Hypothesis 1, this result held irrespective of the group membership of the source. Consistent with Study 1, and in line with Hypothesis 2, we also found that when the outgroup (men) indicated discrimination against women, this impacted differently on targets' self-views than when the ingroup (women) indicated such discrimination. Indeed, participants who knew that the men who were present indicated discrimination against women were less inclined to self-stereotype and to self-handicap than any other participants.

Furthermore, in this second study we also showed that the gender of a source that indicates discrimination has important consequences for the subsequent behavior of victims of subtle discrimination. When outgroup members indicated discrimination, participants reported higher levels of performance related self-confidence and showed a better performance on a given IQ-test compared to when ingroup members indicated discrimination. Consistent with our expectations, when outgroup members indicated discrimination participants also showed more evidence of protest behavior (such as complaining to the experimenter or writing a letter to the responsible instances) than when ingroup members indicated discrimination.

General Discussion

The studies reported in this paper extend prior research by demonstrating that the opinions of other people fulfill an important role in perceptions of subtle discrimination, as well as having an impact on the self-views and the behavior of those who are exposed to such discrimination. In two studies, we demonstrated that when other ingroup or outgroup members indicate discrimination the perception of subtle discrimination is facilitated, while this perception was impaired when other ingroup or outgroup members approved of the procedure (Study 1) or denied the possibility of discriminatory treatment (Study 2). Prior research examining the role of others in discrimination contexts was limited to the effects of the passive presence of others on the tendency of victims to report discrimination (Stangor, et al., 2002; Swim, et al., 1998; Swim & Hyers, 1999; see also Kaiser & Miller, 2001; 2004). We extend this research by showing that others can play an active role at an earlier stage in the process, that is, when targets are

unsure how to interpret the situation and have to decide whether they have been victims of discrimination.

Although the group membership of the source did not affect perceptions of discrimination, as predicted, the source of influence moderated the effects of the opinion of others on people’s self-views indicated by their self-stereotyping and self-handicapping tendencies. In both studies, people held more negative self-views (as they self-stereotyped and self-handicapped more) when other ingroup members indicated discrimination than when outgroup members indicated the possibility of discrimination. Previous research showed that the undesirable behavior of ingroup members reflects more upon the self compared with the similar behavior of outgroup members (e.g., Garcia et al., 2005; Marques, Abrams, Paez, & Martinez-Taboada, 1998; Marques, Abrams, & Serjdio, 2001, Marques & Paez, 1994). The present research extends this knowledge by showing that when both ingroup and outgroup members express opinions about *ingroup treatment*, targets’ self-views are harmed by ingroup members who indicate discrimination while they gain from similar opinions voiced by outgroup members. Stated differently, while one may argue that pointing out discriminatory treatment is likely to have positive consequences for target’s self-views when it offers an alternative to fully accepting the responsibility for a negative outcome, our results show that this is only the case when discrimination is indicated by outgroup - and not by ingroup - members. These results were consistent across two studies that were conducted with slightly different manipulations.

In Study 2, we extended the findings of Study 1 by demonstrating that the source of influence also affected performance related self-confidence, actual task performance, and protest behavior. Individuals indicated higher performance related self-confidence and they actually performed better on a IQ task when outgroup members indicated discrimination compared to when ingroup members indicated discrimination. When men indicated discrimination, female participants also engaged more in protest behavior by complaining to the experimenter or writing a letter to the responsible instances than when other women indicated discrimination. At first sight, this finding may seem inconsistent with work showing that protest is more likely when backed by fellow ingroup members (Klandermans, 1997). However, contrary to the social movement participation examined in previous research, in the present context, no collective action was necessary, as

participants could individually file a complaint or write a letter of protest. In this case, backing by outgroup members could therefore be perceived as more valid, as their evaluations of the situation were made in the total absence of self-interest. Indeed this context, behavioral disconfirmation processes that would exempt the individual from sexist treatment, for instance by showing that stereotypical expectations do not apply to the self (performance) and protesting against the procedure, seem to be promoted by outgroup support, instead of by ingroup support.

One might argue that the different effects of ingroup and outgroup opinions on self-views, and on the behavior of the participants may be due to the possibility that when outgroup members indicated discrimination, perceived pervasiveness of discrimination may be decreased relative to when ingroup members indicated discrimination. This might have a similar result on self-views and behavior as the result we report here (i.e., participants would be less negatively affected when they perceive discrimination as less pervasive; see Schmitt, Branscombe, & Postmes, 2003). Indeed, Schmitt et al. (2003) argued that encountering pervasive sexism leads to more negative psychological consequences than when sexism is perceived to be rare. However, we think this is not a very likely explanation for our results, given that we did not find the group membership of the source to affect perceptions of discrimination. Nevertheless, it is true that our measure of perceptions of discrimination did not explicitly address the perceived pervasiveness of discrimination, so future research should examine this possibility more closely.

One potential weakness of the present studies might be that the manipulations also varied gender identity salience. In Study 1 the manipulation of other's opinion was not entirely symmetrical, and this may have rendered gender identity more salient in the condition where others indicated gender discrimination, than in the condition where others simply approved of the procedure. In Study 2, we addressed this problem by designing a more symmetrical manipulation, and the results of Study 1 were replicated. Furthermore, countering the possibility that the manipulation of group membership of source affected our results by increasing gender identity salience, the manipulations did not result in any main effects of the group membership of

the source, but only revealed an interaction between the two factors, which is consistent with our theoretical reasoning.

Another potential weakness of the current studies might be that our *Other’s opinion about the procedure* manipulations may have caused differences in general mood due to the indication vs. approval of procedure (Study 1) or denial of discrimination (Study 2) conditions. If this were the case other results might be due to those differences in mood instead of our experimental manipulations. However, again, no main effects of other’s opinion about the procedure were found for people’s self-views, and the interaction effects we observed are less easily explained from differential mood.

In sum, our results provide evidence that outgroup members indicating discriminatory treatment are more beneficial for the self-views of targets of discrimination than ingroup members would make a similar claim. Moreover, our results show that in circumstances such as the ones examined here outgroup members are more capable than ingroup members of mobilizing targets to counteract and protest against discrimination. Further research should provide more evidence for these processes, including a closer examination of the mediating psychological processes, as well as a thorough examination of the boundary conditions of this pattern of findings. Future research should also dedicate additional effort to illuminating the influence other people can have on how a target experiences discrimination. In fact, given that people often resort to others who are either present or available to help interpret ambiguous events in their life, the processes examined here appear highly relevant to the understanding of how targets experience discrimination. In particular, these results highlight the importance of considering people’s broader social context when considering the obstacles as well as the resources available to victims of discrimination.