



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Social exclusion: put into context

Doolaard, F.T.

Citation

Doolaard, F. T. (2021, June 8). *Social exclusion: put into context*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3185503>

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/3185503>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/3185503> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Doolaard, F.T.

Title: Social exclusion: put into context

Issue date: 2021-06-08

Chapter 6

Discussion

Throughout four empirical chapters, this dissertation investigated social exclusion in a variety of contexts. Over the course of 11 behavioral experiments and a longitudinal study, the presented findings provide insight in the importance of the context when studying social exclusion. First, this dissertation investigated actors' excluding behavior and targets' experiences of exclusion in different contexts in the interpersonal sphere. Second, it investigated targets' feelings of exclusion from society, thereby assessing how knowledge on social exclusion could further our understanding of societal issues such as poverty and gender inequality. This epilogue starts by briefly recapping the main findings from the first two empirical chapters, offering an integrated discussion of these chapters and the implications for the field, and considering possible avenues for further research. Subsequently, the findings on feelings of exclusion from society that were presented in the last two empirical chapters, are discussed in the same way, and are linked to the first two empirical chapters.

The Situated Approach – Chapters 2 and 3

The introductory chapter of this dissertation discussed the “situated perspective” on social exclusion, which stresses that how people respond to social exclusion, can depend on the situation in which they are excluded (see Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016). To provide insight in the importance of the context in which social exclusion occurs, it is relevant to identify in which contexts actors are most likely to exclude targets, and how targets experience exclusion in these contexts. If actors are more likely to exclude targets in some contexts than in others, these exclusion decisions of actors also determine the contexts in which targets are most likely to be excluded. To further the understanding of exclusion, research may especially benefit from assessing targets' responses in these situations. Together, the first two empirical chapters of this dissertation studied actors' likeliness to exclude targets in different situations, and how targets responded to exclusion in these situations.

Chapter 2

The goal of the first empirical chapter was to advance insight in when actors are likely to exclude targets. For this purpose, we considered both the context in which targets could be removed from the group, and the context in which targets could be denied access into the group. In this way, we compared two ways in which actors could exclude targets (i.e., two *processes* of exclusion), and tested if these processes changed how likely actors were to exclude them. Indeed, in four experimental studies, we demonstrated that actors were more likely to exclude targets when they could do so by not allowing them access into their group,

than when they could do so by removing them from the group. Actors more often denied targets access, both when targets were burdensome to the group, and when they performed in line with the group average. Actors did so, because they considered inclusion to be less normative for people who were not part of the group yet. For targets, our studies demonstrated that these contexts mattered less: Being denied access into a group was just as harmful as being removed from a group that targets were already part of. Although for actors, the process of exclusion thus had a large influence on how likely they were to exclude targets, targets were equally affected, regardless of the process that brought about the exclusion.

Previous research has suggested that actors are generally hesitant to exclude others, and only exclude targets who are burdensome to the group, to protect group functioning (Wesselmann, Wirth, Pryor, Reeder, & Williams, 2013, 2015). However, that research did not consider different ways in which actors could exclude others. We showed that when targets were not burdensome, and performed in line with their peers, actors were still relatively likely to exclude them in contexts where they could deny them access to the group (vs. remove them from the group). Rather than a general reluctance to exclude others, our research thus suggests that while actors may be hesitant to exclude others by removing them from the group, excluding others by denying them access is considered relatively normative.

We have argued that it is important to research targets' responses to exclusion in different contexts, because the context can influence their responses (see Robertson, Delton, Klein, Cosmides, & Tooby, 2014). However, it is important to note that the two processes of how targets were excluded that were studied in this chapter, did not matter for how harmful it was for them to end up apart from the group. Prior research on two other ways in which targets could end up excluded (being neglected by others vs. failing to claim inclusion) also did not find that this affected how harmful exclusion was, although it did affect the positivity of inclusion (De Waal-Andrews & Van Beest, 2012). It may be that while other contextual aspects can change the experience of exclusion (Gerber & Wheeler, 2014; Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016), the *process* of how targets are excluded, is generally unimportant for targets, when the result of ending up apart from the group is the same. However, it may also be that yet other processes than the ones investigated in these studies, could change the experience of exclusion. For example, being explicitly excluded (i.e., "rejected", Wesselmann & Williams, 2017), could be less harmful for targets than being excluded through being neglected (i.e., "ostracized"; Williams, 2007), because being neglected brings an element of uncertainty to

the exclusion situation that can be especially aversive (see Freedman, Williams, & Beer, 2016; Güzel & Şahin, 2018).

Chapter 2 introduced a new paradigm to the literature, that has since been used in other research projects (e.g., Lelieveld, Harris, & Van Dillen, 2020; see also Chapter 3). In this paradigm, participants play a game in which they are shown ten pairs of pictures containing dots. For each pair, they have to estimate as fast and accurately as possible which picture contains the most dots (based on the dot-estimation task, Gerard & Hoyt, 1974). Participants receive feedback on their own performance and that of their team members, and in the final round, a high average team score is rewarded with prize money. After the test round of the game, participants who are assigned the role of “actors” can choose which of their team members they want to include or exclude from the team. Participants who are assigned the role of “targets” receive information that they have either been included or excluded by their team members. Different than paradigms that center around targets’ experiences of being neglected while they (have to) remain part of the group (e.g., Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2006; Wolf et al., 2014), our paradigm models rejection, which results in targets’ actual removal from the group. Moreover, the paradigm introduced here includes an element of group performance (see also Wirth, Turchan, Zimmerman, & Bernstein, 2014), and feedback on participants’ individual performance can easily be manipulated, because for participants, their actual performance in the game is hard to estimate. While usually, targets in experimental paradigms are excluded for no apparent reason (see Nezlek et al., 2015; Robertson et al., 2014), in this paradigm, providing feedback that targets underperform could be used to make the experience of being excluded more realistic and understandable for targets (see also Chapter 3).

Another crucial element of this paradigm, is that it can readily test actors and targets of exclusion in the same experimental design. Chapter 2 advanced the literature by doing so – as far as we are aware – for the first time. In this chapter, bringing information about actors’ excluding behavior and targets’ feelings together, demonstrated an important discrepancy: While actors were far more likely to exclude targets by denying them access than by removing them from the group, targets were equally harmed in both situations. That both forms of exclusion were equally harmful for targets, shows the importance of documenting that actors nevertheless were less hesitant to exclude them by denying them access. Integrating research on actors and targets could also be beneficial to understand other processes of exclusion that

may lead actors to exclude targets in ways that are especially harmful for targets. For example, research could test if actors may be more likely to neglect targets than to reject them, while being neglected may, from the viewpoint of targets, be most harmful (Freedman et al., 2016; Güzel & Şahin, 2018). Actors may do so, because for them, neglecting the target effectively avoids the aversive confrontation of rejecting someone (for a similar argument about actors' likeliness to exclude others online vs. face-to-face, see Swaab, Kern, Diermeier, & Medvec, 2009). In this way, integrating research on actors and targets in one design could help study the dynamic social interaction between actors and targets, and so provide a more complete view on social exclusion (see Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014).

By testing both actors and targets in our new paradigm, we have assessed how likely actors are to exclude targets in this paradigm, and this is informative for the relevance of documenting targets' responses to exclusion in that paradigm. This is notable because, for instance, in the dominant Cyberball paradigm, actors' behavior is simulated so that targets suddenly stop receiving the ball in a game of toss (Williams et al., 2006). However, data about actors playing Cyberball do not support that they are likely to conspire spontaneously to stop throwing the ball to a target individual altogether, for no apparent reason (Wesselmann et al., 2013, 2015; Zadro & Gonsalkorale, 2014). Assessing targets' responses in a situation in which actors are actually unlikely to exclude them, may paint an incomplete picture of social exclusion, and may limit the external validity. If the context is essential, verifying actors' likelihood to exclude targets in the same experimental setting in which targets' responses to exclusion are demonstrated, may become increasingly important in future research.

Chapter 3

While Chapter 2 tested contextual differences by studying two processes of exclusion (i.e., *how* targets were excluded by actors), Chapter 3 centered around the reason *why* targets were excluded by actors. Prior research has shown that the reason for being excluded can affect how targets respond. For example, being excluded for being incompetent leads to more sadness, and less anger than being excluded for lacking warmth (Çelik, Lammers, Van Beest, Bekker, & Vonk, 2013), just as being excluded for free-riding evokes less anger, and leads to different re-inclusion strategies than being excluded for posing an infection threat to the group (Robertson et al., 2014). Importantly, empirical studies have documented that actors are unlikely to spontaneously exclude others, unless it concerns targets who pose a burden to the group by underperforming (Wesselmann et al., 2013, 2015). Chapter 3 tested if, for

targets, their performance in the group may also be an important factor that can change their experiences of being included and excluded.

Indeed, Chapter 3 shows that targets' performance in the group can make inclusion less positive, and can bring some positive elements to the experience of ending up excluded from the group. This introduces a new perspective to the social exclusion literature, where exclusion is always described as a fundamentally negative outcome that people want to avoid at all times, while inclusion should always be positive (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Williams, 2007; Wesselmann & Williams, 2017). Four studies showed that compared to targets who performed in line with the group, targets who underperformed experienced this as distressing, and felt less positive when they were included in the group by their peers. Although being excluded from the group harmed low-performers' and equal-performers' feelings and need fulfilment similarly, underperformers did experience exclusion as relatively preferable and relieving: Exclusion relieved low-performing targets from the distressing experience of underperforming in the group. Moreover, underperformers were even relatively likely to voluntarily leave the group. After leaving the group (or ending up apart from the group by chance), their need fulfilment and feelings improved relative to when they were still part of the group. So, although exclusion is always seen as something fundamentally negative for people, because they end up apart from the group (Kerr & Levine, 2008; Williams, 2009), we show that for underperformers, exclusion can be preferred and relieving. Moreover, when underperformers leave the group, this can even improve their need fulfilment and feelings.

By highlighting the positive elements of being excluded for underperformers, we demonstrated that the influence of the situation on how exclusion is experienced, can go beyond attenuating the harm of exclusion (e.g., Gerber & Wheeler, 2014; Gino & Kouchaki, 2020; Hartgerink, Van Beest, Wicherts, & Williams, 2015; Lelieveld, Moor, Crone, Karremans, & Van Beest, 2013). This finding opposes the dominant functional view of reactions to being excluded, with at its core the idea that over the course of evolution, people have become very focused on avoiding any situation in which they end up apart from their group, because this would harm their chances of survival (Spoor & Williams, 2007). In this line of thought, people should be extremely sensitive to any possible sign of exclusion (Kerr & Levine, 2008; Williams, 2009): Being excluded from *any* group, in *any* context, should then trigger an instinctive negative response (Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; Koudenburg, Gordijn, & Postmes, 2014;

Williams, 2009; Wirth, Sacco, Hugenberg, & Williams, 2010), that is similar to physical pain (Dewall et al., 2010; Eisenberger, 2012; MacDonald & Leary, 2005). Showing that underperformers may prefer to end up apart from the group and at times even actively choose for this, does not fit with this view. Instead of triggering an instinctive negative reaction, we even showed that being apart from the group in some circumstances can restore underperformers' feelings and need fulfilment.

It is important to note here that although exclusion was preferable and relieving for underperformers, and ending up apart from the group was even beneficial for participants in the last two studies of Chapter 3 – exclusion did harm underperformers as much as equal-performers in the first two studies of Chapter 3. Comparing these sets of studies may provide insight in the particular contexts in which exclusion may be most harmful. In the first two studies, underperformers were excluded by their fellow group members, while in the last two studies they ended up apart from the group by their own choice, or by chance. That being excluded would be more harmful for people when their group decided about this, than when this decision was made in another way, goes against the functional perspective that ending up excluded from one's group is equally harmful in all situations. However, it does fit with the theory that being excluded is primarily harmful for people when it signals to targets that their peers evaluate them negatively (Leary, 2001). Whether the context in which a target is excluded signals negative peer evaluations, may then be a fundamental underlying factor that could determine the negativity of the exclusion experience for targets.

Moreover, the studies in Chapter 3 differed in whether exclusion was compared to being actively included by others (the first two studies), or to participants' experiences while being part of the group (the last two studies). Typically, in experimental research, the effects of being excluded are not assessed in comparison to a neutral control condition without exclusion, but in comparison to being included. In the popular Cyberball paradigm, comparing exclusion to inclusion – where inclusion entails the rather normative situation of *not* being completely ignored by others – appears reasonable, and may not lead to different results than when exclusion is compared to a neutral control condition without inclusion (see Dvir, Kelly, & Williams, 2019; Simard & Dandeneau, 2018). However, in our experimental design, inclusion may not have been such a normative, neutral experience, as group members were provided the opportunity to reorganize their team, and so had the chance to exclude underperforming peers. Choosing for inclusion may then signal to underperformers that their group members

actively accepted them regardless of their underperformance, which may not be an experience that functions as a “neutral” control condition. In this set-up, a more neutral comparison to being excluded, may then be people’s experience of being part of the group before the choice for inclusion or exclusion was made, as was done in the last two studies of Chapter 3. This points to the importance for future research to consider, depending on the manipulation of exclusion that is employed, the added value of monitoring participants’ feelings of exclusion over time (see also Wesselmann, Wirth, Mroczek, & Williams, 2012), or including a neutral control condition instead of, or in addition to, an inclusion condition.

Chapter 3 tested how participants’ experiences of inclusion and exclusion were contingent on their performance in the group. Possibly, when targets underperformed, their exclusion could be easier to understand, than when targets performed in line with the group, but were excluded nonetheless. That underperformers may have been better able to make sense of why they were excluded, could have contributed to facilitating the more positive experiences such as preference and relief following exclusion. Other experimental set-ups in which exclusion was more expected and less abrupt, also documented less aversive reactions to exclusion (e.g., when targets expected exclusion to occur, or considered it fair or normative in the situation; Gerbert & Wheeler, 2014; Rudert & Greifeneder, 2016; Tuscherer et al., 2016). Future research could investigate if indeed targets’ understanding of why they were excluded may be an important underlying factor that can reduce the negativity of exclusion. If so, the literature could reevaluate the prominence of experimental paradigms in which exclusion occurs rather unexpectedly, and for no apparent reason (see also Nezlek et al., 2015; Robertson et al., 2014).

While Chapter 2 focused on *how* targets were excluded by targets, and Chapter 3 on *why* targets were excluded, future research may additionally focus on the impact of the group *by whom* targets are excluded. This is an important point, because the dominant idea in the literature is that the excluding group should not affect the aversiveness of exclusion: People have been shown to be equally hurt by exclusion, regardless of whether their excluders were despised or liked on the basis of their political orientation (i.e., KKK members vs. more liberal individuals; Gonsalkorale & Williams, 2007; conceptually replicated by Fayant, Muller, Hartgerink, & Lantian, 2014). However, in these experiments, participants were excluded or included by receiving less or more balls in a digital game of toss, so their excluders’ political ideas were largely irrelevant in the situation, and did not affect participants’ experience of

interacting with the group. Future research could test if the specific experimental set-ups that were used may have contributed to the finding that group membership did not impact reactions. In settings that more closely resemble real life, an actual interaction with a hated outgroup might be so aversive that exclusion may become harmless: For example, one may wonder whether for most people receiving the message that they are not invited to the KKK's next political rally, is really harmful in any meaningful way.

Whether the group or person by which a target is excluded determines the negativity of exclusion for targets, may thus be an important matter to revisit. First steps in this direction have been taken by research showing that being excluded by ingroup members is more hurtful than being excluded by outgroup members (Sacco, Bernstein, Young, & Hugenberg, 2014). Similarly, research has shown that people respond differently to the exclusion of targets, depending on whether these targets were ingroup or outgroup members (Lelieveld et al., 2020). Future research may study whether the desirability of belonging to the group may then be an important underlying construct that explains how people are affected by inclusion and exclusion from different groups (see also DeMarco & Newheiser, 2019). This may fit with results from Chapter 3, where participants' distressing experience of underperforming made it undesirable to be part of the group (i.e., some participants preferred to leave the group). When the group became undesirable to be part of, inclusion became less positive, and leaving the group had positive, rather than negative aspects.

Together, the results of Chapters 2 and 3 show how relevant it is for the field to consider the context of exclusion for actors and targets alike. When the context determines *how* actors can exclude targets (denial of access vs. removal from the group) this can change their likeliness of excluding targets, even if both ways of being excluded are equally harmful for targets (Chapter 2). And *why* targets are excluded (exclusion after underperforming vs. after performing in line with the group) is a contextual factor that can even highlight some positive elements for targets who end up apart from the group. Future research could expand on this work by researching other contexts, and determine the ways in which and reasons for which actors could be likely to exclude targets, and how targets respond to this.

Exclusion From Society – Chapters 4 and 5

The current dissertation aimed to study exclusion in the many contexts in which it can affect people. Experiencing exclusion in an interpersonal context is the main focus of the literature, and this has consistently been demonstrated to threaten people's fundamental

needs of belonging, self-esteem, control, and purpose in life (Wesselmann & Williams, 2017; Williams & Nida, 2016). Chapters 2 and 3 of the current dissertation also focused on the experience of being excluded from relatively small groups. This is the most common approach in social psychological research on exclusion. Chapters 4 and 5, however, expand the scope of social exclusion research by addressing feelings of exclusion in a societal context, and focusing on *society* as the focal group from which people may feel excluded. First, the findings from these chapters are summarized, then the implications are discussed.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 applied the social exclusion framework to the societally relevant context of gender inequality. To overcome the persistent gender inequality in society (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; see also European Commission, 2019), it is necessary to raise attention for this problem, and inform society on the structural inequalities that women face. However, there has been little attention for the direct effects of being exposed to such information about gender discrimination and inequality, on women's well-being. One effect of exposure to this information could be that it increases feelings of being excluded from society, which could harm women's fundamental needs and contribute to discouragement in their careers. Supporting this, a first cross-sectional study in Chapter 4 showed that in general, female participants who perceived society as more sexist, also felt more excluded from society, and experienced more need threats, negative feelings, and had lower expectations and motivation in their careers. Moreover, two experimental studies demonstrate that these same effects were directly triggered when women received information about sexism in society in the form of fictional study results, or actual newspaper articles. In this way, this study provides insight in the initial psychological response that women may have when they are exposed to information about the prevalence of sexism in society.

Chapter 5

In the last empirical chapter, we investigated whether the experience of being excluded from society also described the condition of people in financial scarcity (i.e., people who experience distress and reduced control over a lack of needed money; Van Dijk, Van der Werf, & Van Dillen, 2020). This chapter documented two waves of a longitudinal survey study, from a representative sample of Dutch society. Fitting the data of this study in a Cross-Lagged Panel Model (Kearney, 2017) demonstrates that people who experienced financial scarcity,

over time developed increased feelings of exclusion from society, as well as reduced need fulfillment. Both these feelings of exclusion and the reduced need fulfillment in turn fed into increased financial scarcity, suggesting that these factors reinforced each other. In this study, we further demonstrate that people in financial scarcity felt stigmatized, were less able to participate in (social) activities, and had weaker social networks, and that together these factors resulted in feelings of exclusion from society. The reduced participation and weaker social networks also explained the threatened fundamental needs of people in financial scarcity. Demonstrating that these factors contribute to setting in motion what may be a downward spiral of financial scarcity, exclusion, and need threats, may eventually help identify relevant starting points for interventions.

Integrating Insights About Exclusion at the Interpersonal and Societal Level

Chapters 4 and 5 thus investigated the experience of exclusion at the societal level. Previous theorizing and experimental studies have exclusively addressed exclusion from small groups (Williams, 2007; Williams et al., 2006). Even though these small groups sometimes were meant to represent abstract larger groups (e.g., “the ingroup”; Sacco et al., 2014), feeling excluded from society has not been discussed in the social exclusion literature. But, because the experience of exclusion has been linked to hurt feelings and threats to people’s needs of belonging, control, self-esteem, and purpose in life (Leary, 2001; Williams, 2007), it is important to understand whether exclusion from society may come with a similar social psychological experience, and whether this may underly the experiences of some (groups of) people who feel marginalized in society (see Kurzban & Leary, 2001). By applying social psychological knowledge of how people are affected by interpersonal exclusion to the societal level, these chapters thus add to the understanding of major societal problems.

It is important to note that experiences of exclusion at the interpersonal and societal level can differ in how they are caused. While interpersonal exclusion is typically researched as a single incident in which a target is excluded or neglected by a small group of others, feelings of exclusion from society may instead form over longer periods of time, in reaction to multiple ongoing factors. Perceptions of not being represented in politics or the media, becoming aware that one is treated unfairly or overlooked in social policies time and again, noticing that one is treated as inferior in social interactions, or observing that one is simply unable to attain what others in society appear to attain, may all contribute. Inextricable

experiences of economic, social, political, and cultural deprivation may then over time cause feelings of exclusion at a societal level (Byrne, 2007).

Although feelings of exclusion from society may thus form in a rather different way than feelings of exclusion in interpersonal contexts, prior theorizing has suggested that such ongoing experiences of exclusion could bring about similar effects as single incidents of exclusion (but possibly more detrimental; Williams, 2007). Indeed, Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated that feeling excluded from society also induced threats to people's fundamental needs. Moreover, the threatened needs that people experienced because of their financial situation (Chapter 5) contributed to the development of financial scarcity over time, indicating that the psychological experience of exclusion from society can be rather consequential. Similarly, in Chapter 4, women's threatened needs in part explained why they felt discouraged in their careers. Just as people's threatened fundamental needs are essential to understand their behaviors and cognitions in interpersonal settings (Williams, 2007), they thus appear crucial to understand some of the detrimental effects that people can experience when they feel excluded from society.

Besides threatened fundamental needs, other consequences of exclusion that have been documented in interpersonal settings, may also inform us on how people respond to being excluded from society. This is especially relevant for consequences of exclusion in the interpersonal sphere, that could be disintegrative at a societal level, like aggression (Dewall, Twenge, Bushman, Im, & Williams, 2010), belief in conspiracy theories (Graeupner & Coman, 2017), and attraction to extremist groups (Hales & Williams, 2018). Future research could thus investigate whether feelings of exclusion from society also contribute significantly to belief in conspiracy theories, extremism, and the prevalence of aggression in society. If so, it becomes increasingly important to determine the factors that contribute to feelings of exclusion from society, and counter these with policies aimed at promoting inclusion.

Another example of a finding about interpersonal exclusion that is interesting to consider at the societal level, is the insight from Chapter 2 that actors are more likely to deny targets access into a group than to remove them from the group, because actors feel that denying others access does not violate social norms. At the societal level, people's ideas about denying others access into society (e.g., limiting the influx of immigrants) may also be considered more acceptable than removing them (e.g., forced emigration of residing immigrants). Importantly, as in Chapter 2, this may also misjudge the hardships of being

denied access into a society for targets – in this case not only with regards to psychological belonging, but also with regards to their safety and security (see Simonsen, 2017; Skey, 2013).

Throughout this dissertation, we have adopted the stance that people's experiences of exclusion depend for a large part on the specific situations in which they are excluded (e.g., see Chapter 3). Just as in interpersonal settings, the context in which feelings of exclusion from society develop, may also differ between people. Groups who feel excluded from society for different reasons, may then also experience exclusion differently, and respond in other ways. For example, Chapter 5 demonstrated that for people in financial scarcity, feelings of stigmatization, being unable to participate in social activities, and smaller social networks explained why feelings of exclusion developed. Hypothetically, for women who feel discriminated against (see Chapter 4), stigmatization may also be an influential factor that induces exclusion, but their social networks may be relatively strong, which to some extent could buffer against feelings of exclusion. Future research can investigate how exactly the experience of exclusion differs between such groups with relatively strong vs. weak social networks. For example, it could be exceedingly hard for groups with weaker social networks to organize and voice their concerns, which could reduce their expectations and motivations relative to groups with stronger social networks.

Other differences between groups may also affect how they experience exclusion from society. For example, when people feel excluded from society on the basis of their gender, they could experience this as relatively unchangeable; while exclusion on the basis of their financial situation for some could be perceived as more changeable, and within their control. When the ground for people's exclusion is perceived to be within their own control, this attribution could make exclusion extra harmful, because people may be more likely to feel that the exclusion is their own fault. However, it could also make exclusion less harmful: When people feel in control over the factor that causes their exclusion, they may feel empowered and hopeful that they can change it (for a discussion of both possibilities, see Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). Future research can focus on how such differences between groups on the grounds for which they are excluded, may change their experiences of exclusion from society.

Conclusion

The current dissertation aimed to show the many levels at which exclusion can impact people in many different ways. We have contributed to demonstrating the importance of

studying the circumstances in which actors are likely to exclude others, and how being excluded in these contexts can impact targets' experiences of exclusion. We have also demonstrated that at the societal level, the social exclusion perspective can be very informative, and may advance our understanding of societal issues such as discrimination and poverty. This dissertation thus underscores the pervasiveness and importance of social exclusion across many levels of analysis. It changes how positive people feel, but also impacts their fundamental needs, their cognitions, expectations, and motivations. All these effects do not only affect people's interpersonal interactions, but also how they experience their position in society. Together, this once more emphasizes the importance and gravity of the human motivation to feel included, accepted, connected, wanted, heard, and seen – to belong.