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Running head: FRAMING MORAL IDEALS VERSUS MORAL OBLIGATIONS

Thou Shalt Not Discriminate: How Emphasizing Moral Ideals Rather than

Obligations Increases Whites' Support for Social Equality

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Abstract

An important step toward reducing group-based disparities in society is creating support for equality among advantaged group members (e.g., Whites, men). The current research examined how presenting social equality between ethnic groups in terms of moral ideals (i.e., equal treatment) vs. moral obligations (i.e., non-discrimination) affected the attitudes of Whites (students in Study 1, $N = 45$ and 2, $N = 44$ and employees in Study 3a, $N = 67$ and Study 3b, $N = 62$) toward various social equality issues. Results showed that participants in the moral ideals condition reported more activation rather than inhibition action tendencies related to improving equality (Study 1), were more supportive of affirmative action (Study 2), indicated lower levels of threat to their social identity, and held more favorable attitudes towards cultural diversity which resulted in greater prioritization of equality (Study 3a). These effects did not arise when the ideals/obligations distinction was applied to a nonmoral domain (i.e., competence, Study 3b), underlining the central argument that these processes are specific to morality. The theoretical implications and limitations of the current work are discussed.

Keywords: morality, intergroup relations, motivation, social equality

Thou Shalt Not Discriminate: How Emphasizing Moral Ideals Rather than Obligations Increases Whites' Support for Social Equality

We live in a world that is still marked by inequality between social groups (e.g., Whites versus Blacks, men versus women). It has been argued that an effective means for establishing a more equal society is by use of affirmative action (i.e., policies aimed at increasing the entrance of disadvantaged group members in educational and/or professional settings, Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006). The success of affirmative action is partly determined by the endorsement of such programs by currently advantaged groups (e.g., Whites, men). However, support for policies that promote equality is often the lowest among advantaged group members (e.g., Niemann & Dovidio, 1998). Previous work has aimed to increase support for affirmative action by focusing advantaged group members on moral wrongdoings committed by their group (e.g., colonialism, slavery). We argue that this approach may be suboptimal. The current research aims to demonstrate that a moral incentive presented in terms of ideals (a focus on approaching positive moral outcomes) rather than obligations (a focus on avoiding negative moral outcomes) stimulates more favorable attitudes among advantaged group members toward social equality issues, including affirmative action.

Opposition to Social Equality and Group Position

Displays of ingroup favoritism and outgroup derogation are most common among members of advantaged rather than disadvantaged groups (Guimond, Dif, & Aupy, 2002; Sidanius, Pratto, Martin, & Stallworth, 1991). Even though legislative changes in recent history have given rise to the social consensus that discrimination is morally objectionable (Plant & Devine, 1998), more subtle, indirect forms of discrimination and

implicit prejudice are still widespread in society (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Smith-McLallen, Johnson, Dovidio, & Pearson, 2006; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Consequently, inequality in terms of economic and political power, physical health outcomes and opportunities for social advancement persists and ascribes meaning to the distinction between advantaged groups (e.g., Whites, men) and disadvantaged groups (e.g., Blacks, women) within a given society (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

In addition to exhibiting more discriminative behavior than disadvantaged group members, members of advantaged groups are more likely to oppose changes in the social system (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and measures that promote equality (Crosby et al., 2006; Niemann & Dovidio, 1998) as they tend to view increases in equality as ingroup losses rather than societal gains (Eibach & Keegan, 2006; Ellemers, Scheepers & Popa, 2010). The notion of a more equal society can constitute a threat to members of the advantaged group as they become concerned about the relative loss in status and unwarranted privileges of their group (Schmitt, Miller, Branscombe, & Brehm, 2009). For example, Whites' support for affirmative action policies is determined more by perceptions of how these policies affect their own group's outcomes rather than how they affect the outgroup's outcomes (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006). Moreover, recent findings reveal that even in a minimal group paradigm, high status group members exhibit physiological threat responses when they are confronted with the potential status loss of their group at the benefit of a lower status group (Scheepers &

Ellemers, 2005). In contexts of status instability advantaged group members' resistance to equality measures becomes even more pronounced (Morrison, Fast, & Ybarra, 2009).

It has been proposed, and substantial social changes throughout history illustrate, that recognizing the existence and injustice of systematic intergroup inequality is a vital prerequisite for the effective improvement of the position and outcomes of disadvantaged groups (Saguy et al., 2009). Yet, for members of advantaged groups the recognition of inequality entails a confrontation with the ingroup's unwarranted privileges, which may lead these group members to downplay existing status differences (Van Knippenberg, 1984), justify their group privileges (Harth, Kessler, & Leach, 2008), or deny inequality altogether (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). An important question thus is how advantaged group members can be confronted with their group's unjust privileges *and* be motivated not to defend their group's position, but rather to redress inequality.

Social Equality as a Moral Issue

The current research examines the impact of moral incentives on social equality attitudes among Whites. Examining advantaged group members' attitudes toward equality from the perspective of morality can be particularly fruitful because it has been argued that morality is one of the most important regulators of human behavior (Shavell, 2002; Skitka et al., 2005). Indeed, cross-cultural research has shown that people deem moral values such as fairness and trustworthiness to be among the most important guiding principles in their lives (Schwartz, 1992). For example, recent findings by Ellemers and colleagues (2008) demonstrate that a moral norm (i.e., 'the right thing to do') has greater impact than a competence norm (i.e., 'the smart thing to do') on disadvantaged group members' decision to work for group rather than individual status

improvement. Also, the dilemma to work for either group or individual status improvement is more quickly resolved when people are faced with a moral (vs. competence) norm (Ellemers, Pagliaro, Barreto, & Leach, 2008). In addition, how people evaluate groups and the degree to which they identify with groups has been found to be primarily based on perceptions of a group as moral (e.g., honest, trustworthy) rather than on perceptions of a group as competent (e.g., intelligent, skilled) or sociable (e.g., friendly, likeable; Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto, 2007). Taken together, these findings underline the importance and impact of moral concerns in the interpersonal and intragroup domains. The current work aims to further our understanding of the functionality of morality as a guide to *intergroup* attitudes.

Prior work has demonstrated that attitudes that are held with moral conviction compared to otherwise strong but nonmoral attitudes are superior in predicting interpersonal behavior (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005) and have unique consequences unaccounted for by nonmoral characteristics of attitude strength (Bauman & Skitka, 2009). Nevertheless, very little is known about the impact of morality framing on attitudes in general, and on intergroup attitudes in particular. Based on the evidence of the relationship between moral conviction and strong motivations and justifications for action (Skitka et al., 2005), we argue that framing equality in terms of moral values can have a large impact on advantaged group members' commitment to redressing inequality. Being mindful of the distinction in the literature between examinations of situations that theoretically fit definitions of morality and situations that subjectively hold moral relevance (e.g., Bauman & Skitka, 2009), it is important to note that the current work aims to examine the impact of external morality *framing* on subjectively held social

equality attitudes rather than addressing interpersonal differences in the perceived moral value of equality.

One way in which morality has previously been examined as an incentive to support policies promoting equality is by confronting members of advantaged groups with past injustices committed by their group. This work has shown that when advantaged group members are confronted with the illegitimate advantages their group holds over other groups, they can experience collective guilt, which threatens perceptions of their own group as moral and good (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2002). For example, collective guilt has been shown to motivate European Americans to support compensatory affirmative action programs targeting African Americans (Swim & Miller, 1999), and native Dutch to support financial compensation to a former colony (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). However, collective guilt has been characterized as a self-focused emotion (in contrast to other-focused emotions like sympathy), and as such, has been found to only predict advantaged group members' narrow concern for restitution (e.g., compensatory affirmative action programs) but not for support for policies aimed at promoting social equality more broadly (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003). This distinction is relevant because restorative, symbolic action may not be sufficient to redress inequality (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009).

Because people are generally motivated to avoid feelings of collective guilt (Branscombe & Miron, 2004) a confrontation with ingroup transgressions may raise defensive reactions. Specifically, previous work found that people may distort or deny injustices committed by their group (Dresler-Hawke, 2005), relegate past injustices committed by the ingroup to 'ancient history' (Peetz, Gunn, Wilson, 2010), or even

blame victims of disadvantage for their own hardship (Furnham & Gunter, 1984). In sum, previous work has shown that advantaged group members' responses to a confrontation with the ingroup's unwarranted privileged position can be categorized as either defensive or aimed at narrow restoration. Importantly, both categories of responses are suboptimal in creating support for broader social change toward equality (Iyer et al., 2003).

We aim to expand the inquiry in moral motivation by examining the impact of moral incentives on advantaged group members' commitment to mitigate inequality. To this aim, we will contrast the preceding work's emphasis on the advantaged group's moral obligations (i.e., non-discrimination, restoration) and potential negative outcomes (i.e., being prejudiced and unjust) with an emphasis on the advantaged group's moral ideals (i.e., equal treatment) and potential positive outcomes (i.e., being fair and just). We posit that the latter is more likely to create favorable attitudes among advantaged group members toward social equality and cultural diversity.

The Persuasive Impact of Emphasizing Moral ideals versus Moral Obligations

The central prediction of the current work is that a focus on moral ideals (vs. obligations) may be more effective in establishing favorable attitudes of advantaged group members toward social equality and cultural diversity more generally. We base this prediction on the consistent evidence for a duality in motivational orientations (i.e., approach versus avoidance, inhibition vs. activation, promotion vs. prevention). Although different terms are used, the literature distinguishes between avoiding negative outcomes, punitive end-states and meeting obligations on the one hand, versus approaching positive outcomes, reward end-states and pursuing ideals on the other (e.g., behavioral inhibition system [BIS] vs. behavioral activation system [BAS], Carver & Scheier, 1998; prevention

focus vs. promotion focus, Higgins, 1997). Most recently, this distinction in self-regulation has been extended to moral regulation (Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Baldacci, 2008; Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Hepp, 2009). Namely, evidence of distinct motivational underpinnings in the moral domain has given rise to the distinction between two different forms of morality. On the one hand there is prescriptive morality, associated with concerns pertaining to what one *should do*. On the other hand there is proscriptive morality, associated with concerns in terms of what one *should not do*. Similar to the duality outlined in the self-regulation literature, proscriptive morality is avoidance-based and sensitive to negative outcomes, and prescriptive morality is approach-based and sensitive to positive outcomes (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009). Especially relevant to the current research is the finding that individual differences in moral motives that are approach-based are positively related with positive attitudes toward equality-based social issues (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008). The current research aims to take this previous work an important step further by examining whether experimentally induced conceptions of morality in terms of ideals versus obligations subsequently predict Whites' attitudes towards inequality and their support for measures that aim to redress such inequality (i.e., affirmative action).

Based on the research outlined above, we hypothesize that when advantaged group members are confronted with the implications of inequality framed in terms of moral ideals this will induce activation action tendencies ('which moral things to do'), whereas a focus on moral obligations will lead to inhibition action tendencies ('which immoral things *not* to do'). Furthermore, we argue that the activation of action tendencies among advantaged group members is more advantageous than the inhibition of action

tendencies in terms of promoting social equality. Although the inhibition of negative behavior (i.e., discrimination) is undoubtedly important in facilitating the societal advancement of ethnic minorities, attempts to inhibit such behavior may also cause ethnic majorities to avoid ethnic minorities and culturally diverse contexts altogether (Avery, Richeson, Hebl, & Ambady, 2009). For example, recent findings showed that when advantaged group members become concerned with the risk of being perceived as biased they tend to opt out of cross-race decisions, even when this is materially costly. This inhibition tendency has been termed *racial paralysis* (Norton, Mason, Vandello, Biga, & Dyer, 2010). Indeed, previous work has demonstrated that in a situation where people can choose between a conservative option (status quo) and a new course of action (change), they are more likely to choose the latter when the focus lies on attaining ideals and approaching positive outcomes (Liberman, Idson, Camacho, & Higgins, 1999). In contrast, a fixation on the prevention of negative outcomes has been linked to resistance to change and political conservatism, both of which are negatively related to support for affirmative action (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003). Thus, a focus on moral ideals is expected to elicit activation tendencies rather than inhibition tendencies, and we argue that the former is most beneficial in promoting support among advantaged group members for social change toward equality.

The current work builds on previous findings by framing inequality in terms of the moral implications for the advantaged *ingroup*. Previous work on inequality framing has demonstrated that advantaged group members' perceptions of ingroup outcomes determine their attitudes toward affirmative action (Lowery et al., 2006). Yet, advantaged group members tend to regard inequality strictly as an outgroup disadvantage to avoid the

psychological costs associated with acknowledging ingroup advantage (Lowery & Wout, 2010). The latter can be seen as problematic as it exempts advantaged group members from the ‘moral demands associated with the knowledge that inequality benefits their group’ which, as we aim to demonstrate, are potentially influential in promoting advantaged group members’ commitment to redress inequality (Lowery & Wout, 2010, p. 964). The current work builds on these findings by examining the effects of focusing Whites on the potential benefits of providing moral accomplishment (i.e., attaining moral ideals), versus the potential cost of moral failure (i.e., not meeting moral obligations) for the *ingroup*. We predict that the former will lead to activation and broader support for social equality among advantaged group members as a means to boost, rather than redeem, the perception of the ingroup as fair and just.

Overview of the Studies

In order to test the differential impact of focusing on moral ideals versus moral obligations, we will consider Whites’ action tendencies and their attitudes toward social equality issues in three different studies. Study 1 tested whether a focus on moral ideals leads to activation action tendencies (i.e., what to do to promote equality) and a focus on moral obligations leads to inhibition action tendencies (i.e., what not to do to prevent inequality). In Study 2, we examined whether a focus on moral ideals creates more support for affirmative action among Whites compared to a focus on moral obligations. In Study 3a, we examined the effects the moral ideals/obligations distinction on attitudes toward cultural diversity and equality in a field-experiment among White employees. This study also tested the hypothesis that a focus on moral obligations is more threatening to advantaged group members’ social identity than a focus on moral ideals. Finally, in

parallel to Study 3a, the ideals/obligations distinction was applied to a relevant, but nonmoral domain (i.e., competence) in Study 3b, to examine whether the observed effects are indeed specific to morality.

Study 1

Study 1 examined whether external framing of social equality in terms of moral ideals versus moral obligations would lead to differences in activation versus inhibition action tendencies of native Dutch. To this aim, participants were asked to indicate ways in which they could personally contribute to attaining the ideal (vs. meet the obligation) of tolerance and equality. Participants' answers were then coded for action tendencies in terms of constituting do's (activation) versus don'ts (inhibition).

Method

Participants. Forty-five native Dutch (male) students ($M_{age} = 19.93$, $SD = 1.39$) were randomly assigned to either the moral ideals or moral obligations condition.

Procedure. After reading and signing the consent form, participants were seated in closed-off cubicles behind a computer where they were presented with a (bogus) newspaper article about a recent study done by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). This was intended to emphasize the disparities between native Dutch and nonnative Dutch in the workforce. The article cited fictitious findings which showed that native Dutch with a Master's degree were systematically paid more and promoted more often in their jobs than nonnative Dutch with the same educational background. These differences in salary between ethnic majority and minority employees were said to increase over time, and a graph illustrated the disparities in incomes over a 10-year period. The article continued with a comment on these findings by a senior CBS researcher. A picture

depicting a middle-aged, White male along with a traditional Dutch name was added to convey that he was native Dutch. The researcher explained how, as part of the study, hundreds of interviews were taken with native Dutch employees about the cultural diversity within their own organizations. In both conditions the disparities between ethnic minority and native Dutch employees were explicitly labeled as unfair.

Manipulation of moral ideals versus obligations. To manipulate a focus on either moral ideals or moral obligations, the senior researcher cited in the article elaborated on the key findings of the interviews and the moral implications of cultural diversity in terms of either ideals or obligations. In the moral ideals condition, the text mentioned ideals in terms of fairness and equal treatment of people with different ethnic backgrounds that might be attained in a culturally diverse environment. In the moral obligations condition, the text mentioned obligations in terms of fairness and preventing unequal treatment of people with a different ethnic background that may be met in a culturally diverse environment. Subsequently, participants were asked to imagine the future scenario of working in a culturally diverse organization themselves. In both conditions participants were asked to describe how their behavior and decisions could lead to more equality and tolerance in a culturally diverse organization. In the moral ideals conditions participants were asked to describe how they could contribute to attaining the ideal of tolerance and equality. Participants in the moral obligations condition were asked to describe how they could contribute to meeting the obligation of tolerance and equality (for details see Appendix 1). All of the participants indicated that they had believed that the CBS study was authentic. Participants were then debriefed and rewarded for their participation.

Results and Discussion

Content analyses. To examine whether a focus on moral ideals versus moral obligations induced different action tendencies, participants' responses to the open-ended question were scored by two independent coders who were blind to condition. Responses were coded in terms of do's and don'ts. Specifically, these categories distinguished between reported behaviors aimed at approaching equality and fair treatment of nonnative Dutch (do's) and behaviors aimed at avoiding inequality and unfair treatment of nonnative Dutch (don'ts). An example of a response indicating do's is the following: "I would talk to nonnative Dutch colleagues, to get to know them, understand them and their background, and become better able to respect certain things". An example of a response referring to don'ts is the following: "Make sure that you don't form groups [...] When you're going to do something with people from work, make sure that nonnative Dutch don't feel left out [...] And as a boss, I would not favor anyone in terms of promotion". All responses were coded as either containing or not containing action tendencies in line with do's and don'ts, creating two independent dichotomous variables. In addition, the frequency of reported do's and don'ts were counted to examine whether it was indeed the quality of participants' motivation, rather than the quantity of examples generated that was influenced by condition (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009). The inter-coder reliabilities for both do's and don'ts were high (do's: Kappa = .84, $p < .001$; don'ts: Kappa = .77, $p < .001$), and differences in scores were subsequently discussed and resolved by the coders.

Do's and don'ts. We expected condition to affect the quality of participants' motivation (i.e., avoidance vs. approach) rather than the quantity of their motivation (i.e., the number of do's and don'ts). As anticipated, there was no effect of condition on the

number of do's or don'ts (both $F_s < 1$) participants reported. This indicates that participants in both conditions were equally able to come up with concrete suggestions. In contrast, and as predicted, we found significant differences in the quality of participants' reported motivational strategies. In the moral ideals condition, 86 % of the participants reported do's (action tendencies aimed at promoting fair and equal treatment of nonnative Dutch), compared to 57 % of the participants in the moral obligations condition, $\chi^2(1, 45) = 4.87, p = .03$. In contrast, 61% of the participants in the moral obligations condition reported don'ts (action tendencies aimed at preventing discrimination and unfair treatment of nonnative Dutch), compared to 23 % of participants in the moral ideals condition, $\chi^2(1, 45) = 6.71, p = .01$.

From a regulatory focus perspective (Higgins, 1997), these findings demonstrate the distinction between moral ideals and obligations in terms of eagerness and vigilance concerns, respectively. As hypothesized, the results show that when equality is framed in terms of moral ideals (vs. moral obligations) participants were more inclined to report courses of action which promote equal treatment of nonnative Dutch, and were less inclined to report inhibition aimed at preventing discrimination. Thus, Study 1 demonstrated that framing equality in terms of moral ideals versus obligations substantially influences the quality of individuals' motivational strategies. In sum, regulatory

Study 2

Study 1 confirmed the hypothesis that while a focus on moral obligations induces avoidance motivation, a focus on moral ideals induces approach motivation. In Study 2, we examined the impact of these two foci on Whites' support for affirmative action. As control variables, belief in present discrimination (Swim & Miller, 1999) and overall

mood (e.g., 'sad', 'happy' [reverse coded]) were assessed. An alternative explanation for differences between conditions in support for affirmative action might be that focusing advantaged group members on moral obligations and potential negative outcomes might negatively affect their mood. Consequently, support for affirmative action may be lower than in the moral ideals condition - where a negative mood is less likely to arise. Belief in present discrimination was assessed to exclude the possibility that framing equality in terms of moral ideals (vs. obligations) and positive outcomes (vs. negative outcomes) undermines advantaged group members' perception of discrimination as a stringent societal problem, which would in turn affect levels of support for affirmative action.

Method

Participants. Forty-four (33 females) native Dutch students with an average age of 20.45 years ($SD = 3.20$), were randomly assigned to the moral ideals or moral obligations condition. Participants were rewarded with course credits or money.

Procedure. Participants followed the same procedure as in Study 1, but after reading the (bogus) CBS article participants were now asked which moral ideals (vs. obligations) related to equality and tolerance they could think of, and how they could optimize their efforts to meet those ideals versus prevent not meeting those obligations (for details see Appendix 2). To ensure that participants had an idea of what affirmative action entails, they were presented with a (bogus) example of selection practices in a two-year management traineeship at a well-known multinational organization prior to filling out the support for affirmative action scale. Participants read that due to the current gap between native Dutch and nonnative Dutch employees this traineeship was exclusively available for highly qualified nonnative Dutch college graduates. This way, we primed

participants across conditions with a similar understanding of affirmative action (i.e., that it is a policy designed and implemented to promote the entrance of highly qualified disadvantaged group members and that in some cases it might entail excluding advantaged group members), thus minimizing effects of interpersonal differences in people's understanding of affirmative action policies (e.g., Unzueta et al., 2008).

The following dependent variables were measured (using a 7-point Likert-type scale): support for affirmative action (3 items; "Affirmative action gives an opportunity to qualified nonnative Dutch which they might not have otherwise", "Affirmative action ensures that organizations and institutions remain competitive in a culturally diverse society", and "I think affirmative action is necessary to decrease the differences between nonnative and native Dutch", Cronbach's $\alpha = .49$), belief in present discrimination was measured with 5 items all beginning with the stem "How often do you think nonnative Dutch experience discrimination..." followed by "... by Native Dutch colleagues?", "... by native Dutch supervisors and teachers?", "... during their education?", "... in the workforce?", and "... in the form of racist slurs?", Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$; Swim & Miller, 1999) Finally, participants' negative mood (4 items) was measured by asking participants to indicate the extent to which the information provided made them feel sad, happy (reverse coded), discouraged, and insecure (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$). After completing the questionnaire participants were probed for suspicion, debriefed and remunerated. All of the participants indicated that they had believed that the CBS study and the affirmative action example were authentic. It was explained to participants that although disparities between native and nonnative Dutch exist, the data presented in the CBS article, as well as the example of affirmative action they were presented with, were fictitious.

Results and Discussion

Support for affirmative action. As predicted, there was a significant effect of condition on support for affirmative action, $F(1,42) = 9.02, p = .004, \eta_p^2 = .18$. Participants in the moral ideals condition were more supportive of affirmative action ($M = 5.48, SD = 0.79$) than participants in the moral obligations condition ($M = 4.76, SD = 0.82$).

Control variables. As anticipated, we found no significant differences between conditions on negative mood, $F(1,42) = 1.48, ns$ and belief in present discrimination, $F(1,42) < 1$. These null effects disconfirm alternative explanations that levels in negative mood or belief in present discriminations account for the effect of moral focus on support for affirmative action.

Taken together, results of Study 2 suggest that when the aim is to create support for affirmative action, it is more effective to do so by presenting equality in terms of the advantaged group's moral ideals rather than its moral obligations. Also, these results suggest that in doing so, advantaged group members' belief in present discrimination and their mood are unaffected. To examine whether emphasizing moral ideals (vs. obligations) improves cultural diversity attitudes more generally, Study 3a examined the effect of condition on attitudes toward cultural diversity and equality in a different context and among a different population of participants. This allowed us to examine the robustness of these findings with slightly different manipulations and measures. Specifically, we excluded the mention of affirmative action, and its possible exclusionary consequences of affirmative action. This way, we were able to examine whether or not

the observed effects of Study 2 were due to mention of such exclusionary consequences or, in fact, due to our manipulation.

Finally, although the first two studies revealed the beneficial effects of moral ideals compared to moral obligations, it remains unclear whether the focus on morality is a key part of this effect, or whether this results from targeting ideals versus obligations more generally. Study 3b was added to examine this possibility. This study was identical to Study 3a, but contained two control conditions in which the ideals/obligations distinction referred to a relevant, but nonmoral domain (i.e., taking into account cultural diversity at work as an ideal vs. obligation in the development of work-related competencies).

Study 3a

Results of Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate that a focus on moral ideals (vs. obligations) leads to more approach and less avoidance action tendencies and more support for affirmative action among native Dutch. Study 3a was done to further examine the attitudinal consequences of the two morality frames and the underlying process. Namely, beyond support for affirmative action we wanted to examine whether focusing on moral ideals (vs. obligations) increases the extent to which Whites' actually give priority to fair and equal treatment of ethnic minorities over, for example, their own professional advancement or the organization's financial outcomes. Furthermore, to provide additional insight in the process by which the moral ideals/obligations distinction impacts Whites' attitudes toward equality, we examined two potential mediators: 1) positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, and 2) social identity threat.

Prioritization of equality over professional or financial gain could be caused by a more positive attitude toward cultural diversity. It seems plausible that the moral ideals/obligations distinction influences the extent to which advantaged group members perceive cultural diversity as something positive. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997) posits that a focus on ideals (promotion focus) is linked to concerns about positive outcomes, whereas a focus on obligations (prevention focus) is linked with concerns about negative outcomes. Therefore, we expect that participants in the moral ideals conditions will be more likely than those in the obligations condition to view a culturally diverse environment as an opportunity to achieve positive outcomes, and consequently report more positive attitudes. In turn, the extent to which people hold positive attitudes toward cultural diversity might predict the extent to which they prioritize equality. To examine this hypothesis, we assessed positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and tested whether this mediates the proposed effect of condition on prioritization of equality.

Alternatively, previous work has demonstrated that advantaged group members may experience collective guilt (a threat to their social identity) when confronted with group based disparities (Branscombe et al., 2002; Doosje et al., 1998). We hypothesize that when such disparities are presented in terms of yet to be attained moral ideals (vs. unmet moral obligations) of the ingroup, advantaged group members will experience less threat to their social identity. Therefore, we measured social identity threat to examine whether emphasizing moral ideals indeed lowers levels of social identity threat. In addition, we explored whether the effect of moral focus (ideals vs. obligations) on prioritization of equality is mediated by social identity threat. In light of previous work linking social identity threat to psychological withdrawal strategies such as

disengagement (Walton & Cohen, 2007) and disidentification (Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2006), it is possible that social identity threat is related to a decreased prioritization of equality.

Finally, we included an additional measure to rule out an alternative explanation of our findings in terms of regulatory fit. That is, one may argue that there is greater regulatory fit between the moral ideals condition and the types of measures we used to assess our main outcome variable than between moral obligations and these measures (i.e., affirmative action). Indeed, the value from fit model (Higgins, 2000) posits that people experience regulatory fit when the strategic manner of their goal pursuit suits their regulatory orientation (i.e., prevention vs. promotion). In the current context, it might be the case that people report more favorable attitudes toward measures that aim to promote diversity and equality, because, and unlike the participants in the moral obligations condition, they experience fit between those measures and the promotion orientation of the moral ideals condition. Therefore, the current study also included items to assess participants' support for retributive action against discrimination (i.e., a measure aimed exclusively at preventing negative outcomes). This will allow us to test whether a regulatory fit - which would predict more support for retributive action in the moral obligations (vs. ideals) condition can account for our data.

To test these hypotheses, and to move beyond student participants in the laboratory, we conducted Study 3a as an online questionnaire among a heterogeneous group of native Dutch employees from various organizations. Based on the findings of Study 1 and 2, the manipulation of Study 3a induced participants to think about how to approach the ideal of tolerance toward nonnative Dutch colleagues versus how to avoid

not meeting the obligation of tolerance toward nonnative Dutch colleagues. By asking participants to imagine *their own* organization implementing diversity promoting policies, we aimed to enhance the accessibility of real-life consequences and implications of increasing cultural diversity and prioritizing equality.

Method

Participants. As part of their Bachelor thesis, undergraduate students from Leiden University recruited relatives, friends and acquaintances to participate in this online experiment. E-mail addresses were collected of 76 people who agreed to take part in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to either the moral ideals or moral obligations condition. After assessing participants' ethnicity, nine participants were excluded from analyses because they indicated that their (or one of their) parents were born outside the Netherlands, and/or self-identified with an ethnic group other than native Dutch. This resulted in a sample of 67 native Dutch employees (35 men) from different organizations. Ages ranged from 21 to 62 years ($M_{Age} = 41.24$, $SD = 11.92$), and political party preferences varied across the political spectrum. Job levels varied from entry level to managerial level. As an incentive for participation, two 50 Euro gift coupons were awarded through a lottery.

Procedure. Digital invitations were sent to participants with a link to the online study. Participants read that the current study focused on cultural diversity within Dutch organizations and were instructed to imagine that the management of their organization decided to increase the cultural diversity in their organization. Participants read that previous research indicated that changes in the cultural diversity of their organization would have certain implications for native Dutch employees. In the moral ideals condition, participants read that: "Native Dutch employees who make use of the opportunities to learn about the backgrounds of their nonnative Dutch

colleagues indicated that this really helped them to meet their ideals concerning fairness and equal opportunities”. In the moral obligations condition participants read that: “Native Dutch employees who prevent discrimination by learning about the backgrounds of their nonnative Dutch colleagues indicated that this really helped them to meet their obligations concerning fairness and equal opportunities.”

Subsequently, participants were asked to think of ways in which they could successfully contribute to the moral ideal (versus avoid failing to meet the obligation) of equal treatment and tolerance of nonnative Dutch employees. Finally, the following dependent variables were measured (all of which were scored on 7-point scales): positive attitudes toward cultural diversity (3 items; “Cultural diversity is an asset to my organization”, “Cultural diversity in my organization is unnecessary” [reverse coded], and “I resist cultural diversity”[reverse coded], Cronbach’s $\alpha = .68$); prioritization of equality (3 items; “I would treat nonnative Dutch colleagues fairly even if it means that I personally have to take a step back”, “I think it’s more important that my organization treats nonnative Dutch employees fairly and justly than that it performs well financially”, and “I would treat nonnative Dutch colleagues unfairly if it would benefit my advancement” [reverse coded], Cronbach’s $\alpha = .61$); social identity threat (assessed with two negative items from the private collective self-esteem scale of Luthanen & Crocker, 1992 ; see also Derks, Van Laar, & Ellemers, 2009, $r = .42, p < .001$; “I do not find that native Dutch are worthwhile” and “I regret that I am a member of the group of native Dutch”; support for retributive action (4 items taken from Pagano & Huo [2007] were adapted to fit the current context, “The Dutch government should do everything to ensure that native Dutch do not discriminate”, “Native Dutch who discriminate should be prosecuted at any cost”, “It is important to develop and uphold effective punishment methods for native Dutch who

discriminate”, and “Native Dutch who discriminate should be punished for it”; Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$). Finally, we used the same control variables as those in Study 2: negative mood (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$) and belief in present discrimination (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$).

Results

Positive attitudes towards cultural diversity. There was a significant effect of condition on positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, $F(1,65) = 5.10, p = .03, \eta_p^2 = .07$. As predicted, it was found that participants in the moral ideals condition reported more positive attitudes towards cultural diversity than participants in the moral obligations condition (see Table 1).

Prioritization of equality. There was a significant effect of condition on prioritization of equality, $F(1,65) = 5.43, p = .04, \eta_p^2 = .06$. As predicted, participants in the moral ideals condition prioritized equality more than participants in the moral obligations condition (see Table 1).

Social identity threat. Results revealed a significant effect of condition on social identity threat (after assigning the maximum value within the normal distribution to two outliers), $F(1,65) = 3.98, p = .05, \eta_p^2 = .06$. As predicted, it was found that participants in the moral obligations condition reported higher levels of social identity threat than participants in the moral ideals condition (see Table 1). This finding confirms our hypothesis that framing social equality in terms of moral ideals (vs. obligations) is less threatening to the collective self-esteem of individuals belonging to advantaged groups.

Support for retributive action. As anticipated, there was no effect of condition on support for retributive action, $F(1,65) = 1.18, ns$, thus disconfirming the regulatory fit prediction that a focus on moral obligations would increase support for prevention

focused retributive actions. Further evidence against a regulatory fit explanation is that support for retributive action was significantly and positively correlated with prioritization of equality (see Table 2).

Control variables. Similar to Study 2, there were no significant differences between the moral ideals and moral obligations conditions in participants' negative mood or their belief in present discrimination (both F 's < 1), ruling out mood effects and differential beliefs in discrimination as alternative explanations for our findings.

Mediation analysis. To determine whether differences in positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and social identity threat accounted for the effect of condition on prioritization of equality, we conducted mediation analyses. Bootstrapping analyses were conducted using methods described by Preacher and Hayes (2008) for estimating direct and indirect effects with multiple mediators. Prioritization of equality was entered as the dependent variable, condition as predictor, and social identity threat and positive attitudes toward cultural diversity were entered as proposed mediators (in the SPSS macro created by Preacher and Hayes for bootstrap analyses with multiple proposed mediators). Results revealed that the total effect of condition on prioritization of equality became nonsignificant when the mediators were included in the model. The specific indirect effects of the two proposed mediators showed that positive attitudes toward cultural diversity (point estimate of -.1736 and 95% BCa CI [Bias Corrected and Accelerated Confidence Intervals] of -.4932, -.0072), but not social identity threat (point estimate of .0390 and 95% BCa CI of -.0576, .2412) significantly added to the overall model (see Figure 1). Thus, it was found that positive attitudes toward cultural diversity fully

mediated the link between condition and prioritization of equality, whereas social identity threat did not.

Taken together, results of Study 3a demonstrate that a focus on moral ideals (vs. obligations) leads advantaged group members to evaluate cultural diversity more favorably and to consequently prioritize the fair and equal treatment of disadvantaged group members over personal and financial gain to a greater extent. At the same time, it was found that advantaged group members reported less threat to their social identity when social equality was presented in terms of moral ideals compared to obligations. Although social identity threat was not related to attitudes toward cultural diversity nor prioritization of equality here (see Table 2), this finding suggests that a focus on moral ideals is an effective way to confront advantaged group members with group-based disparities without the epiphenomenon of eliciting a threat to their social identity, which might lead to defensive reactions.

Furthermore, the finding that participants in the moral obligations condition were not more supportive of retributive action against discrimination compared to those in the moral ideals condition disconfirms a regulatory fit account of the observed effects. Additional evidence disconfirming a regulatory fit account is the observation that support for retributive action was positively correlated with positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and prioritization of equality, both of which were higher in the moral ideals condition. Finally, null effects on negative mood and belief in present discrimination again disconfirm the alternative explanation that these factors accounted for the effect of condition on attitudes toward social equality issues.

Study 3b

Taken together, the consistent findings of the three studies reported above corroborate our central notion that Whites' support for social change toward equality is promoted by emphasizing moral ideals rather than moral obligations. We propose that it is the emphasis on ideals and positive outcomes (vs. obligations and negative outcomes) *combined with* the specific importance of morality at the group level (Leach et al., 2007) that account for the observed effects. To provide evidence for the argument that morality plays a key role in the processes outlined above and that the observed effects are not simply due to positive versus negative framing *per se* - Study 3b was conducted. Based on previous work's emphasis on competence as the basis of positive evaluations at the group level (Ellemers, 1993), we chose to use competence as a valuable but nonmoral dimension to which we could apply the ideals/obligations distinction. Study 3b thus examined the effect of competence ideals versus competence obligations in relation to increasing cultural diversity on the same outcome measures as used in Study 3a.

Method

Participants. Participants were recruited and rewarded in the same way as Study 3a. We ensured that no participants from Study 3a participated in Study 3b. Sixty-two native Dutch employees (37 men) of different organizations were randomly assigned to either the competence ideals or competence obligations conditions in this online field-experiment. Ages ranged from 21 to 63 years ($M_{Age} = 38.77$, $SD = 12.03$). Similar to Study 3a, participants' political party preferences varied across the entire political spectrum from left to right and job levels varied from entry level to management.

Procedure. Participants followed the same procedure as in Study 3a. However, in the current study the CBS article and manipulations differed in that the ideals/obligations distinction

was made in terms of competence (i.e., career success and competencies) appeals rather than moral ones. In the competence ideals (vs. obligations) condition, participants read that: “Native Dutch employees who make use of the opportunities to learn about the backgrounds of their ethnic minority colleagues indicated that this really helped them to achieve their ideals (vs. meet their obligations) concerning work related competencies and career success”. Subsequently, participants were induced to think of ways in which they could aim to further develop (vs. meet the required) competencies needed in a culturally diverse work environment.

Finally, measurements of the same dependent variables as in Study 3a followed, namely positive attitudes toward cultural diversity (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .65$); prioritization of equality (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .66$); social identity threat ($r = .56, p < .001$); support for retributive action (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$) and the control variables: negative mood (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .82$) and belief in present discrimination (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$).

Results

Positive attitudes towards cultural diversity. As predicted, there was no effect of condition on positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, $F(1,60) < 1$.

Prioritization of equality. As predicted, there was no significant effect of condition on prioritization of equality, $F(1,60) = 1.88, ns$.

Social identity threat. As predicted, There was no effect of condition on social identity threat, $F(1,60) < 1$.

Support for retributive action. As predicted, there was no effect of condition on support for punitive action, $F(1,60) < 1$.

Control variables. Condition had no effect on participants’ mood, $F(1,60) < 1$, nor on their belief in present discrimination, $F(1,60) = 1.96, ns$.

Study 3b was conducted to examine whether morality indeed plays a key role in the processes outlined above. If it were the case that Whites become more favorable toward social change by focusing them on ideals rather than obligations *regardless* of the domain to which this distinction is applied, we would expect the results of Study 3b to be identical to those of Study 3a. In parallel to the procedure of Study 3a, the current study made the same distinction between ideals and obligations in terms of the implications of increasing cultural diversity at work. However, in Study 3b the distinction was applied to work-related competencies, thus taking morality out of the equation. Results showed that, unlike the moral ideals/obligations manipulation used in Study 3a, there was no significant effect of competence ideals versus obligations on positive attitudes toward cultural diversity, prioritization of equality, or social identity threat. Taken together, the results of Study 3a and 3b corroborate our central argument that it is the focus on *moral* ideals - and not on ideals per se – that promotes Whites' commitment to redress inequality. These findings are in line with previous work which has demonstrated that people care most about being moral (Schwartz, 1992), about having a moral ingroup (Leach et al., 2007), and about conforming to moral norms (Ellemers et al., 2008). We argue that presenting equality in terms of moral ideals may promote Whites' willingness to promote and value equality and cultural diversity in a way that is unparalleled by ideals-based frames applied to nonmoral domains, such as competence.

General Discussion

By demonstrating that the challenge of a positive moral outcome (i.e., attaining moral ideals) rather than the threat of a negative moral outcome (i.e., failing to meet moral obligations) promotes Whites' commitment to redress inequality, the current work

shows the further implications of a dual moral motivation system (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2008; 2009) and constitutes the first step toward understanding the impact of morality framing on intergroup attitudes. Study 1 demonstrates that presenting the moral implications of inequality in terms of moral ideals leads to activation-based tendencies, whereas a focus on moral obligations leads to inhibition-based tendencies. Study 2 and Study 3a demonstrate the beneficial consequences of a focus on moral ideals compared to obligations on Whites' commitment to redress inequality, in terms of affirmative action support and the willingness to prioritize equality over personal and/or financial gain. The null effects found in Study 3b support our central argument that the observed effects are specific to morality.

Furthermore, Study 3a demonstrates that when advantaged group members are induced to think of cultural diversity in terms of moral ideals rather than obligations, they become more positive about cultural diversity, which consequently increases their motivation to prioritize equality and fair treatment of disadvantaged group members. This finding underlines our argument that in terms of creating support for equality, it is more effective to focus advantaged group members on approaching positive moral outcomes than on avoiding negative moral outcomes. Finally, the null effects on general mood (i.e., Study 2 and 3a) as well as on support for retributive action (Study 3a) allow us to exclude affective and regulatory fit accounts of the processes outlined above.

Implications for Intergroup Research

The results of the studies reported here have a number of potentially interesting implications for theories of intergroup processes. Previous work has demonstrated that Whites are generally motivated to perceive inequality strictly in terms of outgroup

disadvantage, as this exempts them from the psychological costs of facing their group's privileged position (e.g., Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007). The current findings suggest an alternative way for these group members to be confronted with the ingroup implications of inequality, without the cost of a lowered collective esteem. In this respect, framing the moral implications of inequality in terms of yet-to-be-attained ideals appears to be an effective way to confront Whites' with their group's advantaged position without raising social identity threat, *and* to increase their support for a more equal society.

It is important to note that we obtained this evidence also in the face of potential exclusion of Whites, as a result of affirmative action (Study 2). Even in this situation, Whites were still more supportive of affirmative action after being focused on moral ideals versus obligations. Prior evidence has shown that Whites' support of affirmative action depends on the extent to which the policy is perceived as not harming the ingroup's outcomes (Lowery et al., 2007). This illustrates that a concern with the ingroup's *material* outcomes may lead to opposition towards equality. The current data extend these prior findings, by demonstrating how an interest in the ingroup's *moral* outcomes can *promote* support for social change toward equality even in the face of material cost for the ingroup. Thus, in addition to making the distinction between ingroup versus outgroup outcomes, the present data suggest that it is important to distinguish between different types of *concerns* about ingroup outcomes, namely in terms of their moral versus nonmoral (e.g., material) implications.

Implications for Morality Research

The current findings also contribute to the understanding of moral motivation more broadly. There is a growing body of research providing evidence for the claim that

moral motivation is distinct from nonmoral motivation in properties, intensity and predictive value (Bauman & Skitka, 2009, Ellemers et al., 2008; Leach et al., 2007; Skitka et al., 2005). Yet, not a lot of research has been done to examine how morality can be applied to alter attitudes or influence individuals' behavior. The current research expands the morality literature by examining the persuasive power of two distinct morality frames (i.e., ideals vs. obligations). Based on the observed effects, it can be argued that because of morality's importance to individuals, the distinction between a positive (i.e., ideals) and a negative (i.e., obligations) frame is of particular relevance. Furthermore, whereas the work of Janoff-Bulman and colleagues (2008) centers on delineating the differences between two types of morality (i.e., prescriptive vs. proscriptive) and examining correlations between individual differences in these motivations and attitudes toward social issues, such as affirmative action, our research builds on this prior work by showing the experimental effects of *manipulating* two different types of moral foci on attitudes toward social equality. This is a theoretically important addition, as it demonstrates that specific moral contexts and/or goals are not inherently proscriptive or prescriptive, but that the same moral goal can be framed both ways. In sum, the findings of the four studies outlined here demonstrate the impact of distinguishing between ideals versus obligations framing of messages that appeal to moral (vs. nonmoral) values, and underline the theoretical and practical importance of this distinction.

Limitations

Although our current findings consistently demonstrate that a focus on moral ideals is more beneficial than a focus on moral obligations in promoting support for

redressing inequality among Whites, we do not expect this process to be exempt from moderating factors. In particular, we expect that interpersonal differences in group dominance motives (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) beliefs rooted in racism (Henry & Sears, 2002; Pettigrew, & Meertens, 1995), or even moral convictions opposing social equality (Skitka et al., 2005), will reduce the persuasive impact of moral appeals for support for social equality among Whites. Nevertheless, even though we expect such factors to lessen the impact of emphasizing moral ideals (vs. obligations) on equality attitudes, we do not expect a change in direction. That is to say, in no case do we expect a focus on moral obligations to elicit more support for redressing inequality than a focus on moral ideals. In so far as presenting equality as a moral issue conflicts with the ideological and/or moral motives, attitudes and beliefs held by a given individual, we expect such a conflict to become most pronounced in a moral obligation frame, which can be seen as more strict and mandatory in nature compared to a moral ideals frame (Janoff-Bulman et al., 2009). It follows then, that the data reported here provide consistent evidence for an effective intervention: Presenting social equality in terms of moral ideals rather than obligations positively influences attitudes and action tendencies of advantaged group members toward a more equal society beyond restoration: It induces these group members to value cultural diversity, prioritize equality, and support policies that actually improve the outcomes of disadvantaged groups.

Conclusion

Presenting equality as a moral issue increases its weightiness, which can be beneficial in terms of eliciting support for equality so long as the focus lies on ideals and positive outcomes. The data reported here demonstrate how advantaged group members'

attitudes and motivational strategies can be influenced by moral incentives, regardless of whether individuals consider equality as a moral issue. Furthermore, demonstrating the effectiveness of this type of experimental manipulation in influencing Whites' support of affirmative action is also important from an applied point of view, as it offers scope for the development of concrete interventions that may enhance public support for affirmative action policies. From a theoretical perspective, the current studies provide the first evidence of the effectiveness of *inducing* – beyond assessing – different frames of morality in changing attitudes toward social equality.

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Table 1. Means and (standard deviations) of the outcome measures used in Study 3a.

	Moral ideals	Moral obligations
Positive attitudes toward cultural diversity *	5.57 (0.85)	4.99 (1.20)
Prioritization of equality *	5.35 (1.16)	4.78 (1.10)
Social identity threat *	5.57 (0.85)	4.99 (1.20)
Support for retributive action	4.73 (1.50)	4.35 (1.44)

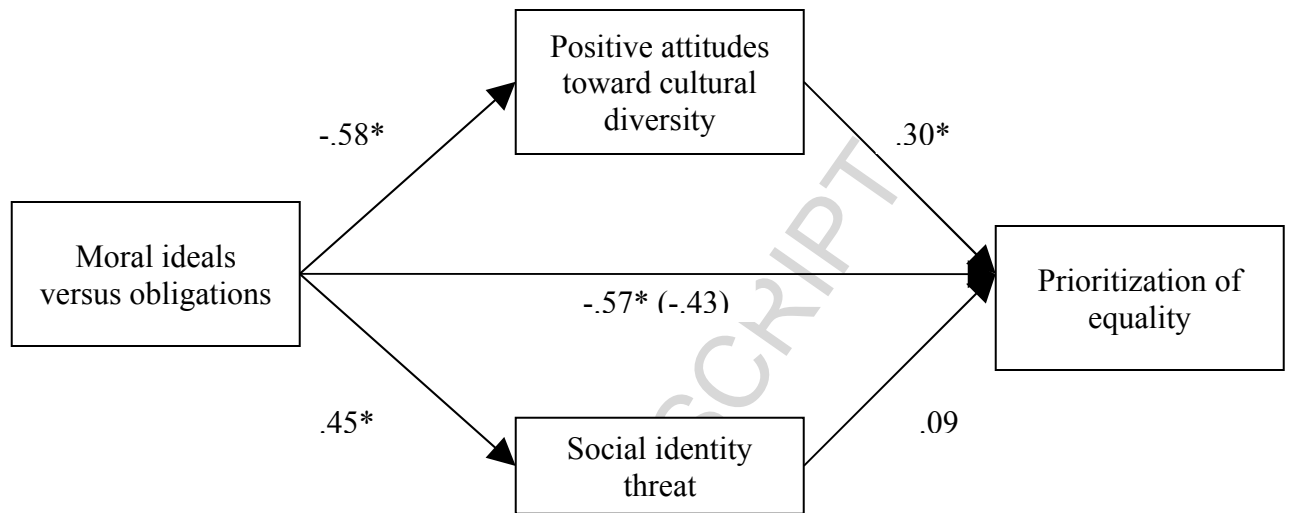
Note: * Effect of condition is significant at the .05 level.

Table 2. Pearson Correlations between outcome variables Study 3a.

	1	2	3	4
1. Positive attitudes toward cultural diversity	-	.33*	-.03	.27**
2. Prioritization of equality		-	.02	.45*
3. Social identity threat			-	.05
4. Support for retributive action				-

Note: * $p < .05$, two-tailed. ** $p < .01$, two-tailed.

Figure 1. Mediation model of Study 3a.



Note: * $p < .05$.

Study 1 Instructions for Open-ended Question (examples generated by participants were retained and content analyzed)

Imagine a future situation in which you work in a culturally diverse organization. How would you, through your actions and decisions, be able to *achieve the ideal/meet the obligation* of equality between native and nonnative Dutch? Please think of some concrete examples, and type them in the window below.

Appendix 2

Study 2 Mindset Instructions (participants did not register their responses to this instruction)

Imagine a future situation in which you work in a culturally diverse organization. Think of specific *ideals/obligations* concerning the fair and just treatment of nonnative Dutch colleagues in this context. Please consider how your efforts could contribute to *achieving these ideals/meetings these obligations*.