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Running Head: SOCIAL CREATIVITY AND WELL-BEING

Socially Creative Appraisals of Rejection Bolster

Ethnic Migrants' Subjective Well-being

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Abstract

We examined a proposition based on social identity theory that socially creative appraisals of rejection can boost the well-being of strongly identifying ethnic migrants. We piloted this proposition amongst women ($N = 80$) and found that strong (but not weak) group identifiers who considered the *positive views* that society holds about their social identity reported higher subjective wellbeing (self-esteem) relative to those who dwelt on rejection. In a subsequent field experiment ($N = 179$) conducted amongst ethnic migrants in London, we added a further social creativity treatment in which participants were encouraged to consider how they would view immigrants if they were native British (*accommodation*). Results revealed that the two social creativity mindsets (accommodation and positive) combined: (a) reduced perceptions of social rejection and increased optimism over the openness and fairness of society relative to a rejection mindset, (b) enhanced the self-esteem of strongly (but not weakly) identified ethnic migrants and (c) enhanced ethnic migrant's wellbeing by minimizing the recall of social rejection and by strengthening optimism over the host society's openness and fairness. Implications for social change are discussed.

Keywords. Community relations, social creativity, ethnic minority, rejection, subjective well-being.

Socially Creative Appraisals of Rejection Bolster

Ethnic Migrants' Subjective Well-being

"I love Turks. But it's in Turkey that I love them most"

Franz Xaver Schönhuber (Founder of the German party Der Republikaner)

In 2015, over one million migrants of diverse ethnicity crossed into Europe to seek asylum from sectarian conflicts, poverty and wars (Duncan, 2015). Although Britain received far fewer migrants during this period compared to Germany and Sweden (Eurostat, 2016), the spread of anti-immigrant sentiment in Britain has soared beyond the levels seen in these other countries (Blinder, 2015), with associated pressures on intercommunity relations (BBC News, 2016). Notably, the incidence of hostility and overt expressions of rejection of migrants from right-wing groups and political parties across Europe has continued to rise. The sense of rejection that ethnic migrants feel in relation to their host communities is likely to have a detrimental effect on their well-being (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999).

Emerging perspectives suggest that social identification may play a protective role against this social rejection (Jetten, C. Haslam, & S. A., Haslam, 2012). For instance, Jones and Jetten (2011) found evidence that heightening the accessibility of other positive social identities can alleviate the negative impact of rejection on the basis of a single devalued identity. That is, the psychological accessibility of other positive social identities reassures people of their wider social acceptance and allows them to escape the uncomfortable sense of being the target of social rejection.

Although Jones and Jetten's (2011) identity-access model is insightful, it may not be applicable for groups with a *non-concealable, central* stigma (e.g., Arab Muslim, Blacks in Europe), who experience repeated rejections on the basis of this central identity and little respite from less central positive social identities. How then might members of groups with non-concealable stigma

(e.g., ethnic migrants) deal with the psychological health problems that are often associated with rejection (Williams, Yu, Jackson, & Anderson, 1997)? We address this important question by considering the impact of socially creative appraisals of social rejection.

In the words of Tajfel and Turner (1979), ethnic migrants may alleviate the burden of social rejection by “redefining or altering the elements of the comparative situation” (pp. 19-20). In particular, ethnic migrants may adopt mindsets (e.g., positive and accommodating) that allow them to dampen the impact of social rejection. Based on this *social creativity hypothesis*, we propose that encouraging mindsets that allow ethnic migrants to re-appraise social rejection either by (a) embracing the positive aspects of their stigmatised identity or (b) accommodating the view and concerns of their host communities could bolster their well-being, at least, relative to dwelling on social rejection. Hence, our perspective differs from that of Jones and Jetten (2011) in that we investigate how people deal with stigma by identifying creatively with the stigmatized identity rather than with an alternative non-stigmatized identity. Below, we consider the basis for this social creativity and its consequences on the self-esteem of ethnic migrants who identify strongly or weakly with their ethnicity.

The Socially Creative Appraisals of Rejection

One reason why people seeking refuge from conflict and oppression (be it political or economic) might choose to migrate to Britain may be due to the perception that Western nations are open, fair and accommodating (e.g., Fleming, 2015). In reality, however, there are various obstacles that migrants encounter in their host societies (e.g., strict immigration policies that limit access to employment). As Owuamalam and Zagefka (2013) demonstrated, those whose beliefs about the openness and fairness of their society are questioned on the basis of a valid rejection experience can be expected to feel less worthy than dominant members of society. Below, we discuss two social creativity mindsets that may be used as tools for navigating this type of social rejection.

A mindset of positivity. To mitigate the negative outcomes of rejection on well-being, ethnic migrants (like other disadvantaged groups) may adopt socially creative ways of coping with their predicaments, for example, by reinterpreting specific devalued aspects of their social identity like skin colour (e.g., “Black is beautiful”). That is, *valuing* devalued aspects of their social identity allows ethnic migrants to dilute the hurtful aspects of social rejection, with the consequence that self-esteem is maintained rather than deflated (see Crocker & Major, 1989 for a review). Thus, the crucial ingredient is the *positive mindset* enlisted by a creative reinterpretation of social rejection. Assuming a positive mindset is the remedy, then redirecting one’s mind to positive ingroup qualities that are valued by the host society should yield similar well-being benefits for ethnic migrants, because such reappraisal diverts attention away from rejection, consequently easing pessimism over societal openness and fairness. This positive mindset, we reasoned, should enhance ethnic migrants’ wellbeing. Indeed advancements in social identity theory’s social creativity principle are consistent with the view that ethnic migrants can cope with their group’s devaluation by focusing on those dimensions on which their ingroup is valued (Blanz, Mummendey, Mielke, & Klink, 1998; p. 702). Consistent with this reasoning, Owuamalam and Zagefka (2014) showed that ethnic migrants who considered the positive qualities that their native British hosts attributed to their social identity reported a boost in subjective wellbeing compared to those who dwelt on rejection from this outgroup. An aim of the current research is to examine whether this effect is moderated by social identification.

A mindset of accommodation. We were also interested in a second social creativity option: that of *accommodation*. By accommodation, we mean the tendency often shown amongst members of low status groups to re-appraise the social order in ways that accommodate the higher status outgroups’ dominance over the ingroup (or outgroup favouritism - see Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). We reasoned, based on social identity theory, that accommodation might be one of several

social creativity strategies that ethnic migrants use to alleviate the negative impact of social rejection. That is, by acknowledging and accommodating their host community members' frustration, ethnic migrants may come to perceive social rejection not as something directed to ones' self personally, but as a generic frustration towards a broader category of immigrants, which they themselves (or at least members of their ingroup) might be capable of expressing towards outgroups if the tables were turned. Even the evidence from the literature on perspective-taking shows that accommodating others' frustrations increases a positive orientation towards the relevant outgroups (e.g., Batson et al., 1997), presumably because this 'other-directed' attention allows people to minimize a self-focused appraisal of the status quo.

Consistent with this coping hypothesis, indirect evidence from the literature on personal-group discrimination discrepancy shows that members of disadvantaged groups may cope with negativity towards their ingroup by minimising personal experiences of discrimination even when they acknowledge that their ingroup is the target of negative treatment (Foster & Matheson, 1999). More specifically, our view is consistent with Foster and Dion (2003) who showed that hardy women (those with a resilient orientation) report enhanced wellbeing due to the minimization of personal discrimination. In fact, our proposal of an accommodation mindset is very similar to Foster and Dion's (2003) conclusion that minimizing the pervasive experience of discrimination "is a coping response aimed at reducing the threat of discrimination" (p. 206). We extend Foster and Dion's view with the proposition that (a) accommodation might be a socially creative strategy that enlists the minimization of social rejection and, (b) in turn, this minimisation improves well-being by providing ethnic migrants with more realistic expectations about the openness and fairness of their host societies.

Hence, the uniting thread between the two social creativity strategies of *positive* and *accommodating* mindsets is the reduction in the recollections of social rejection, either by *diverting*

attention away from rejection—with greater focus on the positive ingroup contributions—or by *minimizing a self-focused appraisal* of social rejection. We further reasoned, based on the evidence that minimizing discrimination reduces the need for social change (Foster, 2001), that both positive and accommodating mindsets should allow ethnic migrants to be *realistic* in their optimism about the openness and fairness of the society in which they live.

The Moderating Role of Social Identification

Consistent with social identity theory's principles, we reasoned that creative appraisals of the social rejection—either by accommodating the dominant host's views or by considering the positive ingroup qualities that are valued by one's host community—should be a particularly effective coping strategy for those group members who are strongly invested in their stigmatised identity. Because strong identifiers are generally the ones who are likely to focus on group disadvantage, we reasoned that mindsets that divert attention away from salient group disadvantage should boost their wellbeing, at least relative to dwelling on social rejection. After all, strong group identifiers are often the ones who experience negative affect (e.g., anger) in relation to their group's disadvantage (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), making it possible that mindsets that diminish the salience of group disadvantage would enhance, rather than harm their personal wellbeing.

In contrast, social creativity effects may not be as prominent for (weak identifiers) because, by definition, the stigmatising identity is less central to their self-concept. As a result, we expected little (if any) fluctuations in the well-being of weakly identified ethnic migrants regardless of whether their attention is on their hosts' rejection of their ingroup – they've made peace with this reality — or on creative re-appraisals of their groups' devaluation – they already do so (Pagliaro, Alparone, Pacilli, & Mucchi-Faina, 2012).

The Present Research

We are not aware of any other study that has considered whether the wellbeing of high or low identifying group members benefit from the adoption of social creativity mindsets (relative to a rejection mindset). We close these important gaps in the literature by examining the effect of two social creativity strategies on wellbeing – *positive (upbeat) outlook* and *accommodation* – and we compare their effects on well-being (self-esteem) to a mindset of rejection. We predicted that an upbeat and accommodating mindset should enhance the wellbeing of strongly identifying ethnic migrants relative to a mindset of rejection, while such a boost would be negligible for their weakly identifying counterparts who already discount the personal relevance of their stigmatised social identity.

We further examined the mechanism through which the beneficial effect of social creativity is transferred on to the personal self-esteem of ethnic migrants and reasoned that decreased recall of social rejections, either via *diversion* (positive mindset) or *minimisation* (accommodation), should allow ethnic migrants to become more realistic in their expectations about the openness and fairness from their host society. Thus, we are the first to consider when and why the vicious cycle of negativity in the relationship between social rejection and wellbeing (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014) is overcome and potentially even reversed. Our research proceeded in two steps. First, we tested our moderation hypothesis in a pilot study. We then tested our full propositions, including the mediational process, in the main study.

Pilot Study

It is difficult to recruit participants from ethnic migrant communities (Ejiogu et al., 2011; Ford et al., 2008). For this reason, we aimed to maximise the chances of a successful test amongst ethnic migrants by first testing our key proposition with another readily available, but nonetheless similarly disadvantaged demographic: women. Here, we wanted to demonstrate that a socially creative mindset of embracing the positive qualities which the outgroup (men) associates with the

ingroup (women) would boost the well-being (self-esteem) of strongly identifying women, in particular.

We therefore recruited 80 women from the Midlands region in the UK to take part in the study via opportunity sampling ($M_{\text{age}} = 20.63$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.14$). Participants first completed a 4-item social identification measure that we adapted from Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, and Owen (2002): “I am proud to be a member of my gender group”; “I like being a member of my gender group”; “I see myself as different from other people in my gender group” (R); “I value being a member of my gender group” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .75$). We then manipulated mindset using a similar paradigm developed by Branscombe (1998) by encouraging participants to consider the *positive* characteristics that men hold about women (social creativity mindset, $n = 40$). In a rejection mindset condition participants were asked to consider the negative views that men hold about women (rejection mindset, $n = 40$). Next, we assessed participants’ subjective wellbeing using Rosenberg’s (1979) 10-item Self-Esteem Scale (e.g., “I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others”). Responses were provided on a 6-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 6 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .88$). On completion, participants were thoroughly debriefed and thanked for taking part.

Using Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 1), we performed a moderated regression analysis in which mindset was effect coded (-1 = rejection, 1 = social creativity) and identification was centred around its mean. The results showed a non-significant main effect of mindset on self-esteem, $\beta = .17$, $SE = .16$, $p = .297$, 95% CI = [-0.153, 0.496], and a significant positive effect of identification on personal self-esteem, $\beta = .42$, $SE = .11$, $p = .0003$, 95% CI = [0.201, 0.645]. These patterns were further qualified by a significant mindset x identification interaction, $\beta = .71$, $SE = .22$, $p = .002$, 95% CI = [0.269, 1.158], $\Delta R^2 = .11$. As expected, simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed a positive effect of socially creative mindset on the self-esteem of high identifiers: a

social creativity mindset enhanced their self-esteem relative to a rejection mindset, $\beta = .71$, $SE = .24$, $p = .004$, 95% CI = [0.235, 1.178]. This mind-set effect was absent for low identifiers, $\beta = -.36$, $SE = .23$, $p = .118$, 95% CI = [-0.823, 0.095].

Thus, we demonstrated in this pilot study that a creative consideration of the positive qualities that men see in women was sufficient to boost the personal self-esteem of strongly identifying women relative to a mindset of rejection from men. Although we reasoned that this boost comes about by diverting attention away from rejection, which then permits greater optimism about societal openness and fairness more generally, we did not test this mediational mechanism directly. We also did not consider how a mindset of accommodation, which we assume to be part and parcel of socially creative strategies that people use to deal with social rejection, affects well-being. We addressed these two issues in the target ethnic migrant community in our main study.

Main Study

Method

Participants. One hundred and seventy-nine ethnic migrants were recruited at locations in the metropolitan British city of London (110 men; $M_{age} = 25.19$, $SD_{age} = 3.82$; see Appendix A for our *a priori* sample size estimation). Recruitment was undertaken by an ethnic minority researcher. In terms of participants' ethnic composition, 75.4% identified themselves as Asian, 19.0% as Black or from the African continent, 3.4% as Arab, 1.1% as Latino, and 0.6% as Greek. We excluded the Greek response (1 case) in order to maintain the current focus on ethnic migrants outside of the European Union.

Materials, procedure and design.¹ Participants were told that the study was about the “attitude and perception of different social groups in this society.” They then completed the measures for the study in the following order:

Social identification. Our moderator was measured using the identity subscale of Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-esteem Scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*, see Table 1). Although this scale is normally reliable (e.g., Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), the reliability of scale items in this study was not optimal ($\alpha = .46$). Indeed, a factor analysis revealed two distinct components (see Table 1) suggesting that participants discriminated between their *ethnic group identities* (i.e., identification based on a unique ethnic group) and *ethnicity* (i.e., identification with shared cultural characteristics that might transcend a single ethnic group). In retrospect, this distinction makes intuitive sense given that participants were of different ethnic groups in Britain, making it likely that the two items relating to *ethnic group membership* ($r = .50, p < .0001$) and the two relating to *ethnicity* or cultural affinity with other ethnic groups in Britain ($r = .30, p < .0001$) mean different things to them ($r = .10, p = .219$). For simplicity sake, we refer to the former as ethnic group identification and the latter as cultural identification.

Mindset manipulation. Our mindset conditions were similar to the one that we tested in the pilot study. In our first social creativity condition (*accommodation* mindset; $n = 64$), we asked participants to consider their disadvantaged outcomes via the lens of their host community members (the native British):

Please try to put yourself in the shoes of a native British person and imagine the impressions you might have of non-native residents who you believe are running down your country. In the space provided below, please write up to four stereotypes you might have of such non-native residents.

In a second social creativity condition (*positive* mindset; $n = 56$) we asked participants to consider the positive views that are associated with their social identity:

Please think about the positive impression that native British people might have of ethnic migrants. In the space provided below, please write up to four positive impressions that you think native British people have of ethnic migrants.

We compared these two social creativity conditions with a *rejection* mindset condition ($n = 59$) in which participants focused on the rejection of their ingroup by the host community:

Please think about the negative impression that native British people might have of ethnic migrants. In the space provided below, please write up to four negative impressions that you think native British people have of ethnic migrants.

We tested the effectiveness of this mindset treatment with two items asking participants how positive and favourable they thought the opinions of their native British host were of them ($-3 = \text{negative/unfavourable}$, $0 = \text{neutral}$, $+3 = \text{positive/favourable}$, $r = .91$, $p < .001$). We expected that a social creativity mindset would lead to more positive expectations from members of the host community compared to a rejection mindset.

Recall of rejection. We measured participants' recall of social rejection, our first mediator, using five items developed by Schmitt et al. (2002) to tap a sense of being rejected on the basis of group belonging (e.g., "I regularly encounter prejudice as an ethnic minority person;" "I feel like I am personally a victim of this society due to my ethnicity"). Responses were collected on a 7-point scale ($1 = \text{strongly disagree}$, $7 = \text{strongly agree}$, $\alpha = .78$). The lower the score on this scale, the more people are minimising attention to rejection based on their social identity. Hence, this measure allowed us to capture the proposed diversion and/or minimization processes envisaged in both social creativity conditions.

Perceived societal openness and fairness. We measured perceived societal openness and fairness, our second mediator, using four items adapted from Major et al. (2002). We re-framed the scale around views of the openness and fairness of the British society: "This society is an open one

where both ethnic minorities and native British people can achieve higher status”; “Ethnic minority people have difficulty achieving higher status in this society” (reverse scored); “Advancement in this society is possible for both ethnic minorities and native British people”; and “Ethnic minority people are often unable to advance in this society” (reverse scored). Responses were collected on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; $\alpha = .75$).

Self-esteem. Because rejection can be expected to have both enduring and situational consequences for the self-esteem of ethnic migrants, we measured both aspects of this outcome variable and combined them to form a composite measure of personal self-esteem ($r = .61$, $p < .001$). Following Rubin and Hewstone’s (1998) distinction between enduring and situational self-esteem, we measured the former using the Rosenberg’s global self-esteem scale ($\alpha = .80$), and the latter using (a) the single-item self-esteem scale (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001) that was adapted to become situational: “I have high self-esteem right now,” and (b) three other ad hoc items: “Right now I feel worthless” (reverse scored); “I feel I am probably no good at all right now” (reverse scored); “Right now I feel unable to do things that most people do with ease” ($\alpha = .74$).

--Insert Table 1 here--

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analysis. Do accommodation and positive mindsets have similar effects on the proposed mechanisms underlying wellbeing? Our a priori assumption was that accommodation and positive mindset are social creativity strategies that people might use to navigate social rejection. We predicted that both strategies should have similar effects on the mechanisms of rejection recall and perceived openness and fairness of host society. If this is true, then both strategies should *similarly* reduce and/or minimize recall of rejection as well as increase optimism about societal openness and fairness. Using an independent *t*-test, we compared scores on rejection recall and perceived societal openness and fairness (including the manipulation check) between the two social

creativity conditions. Results showed that there were no significant differences between the two social creativity conditions for rejection recall ($\bar{d} = .30$, $SE = .24$, $p = .220$) and, optimism about societal openness and fairness ($\bar{d} = .35$, $SE = .23$, $p = .136$; see also Table 2, Panel A). The story was the same even when we reanalysed our results using a Bayesian independent t -test (in JASP program, Love et al., 2015) for null hypothesis testing, which quantifies the degree of evidence for the null relative to the alternative hypothesis that there is a difference (Lee & Wagenmakers, 2014). Indeed, the null hypotheses were 2-3 times more likely than the alternative hypotheses in the contrast for rejection recall ($BF_{01} = 3$) and perceived societal openness and fairness ($BF_{01} = 2$). Consequently, we collapsed the accommodation and positive mindset conditions into a single social creativity condition via a dummy code (.5) that we then contrasted with rejection mindset (-1) in the subsequent moderation and mediation analyses.

--Insert Table 2 and 3 here--

Main analyses. Bivariate relationships are presented in Table 3. We examined the hypothesis that social identification moderates the impact of mindset on wellbeing (personal self-esteem) in a moderated regression analysis. We performed this analysis using the cultural identification measure first, and then repeated the same analysis using the ethnic group identification measure. These analyses were performed using Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 1). Prior to performing the calculation, we centred our continuous identification measures around their means, and effect coded mindset as described earlier.

Consistent with the evidence in our pilot study, results revealed a non-significant main effect of social creativity mindset on personal self-esteem, $\beta = .07$, $SE = .12$, $p = .556$, 95% CI = [-0.169, 0.312]. Contrary to the pattern in the pilot study, there was also no significant main effect of cultural identification on personal self-esteem, $\beta = -.08$, $SE = .05$, $p = .108$, 95% CI = [-0.185, 0.019]. However, consistent with the pilot study, these effects were qualified by a significant interaction

between mindset and cultural identification, $\beta = .16$, $SE = .08$, $p = .033$, 95% CI = [0.013, 0.313], $\Delta R^2 = .03$. As expected, results from a simple slope analysis revealed a boost in the personal self-esteem of those ethnic migrants who adopted a socially creative mindset relative to those who held a rejection mindset, but only if they were strong identifiers [$M+1SD$], $\beta = .34$, $SE = .17$, $p = .046$, 95% CI = [0.006, 0.672], and not weak identifiers [$M-1SD$], $\beta = -.20$, $SE = .18$, $p = .277$, 95% CI = [-0.550, 0.159] (see Figure 1). This moderation pattern did not occur when we substituted cultural identification with ethnic group identification.²

--Insert Figure 1 here--

Mediational analysis. We then sought to establish that the bolstering effect of social creativity on ethnic migrants' individual self-esteem was driven by (a) dampening the recall of rejection, and (b) strengthening optimism about the openness and fairness of the host societies. To test these sequential process predictions, we calculated a structural equation model (SEM) in which we specified a path from social creativity mindset to recollections of rejection (first latent mediator), a path from rejection recall to perceived societal openness and fairness (second latent mediator), and a further path from this second mediator to self-esteem (latent outcome). Given the likelihood that spurious correlations between indicators on multi-item scales could lead to misspecification problems (Little, Cunningham, & Shahar, 2002), we aimed for parsimony by reducing the number of items on the scales to two-to-three item parcels per latent construct.

We examined the adequacy of the resulting measurement model using maximum likelihood estimation in MPlus version 7 (Muthén, & Muthén, 1998-2015) and found that it satisfied all measures of good fit according to the conventional standards³ (Hu & Bentler, 1999), $X^2(17) = 18.12$, $p = .381$, CFI = .997, SRMR = .036, RMSEA = .019, 90% CI = [0.000, 0.072] (see Figure 2a). We therefore estimated the theorised processes in a model where we assumed a sequential effect of mindset on wellbeing (personal self-esteem) via rejection recall and perceived societal

openness and fairness, which demonstrated a near perfect fit to the data, $X^2(24) = 21.95, p = .582$, CFI = 1.000, SRMR = .036, RMSEA < .001, 90% CI = [0.000, 0.055], AIC = 4205.16. Following Owuamalam *et al.* (2013; 2014), we also investigated an alternative (dual process) model in which we assumed that rejection and perceived societal openness and fairness are two separate pathways to ethnic migrants' individual self-esteem. This alternative account did not fit the data well, $X^2(24) = 48.21, p = .002$, CFI = .946, SRMR = .098, RMSEA = .075, 90% CI = [0.044, 0.106], AIC = 4231.83, and was poorer than our proposed model as indicated by a higher Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) value compared to the preferred model ($\Delta AIC = 26.67$). Consequently, we aimed for precision in a bootstrap simulation by re-sampling the data 10,000 times (Preacher & Hayes, 2004) and derived specific hypothesised (in)direct effects from it.

--Insert Figure 2a and 2b here--

First, results confirmed that social creativity reduced the extent to which ethnic migrants dwelt on rejection from their host community relative to a mindset of rejection, $\beta = -.28, SE = .08, p = .001$, (see Table 2, Panel B for descriptive statistics). In turn, reduced rejection recall increased optimism over the openness and fairness of their host society, $\beta = -.51, SE = .08, p < .0001$ (see Table 2, Panel B). Ethnic migrants whose optimism about societal openness and fairness had been enhanced in this way, reported a marginal boost in their personal self-esteem, $\beta = .23, SE = .12, p = .060$. Second, indirect effect analysis corroborated other findings in the literature on rejection-identification (Branscombe *et al.*, 1999; Schmitt *et al.*, 2014) and showed that recalling instances of social rejection undermined personal self-esteem ($\beta = -.40, SE = .15, p = .010$) but it did so by thwarting ethnic migrants' perception about the openness and fairness of their host community, $\beta_{IE} = .15, SE = .05, 95\% CI = [0.059, 0.259]$.

Importantly, and consistent with our prediction, the negative direct and indirect effects of recalling social rejection on personal self-esteem were reversed for ethnic migrants who received a

social creativity treatment relative to those who received a rejection treatment. Indeed, ethnic migrants' personal self-esteem was enhanced by (a) minimizing recall of social rejection, $\beta_{IE} = .11$, $SE = .05$, 95% CI = [0.032, 0.236], and (b) sequentially minimizing rejection recall and increasing optimism about the host society's openness and fairness, $\beta_{IE} = .03$, $SE = .02$, 95% CI = [0.002, 0.009].

General Discussion

Amidst the growing anti-immigrant sentiments across Europe, we investigated the effectiveness of a social creativity cure for identity-based social rejection. Specifically, we predicted that a socially-creative appraisal of social rejection can boost the psychological health of ethnic migrants, and that this remedy would be effective for those who strongly identified with their ethnic identity. We further hypothesised that the bolstering effect of social creativity comes about by reducing the salience of specific instances of social rejection and by strengthening optimism about societal openness and fairness. Our findings supported these hypotheses.

Clarifying the Social Identity Approach

The social identity approach has faced considerable criticism over its 'inability' to explain why members of low status groups (such as ethnic migrants) may, at times, adopt views that legitimise their group's disadvantage (e.g., an outgroup favouring orientation – see Jost et al., 2004). The present data provides one further insight by suggesting that members of low status groups (particularly high identifiers) may sometimes adopt mindsets that accommodate the outgroup's dominance over their ingroup in order to escape the uncomfortable cycle of negativity that could otherwise undermine their personal well-being (see also Owuamalam et al., 2016). In particular, we likened a mindset of accommodation to the traditional social creativity approach posited in social identity theory and showed that holding such a mindset serves a protective function for the self-esteem of members of stigmatised groups. That is, an accommodating mindset could dampen a

sense that one is personally the target of group-based social rejection (cf. Crocker & Major, 1989), allowing members to be more realistic in their optimism about their group's societal outcomes.

In this sense, our analysis is consistent with that of McCoy et al. (2013), who similarly reported the self-esteem benefits of an accommodating (legitimising) mindset. However, we extend this prior contribution by showing that, consistent with social identity theory, that a social creativity mindset is most beneficial for the personal well-being of strongly identifying members of disadvantaged groups. Note that our view is different to Jost and Banaji (1994) who propose that an accommodating mindset (e.g., supporting systems responsible for one's devaluation) operates in the service of the societal systems, outside of personal and group interests.

The accommodation-social change paradox. The puzzle in using accommodation as a tool for navigating social rejection is the prospect that it could undermine social change by reducing collective action (see also Foster & Dion, 2003 for a similar discussion). Our view is that an accommodating mindset does not necessary contradict the goal of resisting social rejection. This is because accommodating the frustrations of host community members is more likely to promote a positive image of, and hence better relations with ethnic migrants, than a rejection mindset that could increase defensiveness amongst host community members given the accusation of prejudice implied by it (see Bastian & Loughnan, 2016 for a similar discussion). This is particularly important for non-prejudiced dominant group members who are ordinarily likely to champion the cause of minority groups (Mallett, Huntsinger, Sinclair, & Swim, 2008) but, at the same time, are often wary of being accused of prejudice (cf. Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Because the evidence shows that advocacy from members of dominant groups is more likely to change public opinion than resistance from the oppressed group (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010) it seems plausible that an accommodating mindset could create the positive conditions that allow host community members to advocate on their behalf (see Reimer et al. 2017). A conclusion that is

supported by numerous evidence showing that resistance ordinarily reinforces rather than abates negativity towards members of the stigmatised group (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). In short, accommodation in this sense, can be viewed as a passive (Becker, 2012), but nonetheless strategic resistance to social rejection (cf. Reimer et al., 2017). Future studies could investigate these assumptions directly, both from the perspective of minority and majority groups.

How Does our Approach Compare with Other Models of Well-being?

Other identity-based models of coping with disadvantage (e.g., the rejection-identification model; Branscombe et al., 1999) have shown that a chronic sense of rejection undermines ethnic migrants' well-being. Our data corroborate this view in that recall of rejection was associated with a decrease in personal self-esteem (see Figure 2b). However, we extend this rejection-identification model by situating our intervention at an earlier stage in the causal sequence. That is, we showed that the primary vector that undermines well-being—recalling rejection—can be stifled by encouraging a coping strategy involving the use of socially creative appraisals.

Importantly, our approach offers a viable means of providing immunity over the social rejection of a central identity, especially among people with non-concealable stigma (such as ethnic migrants, cf. Jones & Jetten, 2011). Although our rationale for the positivity mindset is somewhat similar to Jones and Jetten's (2011) in that both strategies divert attention from social rejection, it is important to note that our approach relates to ways in which members of stigmatized groups can “make peace with their devalued identities” rather than abandoning them for rosier identities. An approach that is likely more appealing (and demonstrably beneficial) to those who identify strongly with their stigmatized identities.

In particular, the finding that social creativity boosts self-esteem relative to a mindset of rejection has applied relevance in the context of support services where professionals may be drawn to establishing rapport via sympathy or pity, with the potential risk of intensifying a sense of

rejection and victimhood. Our results suggest that an approach that allows targets of social rejection to dwell on their rejection can have unintended negative consequences on their self-esteem, at least compared to when such targets are encouraged to adopt a more resilient socially creative mindset. However, longitudinal evidence is needed in order to determine whether an effect of social creativity mindset lingers beyond a single treatment.

Conclusion

We tested and found experimental support for a novel intervention based on social identity theory that: (a) a social creativity mindset bolsters the self-esteem of ethnic migrants relative to a rejection mindset, (b) this effect is visible amongst those ethnic migrants who are strongly invested in their ethnic identity, and (c) the bolstering effect of social creativity on ethnic migrants' individual self-esteem comes about by dampening the extent to which they dwell on rejection and by strengthening their optimism about the openness and fairness of their host society. In short, our data suggest that encouraging ethnic migrants to consider how they themselves might treat immigrants if they were the host community members or to focus on positive aspects of their devalued social identity might be an effective cure (even vaccine) for an identity-based social rejection.

Appendix A

Sample size estimation

We used a conservative average effect size in psychological studies is $d = .43$ (equivalent to $f = .22$, Richard, Bond, & Stokes-Zoota, 2003) rather than those obtained in our pilot study which may have over- or under-estimated the true effect. We then deduced from Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, and Buchner's (2007) G*Power that we would require 165 cases (assuming alpha $[\alpha] = .05$, power $[1-\beta] = .80$ [Cohen, 1988], $f = .22$, groups [social creativity vs. rejection conditions] = 2, numerator $df = 1$, and two covariates (i.e., identification and its interaction term with mindset) in order to test our key proposition that high identifiers benefit from social creativity more than from a mindset of rejection. We rounded this number up by about 5% more cases to account for unusable data.

Notes

1. We also measured ethnic migrants' beliefs about their employability prospects in the current study. We found that social creativity mindset exerted only a significant indirect (not a direct) effect on ethnic migrants' employability beliefs via recollections of rejection and perceptions of societal openness and fairness. We excluded this analysis to place a sharper focus on the unambiguous measure of wellbeing (self-esteem). Similarly, we include a measure of self-confidence (proxy for social anxiety) in the pilot study and obtained identical main and interactive effects of social creativity and identification on that measure. Again, we excluded this proxy analysis to maintain a crisper focus on personal self-esteem.
2. The effect of social creativity on personal self-esteem was not qualified by ethnic group identification, $\beta = -.06$, $SE = .10$, $p = .565$, 95% CI = [-0.256, 0.140]. Hence, the moderating effect of identification may be restricted to specific aspects of social identification (see also Leach et al. 2008 for a similar discussion).
3. According to Hu and Bentler (1999), good fitting models should have CFI values $> .95$, SRMR values $\leq .05$, RMSEA values $\leq .09$ and a non-significant chi-square value. Note that differences in Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) that are $\geq 3-10$ are considered to be meaningful (cf. Burnham & Anderson, 2004).

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Table 1.

Exploratory Factor Analysis on the Group Identification Measure.

Items	Components	
	<i>Cultural identity</i>	<i>Ethnic group identity</i>
1. Overall my ethnicity has very little to do with how I feel about myself (R)	.845	-.173
2. My ethnicity is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am (R)	.779	.192
3. In general, belonging to my ethnic group is an important part of my self-image	.004	.843
4. The ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am	-.008	.866
Proportion of the total variance explained by each component	31.65%	39.58%

Note. R = reverse scored. Promax rotation was used for this analysis. Factors loadings from the pattern matrix.

Table 2.

The Effect of Mindset on the Proposed Mechanisms (including the Manipulation Check).

Outcome variables	Mindset Treatment				
	<i>Accommodation</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>	<i>95% CI [LL, UL]</i>
<i>Panel A</i>					
Mindset positivity (manipulation check)	0.42 (1.29)	0.37 (1.16)	.21	.04	[-0.398, 0.493]
Recall of rejection	2.79 (1.29)	3.09 (1.33)	-1.23	-.23	[-0.769, 0.178]
Perceived societal openness & fairness	4.61 (1.29)	4.26 (1.24)	1.50	.27	[-0.111, 0.806]
<i>Panel B</i>	<i>Rejection</i>	<i>Social creativity</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>	<i>95% CI [LL, UL]</i>
Mindset positivity (manipulation check)	-1.33 (1.47)	0.38 (1.24)	-7.68**	-1.30	[-2.149, -1.270]
Recall of rejection	3.76 (1.34)	2.93 (1.31)	3.94**	.63	[0.413, 1.240]
Perceived societal openness & fairness	3.97 (1.17)	4.45 (1.27)	-2.41*	-.38	[-0.864, -0.085]

Note. In the conditions columns, numbers in parenthesis are standard deviations and numbers outside parentheses are means. All calculations in this table (including effect sizes and confidence intervals) were generated in JASP (Love et al., 2015). Listwise deletion was applied wherever data was missing. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

Table 3.

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations of Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Cultural identification	3.85	1.61	--						
2. Ethnic group identification	4.64	1.53	.10	--					
3. Mindset treatment	--	--	-.03	-.05	--				
4. Recall of rejection	3.20	1.37	.01	.02	-.28***	--			
5. Perceived societal openness & fairness	4.29	1.26	-.01	-.09	.18*	-.45***	--		
6. Wellbeing (self-esteem)	5.27	1.02	-.13	.12	.07	-.41***	.39***	--	
7. Gender	--	--	<.01	.29***	.01	-.11	.08	.03	--
8. Age	25.19	3.82	< -.01	.09	-.08	.12	-.01	.09	-.03

Note. Mindset (coded .05 = social creativity, -1 = rejection); gender (coded 1 = women, 2 = men).

* $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$ & *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1. The effect of social creativity mindset on the personal self-esteem of strongly and weakly identifying ethnic migrants. Error bars are standard errors.

Figure 2a. Measurement model. Note: rejectn = recall of rejection; ofairnes = perceived societal openness and fairness; and welbeing = self-esteem. Standardized estimates are reported. Figure was generated using MPlus diagrammer version 7.

Figure 2b. The serial effect of a social creativity mindset on self-esteem (welbeing) via recall of rejection (rejectn) and perceived societal openness and fairness (ofairnes). Mindset (weighted effect coding: .5 = social creativity mindset, -1 = rejection mindset). All estimates are standardized values, and in parenthesis are 95% Confidence Intervals associated with the relevant path estimate. $+p = .06$, $**p \leq .010$, $***p \leq .001$. Figure was generated using MPlus diagrammer version 7.