

# Motivations for Prevention or Promotion Following Social Exclusion: Being Rejected Versus Being Ignored

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Social exclusion evokes powerful motivations and emotions. The present studies examined how these motivations and emotions might differ following exclusion that is explicit, active, and direct (i.e., when one is rejected) versus implicit, passive, and indirect (i.e., when one is ignored). It was hypothesized that being rejected should produce a sense of social loss and lead to more *prevention-focused* responses, including withdrawal from social contact, thoughts about actions one should not have taken, and increased feelings of agitation. In contrast, being ignored should produce a sense of failure to achieve social gain and lead to more *promotion-focused* responses, including reengagement in social contact, thoughts about actions one should have taken, and increased feelings of dejection. These hypotheses were supported across 4 studies in which people recalled or underwent experiences of being rejected or ignored. Past research on active versus passive exclusion is reexamined and found to be consistent with these hypotheses as well.

*Keywords:* social exclusion, regulatory focus, counterfactual thinking, anxiety versus dejection

Humans are truly social creatures. Not only do we rapidly develop affiliations in the most minimally social circumstances (Brewer, 1979), but we also pursue these affiliations even in the absence of conscious awareness or intention (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003). Indeed, so widespread are our social tendencies that many have identified social connection, or *belonging*, as one of the most fundamental human needs (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Bowlby, 1969; Maslow, 1955; see Pittman & Zeigler, 2007).

When people perceive threats to their belonging, consistent with its status as a fundamental need, such threats evoke powerful motivations and emotions. The anticipation or occurrence of social exclusion evokes a variety of negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, and fear (Williams, 2001), and in many ways shares both the phenomenology and physiological arousal of physical pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003; MacDonald & Leary, 2005). People also mobilize a diverse arsenal of strategies for coping with such exclusion (Williams, 2007), including (a) swift retaliation toward those responsible or, at times, increased anger, hostility, and aggression toward other people in general (Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004; Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001; see Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006); (b) withdrawal from social contact or escape from self-awareness (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003); and even (c) increased social sensi-

tivity and renewed efforts toward social connection (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000; Gardner, Pickett, Jeffries, & Knowles, 2005; Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007; Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000).

This broad range of behavior and emotion that occurs when belonging is generally threatened illustrates the great impact of such threats; however, it also suggests an equally broad range of more specific concerns that may also be threatened in these circumstances. That is, because social exclusion can produce responses as varied as generalized aggression, emotional withdrawal, and renewed interest in social contact, it seems likely that the separate instances of exclusion that evoke these different responses involve somewhat distinct experiences. Thus, the great diversity in people's responses to social exclusion may arise from a variety of additional motivations beyond social connection that different types of exclusion activate (cf. Leary, 2005; Williams, 2001, 2007). The primary purpose of the present research is to explore what additional motivations may be activated in different instances of social exclusion and to investigate the distinct behaviors, thoughts, and emotions these motivations might elicit.

In this article, we investigate one motivational difference among experiences of social exclusion that we hypothesize is tied to the directness with which this exclusion is communicated. In some circumstances, people receive explicit feedback concerning their poor standing within a relationship or a group and are actively *rejected*. In other circumstances, people receive more implicit indications of their lack of social connection and are passively *ignored*. Although both of these situations represent a substantial threat to belonging (see Leary, 2005; Williams, 2001, 2007), we examine here how experiences of being rejected versus ignored may also more broadly evoke motivations concerned with security versus advancement, respectively, and consider how such motiva-

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tions may provide further insight into when and why different instances of exclusion elicit different types of reactions.

### Distinctions Among Experiences of Social Exclusion

Several previous lines of research have also examined distinctions among the threats to belonging created by different types of social exclusion, and among how people respond to such threats. For example, Leary (2005) has proposed that experiences of exclusion are influenced not only by how much one currently feels valued by others but also by the social history that has given rise to these feelings. In one study supporting this perspective, participants who initially received positive feedback from an interaction partner that then became increasingly negative reported more anger, sadness, and hurt feelings than did those who continually received negative feedback from the beginning (Buckley, Winkel, & Leary, 2004; see also Williams et al., 2000). Thus, even though everyone was exposed to the same degree of social exclusion by the end of the interaction, people's previous interactions with the individual responsible for the exclusion altered the way in which this exclusion was experienced.

Williams and colleagues have pursued another distinction between different experiences of social exclusion that focuses on how particular instances of exclusion may threaten other fundamental needs, such as for self-esteem, control, or a feeling of purpose, in addition to needs for belonging (Williams, 2001, 2007). Recent research supports the importance of this distinction as well: Participants who were socially excluded and then further experienced a loss of control (by listening to aversive blasts of noise that they could not initiate or modulate) subsequently acted with much greater aggression than did those who were excluded but were then subsequently able to establish a sense of control over their environment (by choosing when the noise would begin; Warburton, Williams, & Cairns, 2006). Moreover, those able to exert control following social exclusion did not show any greater aggression than those who had initially experienced social acceptance. Thus, people's experiences of the threats to belonging arising from social exclusion appear to also depend on how well they feel their other important needs are currently being satisfied.

A final distinction between different experiences of social exclusion, explored by Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, and Schaller (2007), concerns people's anticipation of the risks and rewards involved in further social contact following instances of exclusion. In a series of studies that illustrated the importance of this distinction, Maner et al. showed that after being excluded, people who saw opportunities to reestablish social ties evaluated their interaction partner more favorably and more generously rewarded this partner's task performance. However, people who did not see such opportunities following exclusion, either because the person with whom they expected to interact was directly responsible for their initial exclusion or because they possessed a chronic fear of negative social evaluation (see Leary, 1983), evaluated their partner more negatively and administered less generous rewards. Thus, whether experiences of exclusion prompt a focus on the possibility of meeting belonging needs elsewhere or on the possibility of renewed threats to belonging can affect people's tendency to respond in a prosocial or antisocial fashion.

In the research presented here, we pursue yet another means of distinguishing between experiences of social exclusion that ex-

tends the three different approaches outlined above while including elements from each one. As did Leary (2005), we begin by considering differences in the broader social circumstances surrounding experiences of exclusion; however, instead of focusing on people's previous history of acceptance or exclusion within a particular relationship, we examine whether exclusion is communicated in an explicit, active, and direct or an implicit, passive, and indirect manner. Then, as did Williams (2001), we further consider what additional motivations active versus passive instances of exclusion evoke beyond general needs for belonging; however, instead of focusing on specific needs, such as self-esteem or control, that might also be threatened, we examine the broader motivational concerns with advancement or security (e.g., Higgins, 1997; Molden, Lee, & Higgins, 2008) that different experiences of exclusion might activate. Finally, as did Maner and colleagues (Maner et al., 2007), we investigate how the motivational concerns associated with active versus passive instances of exclusion influence people's thoughts and behaviors regarding the possibility for future social contact; however, instead of specifically assessing people's prosocial or antisocial outlook, we assess their general tendency to seek out or withdraw from social contact and their ruminations on how future exclusion might be avoided.

### Distinctions Between Being Rejected and Being Ignored

Among the numerous ways in which experiences of social exclusion might be psychologically distinct, one that we propose can have particularly far-reaching implications, but has thus far not been widely investigated, is how explicitly such exclusion is conveyed (cf. Leary, 1990; van Beest & Williams, 2006; Zadro, Williams, & Richardson, 2005). At times, social exclusion is all too explicit and one's poor social standing is directly communicated. Lovers may make detailed lists of character flaws; strangers may be inexplicably rude and insulting; members of one's formal and informal social groups may continually administer verbal or physical abuse. These instances of exclusion involve being actively *rejected*.<sup>1</sup> At other times, social exclusion is more implicit and one's poor social standing is communicated only indirectly. Lovers may be distant and unresponsive; strangers may inexplicably decide to direct their social efforts and attention elsewhere; members of one's social groups may continually refuse to acknowledge one's contributions (or even one's presence). These instances of exclusion involve being passively *ignored*.

As illustrated by the examples presented above, this distinction between being rejected and being ignored is generally applicable across a wide range of circumstances in which social exclusion may occur. It is equally possible for people to be either actively rejected or passively ignored (a) both by specific individuals and by larger groups of people, (b) both by those to whom one is close

<sup>1</sup> In the literature on social exclusion, the term *rejection* has often been used generically to describe any situation in which people perceive some kind of threat to belonging (Leary, 2005), including those in which this threat has been clearly and directly communicated (e.g., Buckley et al., 2004), as well as those in which it has merely been indirectly implied (e.g., Twenge et al., 2003). Here, we use the term *rejection* to refer only to circumstances in which a lack of belonging has been explicitly conveyed (which mirrors its most common colloquial meaning) and use the term *exclusion* to refer to belonging threats in general.

and by complete strangers, and (c) both in brief, isolated incidents and in regularly recurring episodes. Furthermore, decisions to reject or ignore someone can each be inspired by an almost infinite variety of reasons, which may be perceived as either abundantly clear or completely opaque to the unfortunate target of such actions. Therefore, whatever differences exist between people's experiences of being rejected and being ignored could have broad implications for understanding their responses to many different instances of social exclusion.

How, then, might such experiences differ? Although there are several distinctions that can be made between being rejected and being ignored, one that we suggest could have particularly important consequences is the unique type of social failure that people feel is signaled by each of these experiences. The primary source of distress in being rejected is the clear presence of negative feedback, which strongly discourages further social contact. Therefore, in these instances of exclusion, people may primarily feel a *loss* of social connection—that is, that their current standing within an existing relationship has diminished or that their chances of establishing a new relationship have decreased. In contrast, the primary source of distress in being ignored is the clear absence of positive feedback, which does nothing to encourage further social contact. Therefore, in these instances of exclusion people may primarily feel that they have *failed to gain* social connection—that is, that their current standing within an existing relationship status has stalled and cannot advance or that they are failing to make any progress in developing a new relationship.

### Motivational Consequences of Being Rejected Versus Being Ignored

We thus suggest that although being rejected and being ignored both communicate a lack of social value and threaten feelings of belonging, the perception of loss that stems from being rejected should elicit different responses to this threat than the perceptions of nongain that stem from being ignored. An extended program of research by Higgins and colleagues (for reviews, see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008) has demonstrated that concerns with loss evoke general motivations for safety and security (i.e., *prevention*). That is, when one is concerned with avoiding the presence of negative outcomes (i.e., losses) and ensuring the absence of such outcomes (i.e., nonlosses), the resulting motivations for prevention create a state of enhanced *vigilance*. In contrast, concerns with the failure to obtain gains evoke general motivations for growth and advancement (i.e., *promotion*). That is, when one is concerned with avoiding the absence of positive outcomes (i.e., nongains) and ensuring the presence of such outcomes (i.e., gains), the resulting motivations for promotion create a state of enhanced *eagerness*.

Many studies have shown that these states of vigilance or eagerness produced by prevention or promotion motivations can have profound effects on people's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. First, motivations for prevention have been found to inspire more cautious behavior, in which people prioritize goals and evaluate choices so as to maximally protect themselves from incurring losses (e.g., by pursuing courses of action that are low risk and low reward or by highly valuing qualities that promise security), even at the possible cost of foregoing significant gains.

In contrast, motivations for promotion have been found to inspire more risky behavior, in which people prioritize goals and evaluate choices so as to maximize their potential for realizing gains (e.g., by pursuing courses of action that are high risk and high reward or by highly valuing qualities that promise advancement), even at the possible cost of incurring significant losses (Ayduk, May, Downey, & Higgins, 2003; Evans & Petty, 2003; Förster, Higgins, & Bianco, 2003; Higgins et al., 2001; Raghunathan & Pham, 1999; Shah & Higgins, 1997; see Higgins & Molden, 2003). Therefore, whereas prevention concerns evoked by being rejected could lead people to vigilantly withdraw from social contact rather than risk the possibility of experiencing further losses of belonging, promotion concerns evoked by being ignored could lead people to eagerly seek to reestablish social contact rather than abandon their opportunities for gains in belonging.

Furthermore, motivations for prevention have also been shown to focus people's thoughts on what must necessarily be done to avoid mistakes (i.e., protect themselves from losses), as well as selectively increase regret for such mistakes when they occur. In contrast, motivations for promotion have been shown to focus people's thoughts on anything that might be done to avoid missed opportunities (i.e., protect themselves from nongains), as well as selectively increase regret for such missed opportunities when they occur (Camacho, Higgins, & Lugar 2003; Crowe & Higgins, 1997; Liberman, Molden, Idson, & Higgins, 2001; Molden & Higgins, 2004, in press; Roese, Hur, & Pennington, 1999). Therefore, whereas the prevention concerns evoked by being rejected could lead people to primarily ruminate on what crucial actions of theirs brought this exclusion upon them, the promotion concerns evoked by being ignored could lead people to primarily ruminate on the many actions they failed to take, any of which might have allowed them to gain inclusion.

Finally, because motivations for prevention center on concerns with the presence of negative outcomes, the emotions most strongly associated with perceived failures of prevention tend to be tension and anxiety, which reflect this painful presence. In contrast, because motivations for promotion center on concerns with the absence of positive outcomes, the emotions most strongly associated with the perceived failures of promotion tend to be dejection and sadness, which reflect this painful absence (Higgins, 1987; Higgins, Shah, & Friedman, 1997; Lee, Aaker, & Gardner, 2000; Shah & Higgins, 2001). Therefore, whereas the prevention concerns evoked by being rejected could lead people to primarily experience feelings of anxiety, the promotion motivations evoked by being ignored could lead people to primarily experience feelings of sadness.

### Overview of the Current Studies

We investigated these hypotheses concerning the different behaviors, thoughts, and feelings elicited by being rejected versus ignored across four studies. Study 1 provided an initial test of whether feeling rejected is generally related to motivations for prevention and whether feeling ignored is generally related to motivations for promotion. This study examined whether, when people were asked to describe a personal experience of social

exclusion, the relevant instance recalled by prevention-focused individuals was more likely to involve being actively rejected whereas the relevant instance recalled by promotion-focused individuals was more likely to involve being passively ignored. Studies 2–4 then investigated the extent to which experiences of being rejected may themselves evoke motivations for prevention and experiences of being ignored may themselves evoke motivations for promotion. Study 2 examined the extent to which people's behaviors in response to a past experience of being actively rejected or passively ignored represented a more vigilant withdrawal from social contact or a more eager attempt to reestablish social contact. Study 3 examined the extent to which people's thoughts in response to a past experience of being actively rejected or passively ignored included regrets about mistaken actions or regrets about mistaken inactions. Finally, Study 4 examined the extent to which people's thoughts about a present experience of being either actively rejected or passively ignored by two supposed interaction partners included regrets about mistaken actions or inactions and the extent to which people felt anxious or sad following this experience.

Across all of these studies, we hypothesized that experiences of being rejected (a) would be more accessible for prevention-focused individuals and (b) would themselves produce more prevention-focused behaviors (i.e., withdrawal), thoughts (i.e., regrets about mistaken actions), and feelings (i.e., anxiety). In contrast, we hypothesized that experiences of being ignored (a) would be more accessible for promotion-focused individuals and (b) would themselves produce more promotion-focused behaviors (i.e., reengagement), thoughts (i.e., regrets about mistaken inactions), and feelings (i.e., dejection).

### Study 1

Past research has shown that a stronger focus on prevention or promotion selectively increases the accessibility and recall of motivationally relevant events (cf. Higgins, Roney, Crowe, & Hymes, 1994; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992; Shah & Higgins, 2001). Thus, the primary objective of Study 1 was to examine differences between the personal instances of exclusion that were most accessible for prevention-focused or promotion-focused individuals. Participants whose chronic prevention or promotion motivations had been previously assessed described an occasion in which they had felt socially excluded. For people with stronger motivations for prevention, the previous instances of social exclusion that should be most motivationally relevant, and therefore most accessible, are those in which they had perceived a loss of social connection. We hypothesized that such perceptions of social loss would be more likely to involve being explicitly and actively rejected. In contrast, for people with stronger motivations for promotion, the previous instances of social exclusion that should be most motivationally relevant and accessible are those in which they had perceived a failure to gain social connection. We hypothesized that such perceptions of failed social gains would be more likely to involve being implicitly and passively ignored.

### Method

**Participants.** Participants were 51 Northwestern University students (19 men, 31 women, and 1 whose gender was not re-

corded, ranging in age from 17 to 22) who received course credit for volunteering.

**Procedure.** At a large testing session, all participants first completed a measure of their chronic prevention or promotion motivations (the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire; Higgins et al., 2001), as well as measures of a variety of other motivational variables, such as self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), loneliness (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980), and the need to belong (Leary, Kelly, & Schreindorfer, 2001). Between 2 and 6 weeks later, each participant then reported for an individual session and was asked to spend 3 to 5 min thinking and writing about "a time that you felt as if you did not belong." Two independent coders, who were blind to both participants' chronic motivations and the hypothesized results, rated these responses for the extent to which participants described being actively rejected (i.e., explicitly told that they were not wanted or liked) versus being passively ignored (i.e., clearly excluded but never explicitly told that they were not wanted or liked).

Ratings were made using a relative scale to allow for instances in which people described feeling both actively rejected and passively ignored throughout the course of the experience they recalled. This scale characterized the experience as a time in which participants described being *completely rejected* (1), *mostly rejected, but somewhat ignored* (2), *equally rejected and ignored* (3), *mostly ignored, but somewhat rejected* (4), or *completely ignored* (5). Coders rated participants' responses along several other dimensions as well, including how generally painful the experience of exclusion was for participants (on a scale from 1 [*extremely negative experience*; it was very painful and the participant expressed strong negative emotions, perhaps even crying] to 7 [*extremely positive experience*; it was very pleasant and the participant expressed strong positive emotions]), whether the exclusion was performed by someone whom participants had known previously (1 = prior relationship, -1 = no prior relationship), and whether it was performed by a romantic partner (1 = romantic relationship, -1 = nonromantic relationship). All of these ratings attained acceptable reliability ( $\kappa$ s = .76–1.0), and discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

### Results

**Preliminary analyses.** Gender did not have any significant simple or higher order effects on any of the measures discussed below and was therefore dropped from all analyses. An initial set of simple correlations were performed to examine whether the extent to which participants' reports of exclusion involved being rejected versus ignored was related to any of the other dimensions along which these reports were coded. Significant (or near-significant) correlations were observed between reports of being rejected versus ignored and (a) the increased negativity of this experience ( $r = .30, p = .03$ ), (b) exclusion by someone participants had known previously ( $r = -.25, p = .06$ ), and (c) exclusion by a romantic partner ( $r = -.58, p < .001$ ). In order to control for these associations and examine the unique relationship between participants' motivations for prevention or promotion and their accessible experiences of being rejected or ignored, we entered standardized ratings of the negativity of the recalled experience

and the coded variables representing prior and romantic relationships as covariates in all analyses.<sup>2</sup>

**Primary analyses.** A continuous index of participants' predominant prevention or promotion motivations was created by subtracting their scores on the prevention index of the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire from their scores on the promotion index (see Higgins et al., 2001). This index was then entered into a multiple regression analysis predicting the extent to which the accessible experiences of exclusion that participants recalled involved being rejected versus ignored. If experiences of being rejected are more accessible for participants with predominant motivations for prevention and experiences of being ignored are more accessible for participants with predominant motivations for promotion, this analysis should have revealed a positive relationship between the motivation and exclusion indices.

Results showed that, as expected, the more participants' predominant motivations favored prevention over promotion, the more the experience they recalled involved being rejected versus being ignored,  $\beta = .24$ ,  $t(46) = 2.06$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $d = 0.61$ . Figure 1 displays predicted values calculated at 1.5 *SD* below (representing prevention-focused individuals) and 1.5 *SD* above (representing promotion-focused individuals) the zero point of the predominant motivation index. This figure reveals that although the exclusion experiences described by participants generally included aspects of being both rejected and ignored, experiences of being rejected were more prominent for prevention-focused individuals whereas experiences of being ignored were more prominent for promotion-focused individuals. The predominant motivation index was not significantly correlated with negativity of the recalled experience or whether the exclusion came from someone participants had known previously (romantically or otherwise;  $r_s < .19$ ,  $p_s > .19$ ). Furthermore, no significant interactions were found between the motivation index and overall negativity or relationship type ( $t_s < 1.16$ ,  $p_s > .25$ ,  $d_s < .34$ ), indicating that the effects of prevention and promotion motivations on the types of exclusion recalled did not depend on the severity of the exclusion or the context of the relationship in which it took place.

**Auxiliary analyses.** An additional set of multiple regressions were also performed including differences in participants' self-

esteem, loneliness, and need to belong, along with the motivational focus index and the covariates described above. With these additional variables included, the influence of participants' predominant motives for prevention or promotion on their recall of instances of being rejected or ignored was virtually unchanged,  $\beta = .27$ ,  $t(41) = 2.35$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = 0.74$ . Once again, the predominant motivation index was not significantly correlated with any of these other personality variables ( $r_s = .00-.24$ ,  $p_s = .11-.99$ ), and no significant interactions were found ( $t_s < 1.28$ ,  $p_s > .21$ ).

## Discussion

The results of Study 1 revealed that when asked to describe a past experience of social exclusion, individuals with a chronic focus on prevention were more likely to recall an instance in which they had been actively rejected, whereas individuals with a chronic focus on promotion were more likely to recall an instance in which they had been passively ignored. The systematic influence of these motivational orientations on the accessibility and recall of distinct instances of social exclusion provides preliminary evidence that being rejected and being ignored are associated with distinct motivational experiences (cf. Higgins et al., 1994; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992; Shah & Higgins, 2001). In addition, because much previous research has shown that prevention motivations produce a greater focus on losses and that promotion motivations produce a greater focus on nongains (see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008), these results further suggest that a defining difference between being rejected versus ignored does indeed involve a concern with social losses versus a concern with failing to establish social gains.

The findings of Study 1 establish a difference in the motivational relevance of different experiences of social exclusion. However, this study does not provide any evidence that being rejected or ignored, itself, elicits different motivational responses. Studies 2–4 were therefore designed to investigate this additional question. Although several measures of people's chronic focus on prevention or promotion exist (Higgins et al., 2001; Higgins et al., 1997; Shah, Brazy, & Higgins, 2004), to our knowledge, direct and valid measures of people's immediate prevention-oriented or promotion-oriented states have not yet been developed. In testing for the activation of different motivational orientations, we thus adopted the strategy that has been employed in several other programs of research on the antecedents of promotion or prevention concerns (Förster & Higgins, 2005; Lee et al., 2000; Pennington & Roese, 2003; Seibt & Förster, 2004) and examined how being rejected or being ignored might consistently lead to more prevention-focused or promotion-focused patterns of behavior, thought, and emotion.

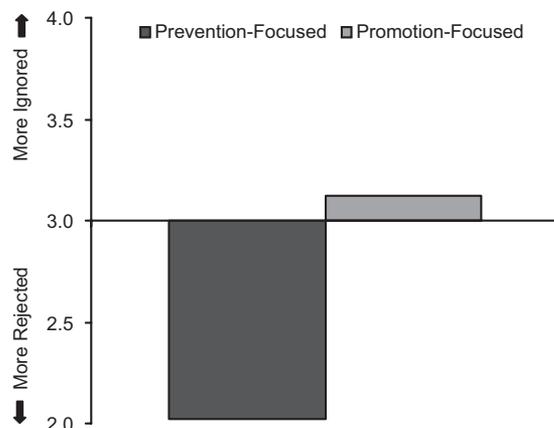


Figure 1. Ratings of prevention-focused and promotion-focused participants' recalled experiences of social exclusion for themes of being rejected versus being ignored.

<sup>2</sup> Because romantic partners were of course people whom participants knew previously, these two variables were not independent. However, entering both indices simultaneously in the regression analysis allowed unique tests concerning the influence of being excluded by a romantic partner versus anyone else with whom one has some history. Results in all of the studies presented here are virtually identical if separate analyses are done using the romantic partner or the previous relationship variable separately.

## Study 2

Study 2 was primarily intended to investigate differences in the actions people choose to take after being rejected versus ignored. Participants wrote a brief description of a time in which they had been either actively rejected or passively ignored. They then described what they had immediately done in response to this exclusion. Motivations for prevention typically lead to cautious behavior aimed at vigilantly guarding against losses (Ayduk et al., 2003; Förster et al., 2003; Higgins et al., 2001; Shah & Higgins, 1997). If being rejected evokes these types of motivations, then participants' responses in such circumstances should therefore focus more on withdrawal from social contact in an effort to protect themselves from further losses of social connection. In contrast, motivations for promotion typically lead to risky behavior aimed at eagerly ensuring all possible opportunities for advancement (Förster et al., 2003; Higgins et al., 2001; Shah & Higgins, 1997). If being ignored evokes these types of motivations, then participants' responses in such circumstances should therefore focus more on attempts to reestablish social contact in an effort to restore their opportunities to gain social connection.

### Method

**Participants.** Participants were 104 Northwestern University students (37 men, 58 women, and 9 whose gender was not recorded, ranging in age from 17 to 22) who either received course credit for volunteering or simply volunteered.

**Procedure.** As part of a large testing session, all participants were asked to first recall a time in which they had been either actively rejected or passively ignored and then to write a brief (i.e., one- or two-sentence) description of this incident. Those in the *rejected* condition were specifically instructed to "think about a time in which you felt intensely rejected in some way . . . it must be a time that you were clearly rejected—where you were told you were not accepted because you were not wanted or liked." Those in the *ignored* condition were specifically instructed to "think about a time in which you felt intensely ignored in some way . . . it must be a time that you were clearly ignored, but no one actually said that they did not want or like you." These instructions were designed so that all participants were asked to recall equally unambiguous and intense instances of social exclusion that differed only in how explicitly and directly this exclusion was communicated. After describing the circumstances of their exclusion, participants were also asked for some additional details about who was responsible for the exclusion and how many people were involved (i.e., whether they were excluded by an individual or a group). Finally, participants were asked to briefly describe what they did immediately following the instance of exclusion in "response to this situation."

Two independent coders blind to all hypotheses classified participants' descriptions of how they reacted to their exclusion. The primary dimension of interest concerned whether participants chose to reengage in social contact (i.e., a *social* response) versus to withdraw from social contact (i.e., a *nonsocial* response). A more exploratory dimension was also included in the coding in an attempt to more precisely examine how reengagement or withdrawal was pursued. This secondary dimension concerned whether participants' responses continued to focus on the person(s) directly

responsible for the exclusion (i.e., a *direct* response) versus someone or something else (i.e., an *indirect* response). With the combination of these two dimensions, there were therefore four possible classifications: (a) Direct social responses represented instances in which participants reported further attempts to interact with or confront the person(s) who had excluded them; (b) indirect social responses represented instances in which participants reported seeking out social interaction (either in person or by phone or e-mail) with anyone else who did not play a role in the exclusion; (c) direct nonsocial responses represented instances in which participants reported withdrawing to be by themselves, but continued to think about what had happened or the person(s) involved; and finally, (d) indirect nonsocial responses represented instances in which participants reported withdrawing to engage in any other type of nonsocial activity (e.g., watching TV or reading).

As in Study 1, coders also classified several aspects of the recalled instances of exclusion themselves, including whether these instances involved either a romantic or a nonromantic relationship and whether they involved someone with whom participants had ever had any kind of previous relationship. Unlike Study 1, in this study, participants provided only a brief description of their exclusion experiences, and it was not possible to reliably code for how generally painful this experience was. All of the classifications made by the coders again achieved acceptable reliability ( $\kappa_s = .79-1.0$ ), and discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

### Results

**Preliminary analyses.** Gender did not have any significant simple or higher order effects on any of the measures discussed below and was therefore dropped from all analyses. Before examining our primary hypotheses, we conducted chi-square tests of independence on separate contingency tables that explored whether reporting an experience of being rejected or ignored was systematically related to (a) whether this exclusion was at the hands of an individual versus a group, (b) whether it involved someone with whom participants had a prior relationship, or (c) whether it involved someone with whom participants specifically had a romantic relationship. Instances of exclusion involving individuals versus groups and romantic versus nonromantic partners did not significantly differ in frequency between the rejected and ignored condition. Instances of exclusion featuring people with whom one had a prior relationship were significantly more likely to involve being ignored than being rejected,  $\chi^2(1, N = 51) = 14.29, p < .001, d = 1.25$ . To control for this effect, whether participants had some prior relationship with the person(s) who excluded them was included as a factor in the analyses reported below.

**Primary analyses.** Because all of our measured variables consisted of frequency counts, simple effects of participants' exclusion experiences were tested using chi-square tests of independence, and higher order interactions involving these experiences were tested using log-linear models. We hypothesized that being rejected would be associated with a greater likelihood of prevention-focused responses involving withdrawal from social contact whereas being ignored would be associated with a greater likelihood of promotion-focused responses involving attempts to reestablish social contact. These effects would be revealed by a

significant association between exclusion condition and participants' reports of social or nonsocial responses.

Figure 2 displays the number of participants who reported each of the four different categories of responses described above following instances in which they had been either rejected or ignored. Log-linear analyses conducted on a 2 (exclusion type)  $\times$  2 (social vs. nonsocial response)  $\times$  2 (direct vs. indirect response)  $\times$  2 (prior relationship status) contingency table confirmed the predicted interaction between exclusion type and social or nonsocial responses,  $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 7.15, p = .007, d = 0.55$ . Tests of simple effects showed that following instances in which they had been rejected, participants were marginally more likely to report a nonsocial response that involved withdrawing from social contact (62%) than a social response that involved reengaging in social contact (38%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 52) = 2.76, p = .10, d = 0.48$ . In contrast, also as predicted, following instances in which they had been ignored, participants were significantly more likely to report a social response (65%) than a nonsocial response (35%),  $\chi^2(1, N = 52) = 4.92, p = .03, d = 0.65$ . Although this interaction between participants' experiences of exclusion and their social versus nonsocial responses appeared to be more prominent for direct actions,  $\chi^2(1, N = 67) = 8.22, p = .004, d = 0.75$ , than for indirect actions,  $\chi^2(1, N = 37) = 0.84, p = .32, d = 0.31$ , the Exclusion Type  $\times$  Social vs. Nonsocial Response  $\times$  Direct vs. Indirect Response interaction did not reach significance,  $\chi^2(2, N = 104) = 0.95, p = .33$ . There was also no significant interaction between exclusion type and the frequency of direct or indirect responses overall,  $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 1.00, p = .32, d = 0.20$ .

Additional results from the log-linear analyses revealed a general interaction between how social and how direct participants' responses were collapsing across the exclusion conditions,  $\chi^2(1, N = 67) = 6.23, p = .01, d = 0.51$ . Social responses were most often direct (76%), whereas nonsocial responses were almost equally likely to be direct (52%) or indirect (48%). However, as noted above, this effect was not influenced by whether participants were describing instances in which they were rejected or ignored. Whether participants had a prior relationship with the person(s) responsible for their exclusion also interacted with the directness of their responses,  $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 5.03, p = .02, d = 0.45$ , such that people were more likely to respond directly (76%) to those whom they did know previously than to those whom they did not

(56%). However, there were no further interactions between this effect and the exclusion condition,  $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 0.42, p = .52, d = .14$ , as well. No other higher order interactions of participants' prior relationship with the person(s) responsible for the exclusion were found,  $\chi^2s(1, N = 104) < 0.67, ps > .41, ds < 0.16$ . Repeating the log-linear analyses including the additional factors of whether participants were excluded by an individual versus a group or by someone with whom participants had a romantic relationship also did not significantly moderate any of the effects reported,  $\chi^2s(1, N = 104) < 2.02, ps > .15, ds < 0.18$ . Altogether, these results indicate that the effects of being rejected or ignored on participants' social or nonsocial responses found here were not limited to a particular context or type of relationship.

*Auxiliary analyses.* Finally, an additional set of exploratory analyses were performed on the subset of participants who reported social responses to being rejected or ignored ( $N = 54$ ) to investigate any potential differences in how friendly or hostile these responses were. Two independent coders, blind to all hypotheses, categorized participants' responses as either prosocial or antisocial ( $\kappa = .67$ ). Participants tended to overwhelmingly (self-) report prosocial responses (82%), and this was not influenced by any of the other factors we measured or manipulated.

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 revealed that when describing their past experiences of exclusion, people who had been rejected reported a greater tendency to respond by withdrawing from social contact. Such withdrawal primarily represents a means of protecting oneself from further experiences of social loss (Ayduk et al., 2003) and therefore suggests the greater activation of prevention motivations. In contrast, people who had been ignored reported a greater tendency to respond by attempting to reengage in social contact. Such reengagement primarily represents a means of restoring opportunities to gain social connection and therefore suggests the greater activation of promotion motivations.

Results also indicated that social withdrawal after being rejected was not typified by attempts at distraction, but instead was more likely to involve continued rumination about what had happened. In a similar manner, social reengagement after being ignored was not typified by attempts to seek solace in one's other social

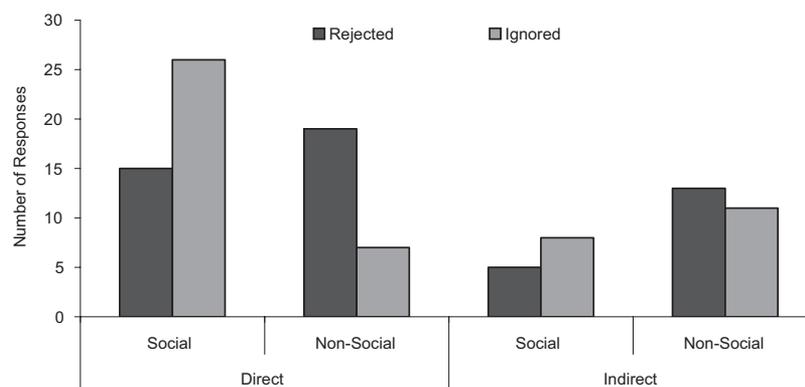


Figure 2. The number of participants who reported responding in a social versus nonsocial and direct versus indirect manner following past experiences of being rejected or ignored.

connections, but instead was more likely to involve continued efforts at acceptance or acknowledgment from those responsible for one's exclusion. Although these latter findings are more tentative, they are interesting in that withdrawal accompanied by rumination is a much more vigilant response to exclusion than withdrawal accompanied by distraction. Similarly, attempting reengagement with those responsible for one's exclusion is a much more eager response than reengagement with one's established friends or acquaintances. That is, when one is rejected, withdrawing from social contact but continuing to think about what has happened is more likely to allow one to avoid future rejection than is merely finding some source of distraction, and thus such behavior is perhaps further evidence of heightened prevention motivations in these circumstances. Moreover, when one is ignored, attempting to reengage with those responsible is more likely to eagerly address failures to gain social connection (despite its greater risks) than is reaffirming one's existing relationships, and thus such behavior is perhaps further evidence of heightened promotion motivations in these circumstances.

On the whole, Study 2 therefore provides an initial demonstration not only that being rejected is more strongly associated with prevention motivations, and being ignored more strongly associated with promotion motivations, but that these different experiences of exclusion may actually activate such motivational orientations. However, there are several limitations to these findings. First, although previous research strongly suggests that the more vigilant responses of social withdrawal reflect prevention motivations and the more eager responses of social reengagement reflect promotion motivations (Ayduk et al., 2003; Förster et al., 2003; Higgins et al., 2001; Shah & Higgins, 1997), the results of Study 2 still provide largely indirect evidence of the presence of such motivations. Therefore Study 3 included more direct measures of prevention-focused or promotion-focused thoughts concerning the experience of being rejected or being ignored. Furthermore, our analyses of the motivations activated by experiences of being rejected or ignored have focused exclusively on motivations for prevention and promotion and have not considered how these types of exclusion might affect other basic needs or motivations as well (see Williams, 2001, 2007). Therefore, Study 3 also included direct measures of people's perceived threats to their belonging, self-esteem, feelings of control, and feelings that their lives have meaning and purpose.

### Study 3

The primary purpose of Study 3 was to more directly investigate differences in people's psychological experiences of being rejected or ignored. Participants recalled an incident in which they had been either actively rejected or passively ignored and then described their thoughts about how this incident might have unfolded in a more pleasant manner. Previous research has shown that when motivated by prevention, people contemplating negative experiences are more likely to think about (and regret) actions they took that they believe brought them harm, whereas when motivated by promotion, people contemplating negative experiences are more likely to think about (and regret) failures to act that they believe caused them to miss important opportunities. Furthermore, prevention-focused individuals are also more likely to think about what circumstances were necessarily responsible for the negative

experience, so as to guard against such circumstances in the future, whereas promotion-focused individuals are also more likely to think about what might have been sufficient to avoid the negative experience, so as to ensure that such opportunities are not missed in the future (Camacho et al., 2003; Roese et al., 1999). Therefore, if being rejected evokes motivations for prevention, then people's thoughts about these incidents should primarily involve actions that necessarily led to their being rejected, whereas if being ignored evokes motivations for promotion, then people's thoughts about these incidents should primarily involve actions that they failed to take which might have been sufficient to avoid being ignored.

### Method

*Participants.* Participants were 55 Northwestern University students (32 women, 17 men, and 6 whose gender was not recorded, ranging in age from 17 to 22) who received course credit for volunteering.

*Procedure.* As part of a large testing session, all participants completed measures of self-esteem, loneliness, and the need to belong, as in Study 1. Between 2 and 6 weeks later, each participant then reported for an individual session and spent 5 min writing about an experience in which they had been either actively rejected or passively ignored. The instructions used in each of these conditions were identical to those in Study 2.

Following this exercise, participants completed measures of how their experiences of exclusion had threatened their fundamental needs for belonging (e.g., "I felt poorly accepted"), self-esteem (e.g., "I felt somewhat inadequate"), control (e.g., "I felt in control of the situation" [reverse scored]), and a meaningful existence (e.g., "I felt nonexistent in the situation"). Each need was assessed using three separate items ( $\alpha = .61-.63$ ), which were adapted from Zadro, Williams, and Richardson (2004), and rated on 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*) scales.

Participants also completed measures of how important to them both the person(s) responsible for the exclusion and the incident itself were at the time it occurred on 1 (*not at all important*) to 7 (*extremely important*) scales, as well as a manipulation check that asked them to rate how rejected and how ignored they had felt at the time on separate 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) scales. Next, participants were asked to imagine how things might have gone better in the incident they recalled and to list three thoughts of "if only . . ." that had run through their head afterward. Finally, using a procedure developed by Roese et al. (1999), they were asked to go back and reread the "if only . . ." thoughts they had just reported and to indicate whether each one concerned something necessary (i.e., that was "the only way") or sufficient (i.e., that was "one of many ways") to avoid being excluded.

As in Study 1, two independent coders blind to all hypotheses rated participants' descriptions of being rejected and being ignored for how generally painful the experience was (from 1 [*extremely negative experience*] to 7 [*extremely positive experience*]), whether the exclusion was performed by someone whom participants had known previously (1 = prior relationship, -1 = no prior relationship), and whether it was performed by a romantic partner (1 = romantic relationship, -1 = nonromantic relationship). In this study, coders also rated whether the exclusion was performed by an individual (-1) or a group (1), and how long the exclusion

continued (from 1 [*very short term; a number of minutes*] to 6 [*very long term; a year or more*]). Finally coders rated participants' "if only . . ." thoughts for whether they represented actions that they wished they had not taken or actions that they wished they had taken. Coders' ratings achieved acceptable reliability ( $\kappa_s = .73$ – $1.0$ ), and disagreements were resolved by discussion.

## Results

**Preliminary analyses.** Gender did not have any significant interactive effects on any of the measures discussed below and was therefore dropped from all analyses. Including gender in these analyses did not change the significance of any of the results reported. A preliminary 2 (exclusion: rejected vs. ignored)  $\times$  2 (measure: rejected vs. ignored) mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures on the last factor was conducted on the manipulation check items. Follow-up within-participant contrasts were then performed within each exclusion condition. Results showed that participants who were asked to describe a time in which they were actively rejected reported feeling significantly more rejected ( $M = 6.0$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) than ignored ( $M = 4.7$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ) during that incident,  $F(1, 26) = 16.9$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.82$ , whereas participants who were asked to describe a time in which they were passively ignored reported feeling more ignored ( $M = 5.8$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ) than rejected ( $M = 5.3$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ),  $F(1, 28) = 7.1$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $d = 0.40$ . This led to a significant Exclusion  $\times$  Measure interaction,  $F(1, 56) = 24.6$ ,  $p < .001$ , which confirms the effectiveness of the manipulation.

An additional series of preliminary one-way ANOVAs revealed that there were no systematic associations between whether participants described being rejected or ignored and (a) how generally painful the exclusion experience was, (b) how important the person(s) excluding them had been to them at the time, (c) whether participants had previously known the person(s) who had excluded them, (d) whether the exclusion was performed by a romantic partner, (e) whether the exclusion was performed by an individual or a group, and (f) how long the exclusion continued (all  $F_s < 2.1$ ,  $ps > .15$ ,  $ds < 0.38$ ). Those who described being rejected did, however, report that the incident itself had been more important to them ( $M = 5.8$ ) than did those who described being ignored ( $M = 4.6$ ),  $F(1, 56) = 14.2$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 0.98$ . This variable was therefore included as a covariate in all primary analyses reported below.

Finally, preliminary analyses also examined whether instances in which participants described being rejected or ignored differentially threatened their fundamental needs for belonging, self-esteem, control, and a meaningful existence. A one-way multivariate analysis of variance including all four needs revealed that the type of exclusion participants experienced did influence the overall pattern of threats to these needs,  $F(4, 53) = 6.7$ ,  $p < .001$ . Although there were no differences in the extent to which being rejected or ignored affected needs for belonging or control ( $F_s < 1.7$ ,  $ps > .19$ ,  $ds < .34$ ), being rejected resulted in greater threats to self-esteem than being ignored,  $F(1, 53) = 6.3$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $d = 0.65$ , but being ignored resulted in greater threats to a meaningful existence than did being rejected,  $F(1, 53) = 10.6$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = 0.85$ . That is, direct, explicit, and active exclusion had a greater impact on participants' feelings of worth and confidence, but indirect, implicit, and passive exclusion had a greater impact on

participants' feelings of whether their existence had deeper meaning or significance. This pattern of results is consistent with our general proposal that being rejected and being ignored are both serious but distinct threats to belonging, and also fits with Williams's perspective on the basic needs that are threatened by social exclusion (Williams, 2001, 2007; Zadro et al., 2005). However, in order to control for the effects of these different types of threats when examining our further proposal concerning the motivations for prevention or promotion activated by exclusion, we included participants' ratings of their threatened needs for self-esteem and meaningfulness as covariates in all primary analyses reported below.

**Primary analyses.** The primary measures of interest in this study were the proportion of participants' "if only . . ." thoughts following experiences of exclusion that (a) included actions they believed they should not have taken versus actions they believed they should have taken and (b) involved something necessary (i.e., the only way they could have changed the outcome) versus something sufficient (i.e., one of many ways they could have changed the outcome) for avoiding exclusion. We hypothesized that being rejected would produce a greater proportion of prevention-focused thoughts about mistaken actions and necessity whereas being ignored would produce a greater proportion of promotion-focused thoughts about mistaken inactions and sufficiency.

As displayed in Figure 3, a one-way analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) confirmed the first set of predictions; participants generated a greater proportion of thoughts about what they should not have done when rejected ( $M = .40$ ,  $SD = .27$ ) than when ignored ( $M = .18$ ,  $SD = .27$ ),  $F(1, 50) = 4.7$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 0.59$ . Follow-up multiple regression analyses showed that there were no significant simple or interactive effects of the importance participants gave to the incident or of the perceived threats to their needs for self-esteem or meaningfulness ( $F_s < 2.2$ ,  $ps > .15$ ).

As displayed in Figure 4, a separate one-way ANCOVA partially confirmed the second set of predictions; participants generated a marginally greater proportion of thoughts focused on what would have been necessary to change the outcome when rejected ( $M = .32$ ,  $SD = .31$ ) than when ignored ( $M = .21$ ,  $SD = .28$ ),  $F(1, 49) = 3.0$ ,  $p = .09$ ,  $d = 0.47$ . Follow-up multiple regression analyses again showed that there were no significant simple or

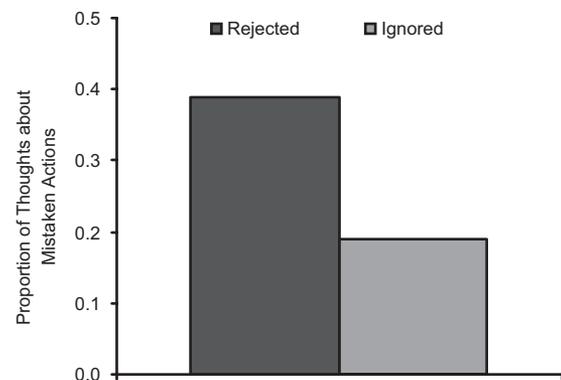


Figure 3. Proportion of reported thoughts about actions that one should not have taken (vs. actions that one should have taken) following past experiences of being rejected or ignored.

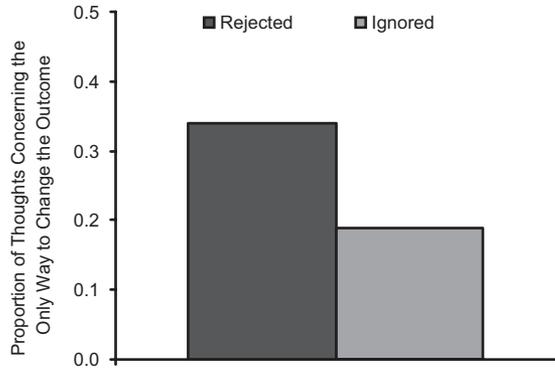


Figure 4. Proportion of reported thoughts about actions that represented the only way that exclusion could have been avoided (vs. one of many ways that exclusion could have been avoided) following past experiences of being rejected or ignored.

interactive effects of the importance participants gave to the incident or of the perceived threats to their needs for self-esteem or meaningfulness ( $F_s < 2.5$ ,  $p_s > .12$ ).<sup>3</sup>

*Auxiliary analyses.* Further analyses explored any additional influences on participants' thoughts following exclusion of their chronic self-esteem, loneliness, and need to belong and the additional social factors surrounding the incident that they described (i.e., any previous relationships with the person[s] performing the exclusion, whether the exclusion was performed by an individual or a group, and how long the exclusion continued). One-way ANCOVAs conducted on the proportion of participants' thoughts about mistaken actions and necessary means of avoiding exclusion showed that the addition of these variables, either on their own or accompanied by participants' ratings of their threatened needs, did not alter the significance of any of the results reported above. Follow-up multiple regression analyses revealed one significant interaction between experiences of being rejected or ignored and chronic loneliness on participants' thoughts about mistaken actions or failures to act,  $t(42) = 3.40$ ,  $p = .001$ . The more lonely participants were, the more they thought about mistaken actions when rejected (although this effect did not reach significance),  $\beta = .09$ ,  $t(22) = 1.68$ ,  $p = .11$ ,  $d = 0.68$ , but the more they thought about mistaken failures to act when ignored (although this effect was marginal),  $\beta = -.11$ ,  $t(21) = 1.78$ ,  $p = .09$ ,  $d = 0.74$ . Chronic loneliness thus appears to have intensified the distinct reactions to the different social threats perceived in each exclusion condition, which is consistent with previous work by Gardner and colleagues (2005) demonstrating that such loneliness generally enhances people's social concerns and social motivations overall. No other significant higher order interactions were found between either the chronic motivational variables, participants' ratings of the painfulness or importance of the exclusion, or the coded context of the exclusion and whether participants described being rejected or ignored ( $F_s < 2.5$ ,  $p_s > .12$ ).

## Discussion

The results of Study 3 revealed that when describing their past experiences of exclusion, people who had been rejected reported a greater tendency to think about actions that they should not have

taken and to focus on what specifically would have been necessary to avoid being rejected. These types of thoughts indicate a heightened vigilance for identifying mistakes that led to losses of social connection, and therefore suggest the greater activation of prevention motivations. In contrast, people who had been ignored reported a greater tendency to think about actions that they should have taken and to focus on anything that might have been sufficient to avoid being ignored. These types of thoughts indicate a heightened eagerness for identifying missed opportunities that resulted in failures to gain social connection, and therefore suggest the greater activation of promotion motivations. Such conclusions are further strengthened by past work that has demonstrated identical patterns of vigilant thinking following the direct activation of prevention motivations and identical patterns of eager thinking following the direct activation of promotion motivations (Roese et al., 1999; see also Camacho et al., 2003).

The findings of Study 3 extend those of Study 2 by showing that in addition to higher tendencies for social withdrawal following exclusion, being rejected also produces more prevention-focused representations of the experience of exclusion itself, whereas in addition to higher tendencies for subsequent social reengagement, being ignored also produces more promotion-focused representations of the experience. These findings further extend those of Study 2 by eliminating several possible confounds that could also lead to differences in people's reactions to being rejected or ignored, including possible relationships between these types of exclusion and the personal relevance, importance, or painfulness of the experience; the length of time that the exclusion lasted; and the specific needs that were threatened. Although in this study the experiences of being rejected that participants recalled were also rated as more personally important and more specifically threatening to self-esteem, whereas the experiences of being ignored were rated as more specifically threatening to feelings of "meaningfulness," these differences did not mediate any of the effects on prevention- or promotion-focused thinking. Thus, together, Studies 2 and 3 provide clear and consistent evidence that being rejected activates motivations for prevention and that being ignored activates motivations for promotion.

There are still, however, several remaining limitations to this evidence. All of our studies to this point have relied on retrospective accounts of being rejected or being ignored. Although retrospective methods are widely used in the social exclusion literature (e.g., Gardner et al., 2000; Maner et al., 2007) and have the advantage of ensuring that we are studying real-life events that are personally relevant, they introduce some uncertainty as to whether our findings reflect people's reconstruction or remembrance of their experiences of exclusion more than the actual experiences themselves. Furthermore, although we have assessed a wide vari-

<sup>3</sup> In both Studies 3 and 4, participants were more likely on average to think about mistaken failures to act than mistaken actions and to focus on what would have been sufficient for avoiding exclusion. These results closely replicate the previous studies of Roese et al. (1999), which used procedures highly similar to those employed here. They are also consistent with other research suggesting that envisioning the addition of new actions to overcome past failures and weighting causal sufficiency more than causal necessity are often people's default responses (Kahneman, 1995; Mandel & Lehman, 1997; McGill & Klein, 1993; Sanna & Turley, 1996; cf. Klayman & Ha, 1987).

ety of differences between people's accounts of being rejected or being ignored that do not involve motivations for promotion or prevention (and eliminated these other differences as possible explanations for our findings), there could be additional confounds in these accounts that we have not captured. Study 4 was therefore designed to address both of these limitations by examining people's prevention- or promotion-focused thoughts after their present experiences of being rejected or ignored had been manipulated in a controlled environment. Study 4 was also designed to further extend the present evidence for the activation of prevention motivations when one is rejected and the activation of promotion motivations when one is ignored by including additional measures of people's prevention- or promotion-focused emotions following social exclusion.

### Study 4

The primary purpose of Study 4 was to replicate and extend our previous findings concerning people's psychological experiences of being rejected or ignored under more controlled circumstances. Participants took part in what they believed was a discussion with two fellow students over a computer network, but in reality they received a series of preprogrammed responses (cf. Gardner et al., 2000). In one condition, participants were actively rejected and received explicit feedback that the other "students" did not like or accept them; in a second condition, participants were passively ignored and the other "students" talked only to each other without acknowledging anything participants said; in a third, control condition, participants were uniformly affirmed and accepted by the other "students" in the course of the discussion. Everyone was then asked the same questions concerning how things might have gone differently that were used in Study 3. We again predicted that being rejected would evoke motivations for prevention and activate more vigilant thoughts about what one should not have done, whereas being ignored would evoke motivations for promotion and activate more eager thoughts about what one should have done.

In addition, following the discussion, participants completed a measure of their current emotions. Previous research has shown that negative experiences involving prevention motivations (i.e., the presence of negative losses) result in greater feelings of agitation and anxiety, whereas negative experiences involving promotion motivations (i.e., the absence of positive gains) result in greater feelings of dejection and sadness (Higgins, 1987; Higgins et al., 1997; Shah & Higgins, 2001; Strauman & Higgins, 1988). Therefore, if being rejected evokes motivations for prevention, then this experience should predominantly elicit feelings of anxiety, and if being ignored evokes motivations for promotion, then this experience should predominantly elicit feelings of sadness.

### Method

**Participants.** Participants were 134 Northwestern University students (74 women and 60 men, ranging in age from 17 to 22) who received course credit for volunteering.

**Procedure.** Participants reported to a laboratory room and entered one of four completely enclosed cubicles. They were then informed that they would take part in a study about how people form friendships over the Internet. Before the interaction began,

everyone rated their current mood, from 1 (*definitely don't feel this way*) to 7 (*definitely feel this way*), on a scale that included four items assessing agitation (i.e., *agitated, on edge, uneasy, and tense*) and four items assessing dejection (*disappointed, discouraged, low, and sad*). This scale has frequently been used to distinguish prevention-focused and promotion-focused emotions in past research (e.g., Higgins et al., 1997; Shah & Higgins, 2001). Following this, participants began what they believed was a networked communication with two other individuals in the adjoining cubicles (whose doors had already been closed when the participants arrived, giving the impression that the other individuals had arrived earlier). However, this communication had been completely scripted ahead of time and did not involve any real interactions. Instead, it served as the primary manipulation of exclusion (see below). Following the networked communication, participants imagined how the interaction might have gone differently and listed three "if only . . ." thoughts. Two independent coders, blind to experimental condition and all hypotheses, later rated these responses for thoughts about actions that one should not have taken versus actions one should have taken ( $\kappa = .74$ ), as in Study 3. Also as in the previous study, participants themselves rated their "if only . . ." thoughts as more related to necessary (i.e., "the only") or sufficient (i.e., "one of many") means of altering the interaction. Finally, participants again rated their current agitation and dejection on the same scales as they had at the beginning of the session.

**Exclusion manipulation.** Participants were told that during the networked communication, everyone would take turns sending messages that would then be displayed to all members of the discussion. They were further told that individual responses would be identified on the screen by a letter code (i.e., member A, member B, and member C) and were then always designated member B, placing them second in line to respond. After an initial exchange of greetings, the "interaction" began with "member A" revealing that he or she had been given a list of possible discussion questions to facilitate the interaction and posing the first question. This question was always "Do you think that it's right that smoking will be banned in bars in Illinois?," which was chosen because (a) it was an issue that was currently in the news, (b) informal surveys indicated that the students in our sample felt strongly about the issue, and (c) there were roughly equal numbers of people who agreed and disagreed with the smoking ban.

Because "member A" opened the discussion, participants were always the first to make their opinion on the smoking ban known. In the *rejected* condition, participants' opinions (whatever they were) were immediately disparaged by both of the other two ostensible members of the discussion (e.g., "Really, you're kidding right?" and "Are you for real?"), and as the discussion continued, both of the other members also made explicit and direct statements of exclusion and dislike (e.g., "I don't understand people like you"). However, in the *ignored* condition, participants' opinions were not acknowledged by the other two ostensible members of the discussion, who immediately began their own private conversation after "discovering" that they lived in adjacent apartment complexes (e.g., "This is such a big topic in my apartment complex . . . what complex do you live in . . . wow, no way! I live right next door to you . . . can you hear the guy who plays really loud rap music late at night?"). Throughout the entire discussion, these other "members" directed their questions and responses solely

toward each other and, because the comments were completely scripted ahead of time, never even acknowledged any attempt by participants to enter the conversation. Therefore, the exclusion in this condition, although clear and consistent, was more implicit and indirect. Finally, an *accepted* condition was also included in which participants' opinions were mutually affirmed by the other two ostensible members of the discussion (e.g., "I feel the same way" and "Good point"). This condition was included as a baseline with which the other two conditions could be independently compared. A full transcript of the scripted responses from all three conditions is available from the authors upon request.

At the end of the study, all participants were first probed for suspicion using a funneled debriefing that began with general questions concerning what they believed the study to be about and ended with more specific questions about whether they ever suspected the interaction was not genuine. Afterward, everyone was fully informed about the true nature of their networked interaction.

## Results

Gender did not interact with any of the measures discussed below and was therefore dropped from all analyses. Including gender in these analyses did not change the significance of any of the results reported below. Eleven participants, who were distributed evenly across the experimental conditions, expressed some suspicion about the networked discussion during debriefing and were dropped from the study, leaving 123 responses for analysis.

**Thought analyses.** As in Study 3, the first measures of interest were the proportion of participants' "if only . . ." thoughts following the networked discussion that (a) included actions they believed they should not have taken versus actions they believed they should have taken and (b) involved something necessary versus something sufficient for avoiding the exclusion they experienced. We again hypothesized that being rejected would produce a greater proportion of prevention-focused thoughts about mistaken actions and necessity whereas being ignored would produce a greater proportion of promotion-focused thoughts about mistaken inactions and sufficiency.

As displayed in Figure 5, a one-way ANOVA followed by planned contrasts confirmed the first set of predictions; an overall effect of condition was found,  $F(2, 117) = 6.14, p = .003$ , such

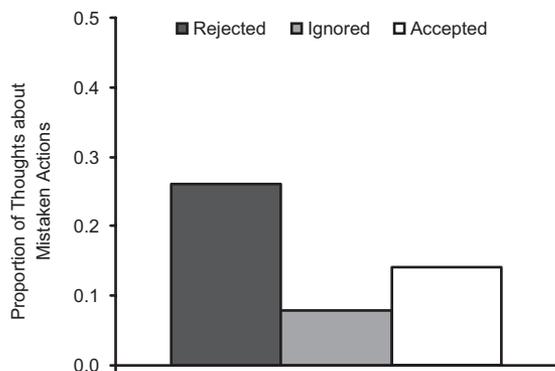


Figure 5. Proportion of thoughts about actions that one should not have taken (vs. actions that one should have taken) following a current experience of being rejected, ignored, or accepted.

that participants generated a greater proportion of thoughts about what they should not have done when rejected ( $M = .26, SD = .29$ ) than when ignored ( $M = .08, SD = .18$ ),  $F(1, 117) = 11.74, p < .001, d = 1.02$ , or when accepted ( $M = .14, SD = .21$ ),  $F(1, 117) = 5.0, p = .03, d = 0.44$ . Although participants did think more about what they should have done when ignored than they did when accepted, this difference was not significant,  $F(1, 117) = 0.98, p = .32, d = 0.10$ , which is perhaps due to a ceiling effect created by people's strong tendency toward generating these types of thoughts in general (see footnote 3).

A parallel set of analyses on the proportion of participants' "if only . . ." thoughts that concerned necessary versus sufficient means of changing the outcome did not confirm the second set of predictions, and no differences were found between experimental conditions,  $F(1, 117) = 0.30, p = .74$ . This inconsistency with Study 3 was perhaps due to people's more limited opportunities for what they could have done differently within the constraints of the specific networked discussion created for this study. Thus, overall, results for participants' prevention- or promotion-focused thoughts immediately following manipulated experiences of exclusion partially replicated those found for the more naturalistic personal experiences examined in Study 3.

**Emotion analyses.** The second measures of interest in this study were participants' feelings of agitation and dejection following the networked discussion. We hypothesized that being rejected would produce more prevention-focused negative emotions, which predominantly involve agitation, whereas being ignored would produce more promotion-focused negative emotions, which predominantly involve dejection.

Figure 6 displays participants' mean ratings of agitation ( $\alpha = .87$ ) and dejection ( $\alpha = .87$ ) following the networked discussion. These ratings were adjusted for mean ratings of the same emotions before the discussion (agitation,  $\alpha = .84$ ; dejection,  $\alpha = .88$ ). Agitation and dejection frequently co-occur and tend to be highly correlated (in the current sample,  $r = .58, p < .001$ , before the discussion and  $r = .73, p < .001$ , after the discussion; see also Watson et al., 1995). Therefore, to examine the extent to which participants experienced each emotion above and beyond the other, we further adjusted ratings of agitation for simultaneous ratings of dejection, and we further adjusted ratings of dejection for simultaneous ratings of agitation, as recommended by Boldero, Moretti, Bell, and Francis (2005; see also Strauman & Higgins, 1988).

A one-way ANCOVA on participants' feelings of agitation revealed a marginal overall effect of condition,  $F(2, 117) = 2.33, p = .10$ , such that, as predicted, participants who were rejected experienced significantly more agitation ( $M = 3.41, SD = 1.34$ ) than those who were ignored ( $M = 3.05, SD = 1.41$ ),  $F(1, 117) = 4.09, p = .04, d = 0.46$ . There was a nonsignificant trend for those who were rejected to experience more agitation than those who were accepted ( $M = 3.13, SD = 1.52$ ),  $F(1, 117) = 2.41, p = .12, d = 0.36$ , and those who were accepted and those who were ignored did not differ in their level of agitation,  $F(1, 117) = 0.18, p = .67, d = 0.03$ . In contrast, a one-way ANCOVA on participants' feelings of dejection revealed a significant effect of condition,  $F(2, 117) = 3.99, p = .02$ , such that, also as predicted, participants who were ignored experienced more dejection ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.31$ ) than those who were either rejected ( $M = 2.72, SD = 1.28$ ),  $F(1, 117) = 7.45, p = .007, d = 0.79$ , or accepted ( $M = 2.81, SD = 1.44$ ),  $F(1, 117) = 4.21, p = .04, d = 0.47$ , but

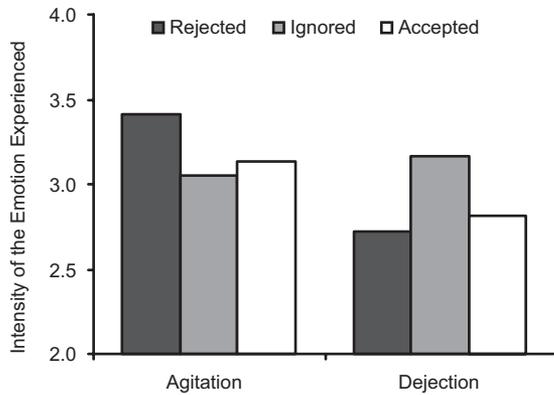


Figure 6. Feelings of agitation and dejection following a current experience of being rejected, ignored, or accepted.

these latter two groups did not differ from each other,  $F(1, 117) = 0.28$ ,  $p = .60$ ,  $d = 0.03$ . Thus, overall, results for participants' prevention- or promotion-focused emotions following manipulated experiences of exclusion conceptually replicated and extended the behavioral and cognitive effects of Studies 2 and 3.

### Discussion

Study 4 found that immediately following an experience of exclusion, just as when describing past experiences, individuals who had been rejected were more likely to think about actions that they should not have taken. In addition, these individuals showed a specific increase in agitation-related negative emotions as a result of their exclusion. These types of thoughts and emotions further indicate a heightened state of vigilant concern with mistakes that produced social losses, which is uniquely related to motivations for prevention. In contrast, individuals who had been ignored were more likely to think about actions that they should have taken and showed a specific increase in dejection-related negative emotions as a result of their exclusion. These thoughts and emotions further indicate a heightened state of eager concern with missed opportunities that produced failures to gain social connection, which is uniquely related to motivations for promotion.

Beyond the additional effects on emotion, Study 4 also extends the previous studies by better isolating the key distinctions between being directly and explicitly rejected versus indirectly and implicitly ignored. All participants experienced a short-term exclusion by multiple people whom they had never met, and the only difference between conditions was how actively or passively this exclusion was communicated. Therefore, although Studies 2 and 3 measured and statistically adjusted for many additional differences between being rejected and being ignored, the replication under more controlled conditions in this study provides stronger evidence that these, or other, potential confounds cannot account for the observed pattern of results.

Finally, the inclusion in Study 4 of a control condition in which participants were accepted rather than excluded further illustrated that both the exclusion produced by being rejected and the exclusion produced by being ignored create distress and negative emotions; however, these negative emotions differ according to what

type of threats people perceive their exclusion as signaling. The hurt feelings associated with being rejected were more related to agitation, which reflects greater threats to prevention concerns, whereas the hurt feelings associated with being ignored were more related to dejection, which reflects greater threats to promotion concerns. Comparisons with the control condition also provided some indication that the effects of being rejected on prevention-focused thinking might be stronger than those of being ignored on promotion-focused thinking; however, this finding is less conclusive owing to a potential ceiling effect and requires further validation.

### General Discussion

Social exclusion threatens fundamental human needs and generally evokes powerful motivations (see Leary et al., 2006; Williams, 2007). In this article we have examined how the distinct threats offered by specific types of social exclusion might alter these motivations, as well as the behaviors, thoughts, and emotions they produce. Across four studies, participants recalled and experienced instances of exclusion that involved either explicit and direct or implicit and indirect feedback concerning their poor social standing. That is, participants were either actively rejected or passively ignored.

The results of these studies revealed that experiences of being rejected were more accessible for those with stronger motivations for prevention and led to (a) greater withdrawal from social contact, (b) an increased focus on the actions one should not have taken that necessarily led to exclusion, and (c) stronger feelings of agitation and anxiety. All of these effects suggest that being rejected creates an enhanced state of vigilance and stronger concerns with preventing further losses of social connection (see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008). In contrast, experiences of being ignored were more readily accessible for those with stronger motivations for promotion and led to (a) greater attempts at social reengagement, (b) an increased focus on the actions one should have taken that might have been sufficient to avoid exclusion, and (c) stronger feelings of dejection and sadness. All of these effects suggest that being ignored creates an enhanced state of eagerness and stronger concerns with promoting further opportunities to overcome a failure to gain social connection (see Higgins, 1997; Molden et al., 2008).

### Alternate Mechanisms for Distinctions Between Being Rejected and Being Ignored

There are, of course, other possible psychological distinctions between being rejected and being ignored that do not revolve around prevention or promotion motivations and that could, in theory, be responsible for the effects that were observed. However, across all four studies, our findings remained unchanged when we controlled for a wide variety of alternative distinctions. The instructions used in Studies 2 and 3 asked participants to recall experiences in which they were clearly excluded (which coders then confirmed that they did) so as to eliminate any potential differences in people's tendency to notice or acknowledge more direct or indirect forms of exclusion. In addition, Studies 1–3 assessed whether the incidents of being rejected or ignored that participants recalled differed in their importance, how generally

painful they were, how long they lasted, what types of needs they threatened, and what types of other people were involved (i.e., whether the exclusion was performed by groups or individuals including strangers, acquaintances, or romantic partners). Although some studies did reveal additional differences between being rejected and being ignored along some of these variables, such differences were not consistent across studies and never mediated the distinct effects that the different types of exclusion had on participants' behaviors or thoughts. Finally, the exclusion manipulation used in Study 4 ensured that participants' experiences of being rejected or being ignored were identical in (a) how long they lasted, (b) the specific context in which the exclusion occurred, and (c) the number and type of individuals involved. Our findings therefore cannot be readily explained by any differences in the particular instances in which being rejected or being ignored might naturally be more likely to occur.

Further evidence for the specific motivational mechanisms we propose to explain the differences we observed between being rejected and being ignored comes from the lack of alternative mechanisms that can provide as coherent an account of the full range of these differences. When considered separately, some of our findings may indeed allow plausible explanations beyond the activation of promotion or prevention motivations. For example, it could reasonably be argued that being rejected and receiving explicit negative feedback is generally a rarer occurrence, and that people thus assume that some kind of direct action on their part was required to elicit such feedback. Such beliefs would then explain why people generated more thoughts about regretted actions versus inactions when they were rejected as compared with when they were ignored. Another alternative is that being actively rejected conveys a greater sense of finality concerning one's exclusion as compared with being passively ignored. Such perceived finality could explain why people chose withdrawal following rejection rather than what they see as a fruitless attempt at reengagement. Similarly, despite our attempts to control for this factor in our experiments, experiences of being ignored could involve more uncertainty concerning whether one had indeed been, or would continue to be, excluded than did experiences of being rejected. Such uncertainty could explain why ignored participants were more willing to optimistically attempt reengagement, and even why they thought more about what actions might have been sufficient for them to gain inclusion.

However, even if these alternative mechanisms are operating, they satisfactorily explain only a subset of the findings we report here. Believing that direct actions are necessary for explicit rejection may account for differences in people's thoughts about the source of exclusion, but such beliefs could just as easily have initiated efforts toward social reengagement (to make up for one's actions) as impulses for withdrawal from social contact (to shield oneself from the consequences of one's actions). Such beliefs could also just as easily have produced feelings of disappointment and dejection as feelings of worry and anxiety. Similarly, the perceived finality of being rejected may account for differences in people's behaviors following exclusion, but such perceptions could just as easily have produced thoughts about either what they did or what they failed to do to bring about these dire circumstances. Finally, the greater uncertainty of being ignored may possibly account for differences in both thoughts and behaviors following exclusion, but such feelings of uncertainty would be

expected to produce greater anxiety and agitation rather than sadness and dejection (e.g., C. A. Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), which is the opposite of the pattern that was observed. Thus, the most coherent and consistent explanation of all of the present findings concerning people's behaviors, thoughts, and emotions is provided by the additional propositions that (a) the experience of being rejected evokes a sense of lost social connection, which then selectively activates prevention motivations, and (b) the experience of being ignored evokes a sense of missed opportunities to gain social connection, which then selectively activates promotion motivations.

### *The Dynamics of Being Rejected and Being Ignored*

Throughout this article, we have tended to discuss instances of social exclusion that involve being rejected versus ignored as discrete and separable events. Although this characterization has facilitated the identification of distinct psychological processes associated with these two forms of social exclusion, it almost certainly oversimplifies how people often experience exclusion in their daily lives. It is more likely that being actively and explicitly rejected versus being passively and implicitly ignored resides somewhere along a continuum (see Leary, 1990) and that many instances of exclusion include aspects of both. Moreover, it is also likely that beyond such co-occurrence, there are prototypical patterns of dynamic shifts between being rejected and being ignored that develop over time. That is, following an instance of active and explicit rejection, one may then frequently be more passively ignored going forward. Conversely, after some period of being passively ignored, if one still does not seem to have received the message, this may frequently trigger an instance of active rejection.

The possibility of such a dynamic oscillation between being rejected and being ignored is particularly intriguing in light of the results of the present studies. When people are rejected, the motivations for prevention that are activated lead them to withdraw from social contact and contemplate what types of behaviors they should cease to display. Such withdrawal creates a situation in which any continued exclusion from the person(s) involved would likely be more passive (i.e., consist largely of being avoided or ignored). However, after some time, this more passive exclusion could prompt the reemergence of motivations for promotion. These motivations might then spur people to contemplate actions they have not taken that may be prolonging their exclusion, and perhaps even to attempt reengagement. However, such direct attempts at reengagement, if premature or unsuccessful, could then invite another instance of active rejection, leading once again to the renewed dominance of prevention motivations and tendencies for withdrawal, completing the cycle. The possibility of such motivational dynamics in people's experiences of more prolonged social exclusion could be an interesting direction for future research.

### *Effects of Active Versus Passive Exclusion in Previous Research*

In this article, we have made a distinction between social exclusion that involves being actively rejected versus passively ignored. Although few previous studies have directly compared

these two experiences (but see van Beest & Williams, 2006; Zadro et al., 2005), some manipulations of exclusion that have frequently appeared in the literature can be classified as largely active or largely passive. For example, Williams and colleagues have performed many studies in which people engaged in a game of catch (either in person or over a computer network) are passively excluded by other “participants” who never throw them the ball (see, e.g., Warburton et al., 2006; Williams et al., 2000). In addition, Leary, Twenge, and others have had people engage in an initial group interaction and then exposed them to passive exclusion by informing them that all of the other group members had chosen someone else as the person with whom they would most like to work (e.g., Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Twenge et al., 2001). In contrast, an older study by Snoek (1962) and more recent studies by Buckley et al. (2004) and Maner et al. (2007) have actively excluded people by providing them with explicit feedback that their interaction partner(s) did not like them or did not want them to join the group because of some undesirable personal quality.<sup>4</sup>

Direct comparisons between the past studies featuring these types of manipulations and our current research are difficult at best. Many of these previous studies did not include measures of people’s behaviors following exclusion and were primarily focused on when and how exclusion threatened people’s self-esteem, their needs for belonging, and the meaning they found in their lives (e.g., Leary et al., 1995; Twenge et al., 2003; Zadro et al., 2005). Furthermore, the many methodological differences between studies that have examined more active or passive exclusion prevent any firm conclusions concerning whether it is truly the type of exclusion that is behind any distinct effects that are observed. Nevertheless, a careful examination of past work reveals some suggestive similarities with the results presented here.

When the behavioral effects of more passive manipulations of exclusion (e.g., being left out of a ball-toss game or passed over during group selection) have been investigated, results have often revealed greater attempts to reengage in social contact. For example, Williams et al. (2000) showed that increasing degrees of exclusion during a ball-toss game increased the length of time that people continued playing the game (at least up to the point of total exclusion, where persistence dropped). They also showed that the same type of exclusion increased people’s willingness to agree with unanimously wrong answers in a group problem-solving task, which presumably indicates greater attempts to reestablish some kind of social acceptance. Williams and Sommer (1997) reported somewhat similar findings as well, such that women (but not men) who were excluded in a ball-toss game worked harder on a subsequent collective task. Finally, A. Smith and Williams (2004) have shown that people who are passively excluded by someone who does not respond to text messages they have sent make more subsequent attempts to elicit a response (see also Williams, 2001).

Beyond these active, prosocial behaviors, even in studies where people have responded to passive exclusion with more antisocial behaviors, they have shown a greater willingness to express this hostility in a directly social manner. For example, Twenge et al. (2001) demonstrated that people who had not been selected for a group task delivered longer and more intense bursts of an aversive noise during a subsequent competitive game, even if the other participant had done nothing him- or herself to provoke this. Similarly, DeSteno, Valdesolo, and Bartlett (2006) showed that

people whose initial partner in a group exercise chose to work with someone else assigned these other two individuals to taste a larger portion of an extremely spicy sauce, believing they would have to consume the whole amount (see also Warburton et al., 2006). Finally, van Beest and Williams (2006) demonstrated that people who were passively excluded during a ball-toss task reported greater desires to seek revenge and to punish the other players; what is more, these desires were significantly higher in this passive exclusion condition than in a more active exclusion condition where receiving the ball caused one to lose money and the other two players had “conspired” to throw the ball only to the participant and not each other.

In contrast to these effects for passive exclusion, results from studies in which people have experienced more active exclusion (which are somewhat rarer) reveal a tendency toward greater attempts to reduce one’s social profile. Snoek (1962) has shown that people who were explicitly informed that the members of a group did not want to admit them because they lacked certain skills subsequently made fewer comments about the task they were performing, whereas people who were explicitly informed that the group did not want to admit them because of their personal qualities subsequently made fewer comments about themselves. Furthermore, the types of antisocial behavior that have typically been demonstrated following active exclusion have tended to be less direct or confrontational. In a study by Maner et al. (2007), people who received feedback that a potential partner specifically did not want to work with them (rather than just choosing to work with someone else) responded by withholding positive rewards from this partner. Similarly, using the same type of active exclusion, Buckley et al. (2004) have shown that those who are excluded respond by assigning the person who has excluded them a neutral task rather than a pleasant one, even when the opportunity existed to assign an unpleasant task. Finally, returning to the van Beest and Williams (2006) results described above, those participants in the active exclusion condition, in which the other members of the ball-toss game singled them out to lose money, did not report any greater desires for punishment or revenge than participants who either were not uniquely targeted or were even largely spared from negative outcomes.

Once again, any comparisons between these previous findings and our current results are suggestive at best, but the overall pattern is largely consistent with the distinctions that we have made between being rejected and being ignored. Active exclusion appears to produce more cautious, restrained, and prevention-oriented responses, whereas passive exclusion appears to produce more risky, unrestrained, and promotion-oriented responses. Studies that manipulate active or passive exclusion using the same type of procedures and then provide people with opportunities for both direct and indirect prosocial behavior (e.g., choosing to continue to work with group members vs. providing support or assistance to the group that does not require actual social contact) or for both

<sup>4</sup> Other common manipulations, such as reliving a previous experience of exclusion (e.g., Gardner et al., 2005; Maner et al., 2007; see Study 1) or receiving feedback that one is likely to end up living his or her life alone (e.g., Twenge et al., 2001, 2007), could induce thoughts of either active or passive exclusion and therefore cannot be readily classified in terms of this distinction.

direct and indirect antisocial behavior (e.g., forcing someone to eat more hot sauce or allowing them to eat fewer cookies) could provide more conclusive evidence for these types of effects and would be an interesting direction for future research.

### Conclusions

In the wake of the range of consequences that social exclusion has been found to have for people's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, important questions have arisen about when and why some of these consequences might be expected instead of others. The studies we present here provide a new framework to help answer such questions. Experiences of being either actively rejected or passively ignored were found to evoke distinct types of social motivations, respectively focused either on protecting oneself from further social loss (i.e., prevention) or on seeking ways to compensate for failures to achieve social gains (i.e., promotion). Although the present findings provide basic evidence for these important motivational differences, many additional implications of these motives remain to be explored. Being rejected or ignored could create more prevention-focused or promotion-focused sensitivities in people's subsequent encoding of social information and affect their social judgments (cf. Evans & Petty, 2003; Higgins et al., 1994; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992). These different types of exclusion could also affect the types of goals and strategies that people are more likely to adopt following these experiences (cf. Higgins et al., 2001; Liberman et al., 2001; Molden & Higgins, 2004; Molden et al., 2008; Shah & Higgins, 1997). Therefore, future work that investigates the motivational distinctions between being rejected and being ignored could bring greater insight to the specific ways in which people attempt to pursue their fundamental needs for social connection.

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