Trist, E. L., Susman, G. I., & Brown, G. R. (1977). An experiment in autonomous working in an American underground coal mine. *Human Relations, 30*(3), 201–236. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872677703000301

Turner, J. C., Brown, R. J., & Tajfel, H. (1979). Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favouritism. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 9*(2), 187–204. https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2420090207

Tziner, A. (2002). *Human resource management and organization behavior: Selected perspectives.* Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

A Broader Perspective for Subtle Discrimination Interventions

Amer Odeh, Timothy J. Bruce, Daniel R. Krenn, and Shan Ran
Wayne State University

Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, and Lindsey (2017) make the case that discrimination is multifaceted and can be identified along several continua. They also emphasize the role that every individual may play in the propagation of discrimination. As such, they make note of several interventions from bystanders and allies to combat subtle discrimination. Although we agree that subtle discrimination causes harm and that interventions targeted at such discrimination are necessary, we propose some additional considerations for the science and practice of subtle discrimination reduction. Specifically, we discuss the limitations of focusing on subtle discrimination at the individual level, the ambiguous nature of intentionality, the view of subtle discrimination as a manifestation of a hostile environment that falls under the broader umbrella of negative interpersonal treatment, and the emphasis placed by Jones et al. on the potential for organizational level interventions by proposing several considerations for tackling a climate of negative interpersonal treatment.

Individual Versus Organizational Perspectives

As discussed in the focal article, subtle discrimination can vary along the dimension of intentionality. Similar to incivility, subtle discrimination can be ambiguous in its intentionality, so it is difficult to objectively pinpoint single occurrences of subtle discrimination and attribute them to individual

Amer Odeh, Timothy J. Bruce, Daniel R. Krenn, and Shan Ran, Department of Psychology, Wayne State University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Amer Odeh, Timothy J. Bruce, Daniel R. Krenn, or Shan Ran, 5057 Woodward Avenue, Department of Psychology, Wayne State University, Detroit, MI 48202. E-mail: ev5459@wayne.edu, timothy.bruce@wayne.edu, daniel.krenn@wayne.edu, or shan.ran@wayne.edu

perpetrators' conscious choice of behaviors (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Cortina, 2008). Determinations of the intentionality of subtle discrimination are made further elusive due to their subjective nature. A target may attribute an action to discrimination, whereas an employer or coworker may not (Jones et al.). Subtle discrimination may also occur without the perpetrators' awareness of the harm inflicted. It is important to note that not every instigator is aware of the damage caused by their behavior. It is possible that unintentional discrimination may be manifested in situations where the perpetrator is influenced by frequent exposure to mistreatment from others, high job demands, and low workplace justice (Schilpzand, De Pater, & Erez, 2016). Due to the convolution associated with determining intentionality, one runs the risk of unfairly punishing individuals for biases that they are unaware of or cannot consciously control. Meanwhile, an emphasis on reducing subtle discrimination for members of protected groups may overlook the fact that members of any group affiliations, although disproportionate, could be victims of negative interpersonal treatment (Cortina, Kabat-Farr, Leskinen, Huerta, & Magley, 2013). It is possible that a member of either a majority or minority group affiliation is mistreated due to reasons such as interpersonal conflicts rather than for his/her group identity. In this case, this member may not benefit from an intervention related to subtle discrimination.

One example of the negative consequences of individual-focused intervention can be found in Sanchez and Medkik's (2004) study, such that the trainees believed that participation in the diversity training was a form of correction and punishment, resulting in a "backlash" effect and an increased "us versus them" mindset. Likewise, the allies and bystander interventions may segregate members from an organization by identifying different groups of employees into different roles, generate threats perceived by out-group members, and create a similar backlash effect in the workplace as a whole.

Although we agree that individual biases can account for the occurrence of subtle discrimination, we should not ignore other causes, especially contextual influences. As Jones and colleagues point out, the cyclical nature of subtle discrimination can influence many members in an organization and create a climate for negative interpersonal treatment, similar to a mistreatment climate (Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Paulin & Griffin, 2016; Walsh et al., 2012; Yang, Caughlin, Gazica, Truxillo, & Spector, 2014). For example, as a mild, ambiguous form of subtle discrimination, incivility can lead to retaliatory aggression of increasing intensity across the organization (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Yang et al. (2014) defined mistreatment climate as employees' shared perceptions of general policies, procedures, and practices targeted at reducing different forms of mistreatment (i.e., incivility, aggression, bullying). They also found that employees generally experience higher

levels of mistreatment and the subsequent negative consequences under an unfavorable mistreatment climate. Therefore, it is necessary to create organizational level changes for broad influences on the mistreatment climate without alienating particular members or groups.

For these reasons, we propose a broader perspective for decreasing the prevalence of subtle forms of discrimination. First, because mistreatment encompasses subtle discrimination, inclusive methods for decreasing general mistreatment are likely to minimize subtle discrimination and simultaneously decreasing other forms of mistreatment within the organization. Furthermore, instead of addressing subtle discrimination as an individual issue, it may be more effective to treat it at the organizational level in order to diminish some backlash effects. As such, we propose the following interventions regarding training and development, selection, and leadership practices for minimizing interpersonal mistreatment and maximizing the value of diversity in the workplace.

Training and Development

As a systematic organizational intervention, training can equip employees with necessary attitudes and behaviors in interpersonal interaction. Research has found that positive framing of diversity (i.e., "strengths of diversity" vs. "consequences of discrimination") in training is effective in promoting participants' positive reaction and attitude change compared with negative framing (Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, Mollica, & Friedman, 2004). In contrast to Sanchez and Medkik (2004), Kidder and colleagues (2004) found that trainees did not perceive that they were singled out or punished by participating in the training.

Such positive framing is generalizable to employee development programs. For instance, instead of aiming at reducing negative interpersonal treatment, the CREW (Civility, Respect, & Engagement in the Workplace) program aims at building a civil and respectful organizational climate through hands on problem solving and discussion. The intervention encourages all employees to participate without categorizing them into perpetrators, victims, or witnesses of mistreatment. The results demonstrated increased civility among participants as well as the reduction of several negative outcomes such as absenteeism, cynicism, and intentions to quit (Leiter, Laschinger, Day, & Oore, 2011; Osatuke, Moore, Ward, Dyrenforth, & Belton, 2009).

Selection

The focal article discussed some remedies for common problems with selection process and selection decision making, such as the utilization of an acknowledgment strategy or a display of increased positivity by the applicants

(Jones et al.). Besides proposing strategies for individual decision makers and applicants to adopt, we believe that organizations should also adopt a better selection process to foster a more inclusive environment. With regard to predictors to be used in selection, individual characteristics, such as low trait anger, high emotion stability, and high self-control, may serve as the basis for selecting employees who are less likely to instigate mistreatment under stress (Douglas & Martinko, 2001; Schilpzand et al., 2016). This selection practice also requires an organization to adopt broader criteria (i.e., contextual performance) beyond task performance. Organizations may also select employees who tend to actively foster a more civil environment. Another strength of focusing on broad criteria and noncognitive measures is the lack of subgroup differences (Sackett & Lievens, 2008), so the equitable selection ratios across subgroups can further facilitate a diverse makeup of the workforce.

In the meantime, employees also self-select themselves to suitable organizations. Through the process of self-selection, employees who value quality interpersonal interaction and diversity will find themselves more at ease within a diversity-promoting organization and are more likely to apply for a job and accept an offer at the organization (Ryan, Sacco, McFarland, & Kriska, 2000; Schneider, 1987). Through this positive cycle of selection and self-selection, organizations are more likely to preserve a sustainable climate of diversity.

Leadership

Kimberly and Miles (1980) made the case that leadership sets the precedent for organizational climate. Schneider (1987) built on this with his attraction–selection–attrition (ASA) model, asserting that the homogeneity of a workforce can be linked to the initial attitudes of leaders in the organization. Leaders must come to realize that diversity goes beyond numbers and personnel, so those who solely seek to reach a quota of diversity will quickly find themselves in a harrowing atmosphere of tensions.

Besides making decisions regarding training, development, and selection programs, leaders should demonstrate behaviors that facilitate the reduction of mistreatment in the workplace. Through leaders' ethical behaviors, they can inspire followers to value and exhibit civil behaviors toward others (Taylor & Pattie, 2014). Under the possibility of interpersonal mistreatment, leaders who actively engage followers in addressing these issues using transformational and contingent reward behaviors can mitigate the vicious cycle of mistreatment (Harold & Holtz, 2015; Lee & Jensen, 2014). Leaders' transformational behaviors and openness also increases followers' comfort for speaking up about unfair interpersonal situations, creating a climate for employees to take proactive actions toward minimizing subtle

discrimination (Detert & Burris, 2007). The implication is that organizations can take advantage of leadership development programs to promote commitment and effectiveness of leaders in fostering quality interpersonal treatment among followers.

Taken together, the focal article proposes a multidimensional approach to understand the subtle discrimination construct, a perspective that illuminates the role of individuals within the cycle of subtle discrimination, and a series of strategies that outline how individuals may combat discrimination. We extended that perspective by emphasizing that since discrimination can vary on the dimension of intentionality, treating all subtle discriminatory behavior as blameworthy may create backlash and an "us versus them" mindset, as well as downplaying the contextual influence. We further emphasize that while the complex interplay of subtle discrimination may be better understood at the individual level, it is unlikely to be intervened positively through an individualistic focus. In order to attain sustainable and practical change, we accentuate a broader lens through which organizations and researchers should view interventions at the organizational level as the primary means of reducing subtle discrimination.

References

Andersson, L. M., & Pearson, C. M. (1999). Tit for tat? The spiraling effect of incivility in the workplace. *Academy of Management Review, 24*, 452–471.

Cortina, L. M. (2008). Unseen injustice: Incivility as modern discrimination in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 33*, 55–75.

Cortina, L. M., Kabat-Farr, D., Leskinen, E. A., Huerta, M., & Magley, V. J. (2013). Selective incivility as modern discrimination in organizations evidence and impact. *Journal of Management, 39*, 1579–1605.

Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open? *Academy of Management Journal, 50*, 869–884.

Douglas, S. C., & Martinko, M. J. (2001). Exploring the role of individual differences in the prediction of workplace aggression. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86*, 547–559.

Harold, C. M., & Holtz, B. C. (2015). The effects of passive leadership on workplace incivility. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 36*, 16–38.

Jones, K. P., Arena, D. F., Nittrouer, C. L., Alonso, N. M., & Lindsey, A. P. (2017). Subtle discrimination in the workplace: A vicious cycle. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice, 10*(1), 51–76.

Kidder, D. L., Lankau, M. J., Chrobot-Mason, D., Mollica, K. A., & Friedman, R. A. (2004). Backlash toward diversity initiatives: Examining the impact of diversity program justification, personal and group outcomes. *International Journal of Conflict Management, 15*, 77–102.

Kimberly, J. R., & Miles, R. H. (1980). *The organizational life cycle: Issues in the creation, transformation, and decline of organizations*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Lee, J., & Jensen, J. M. (2014). The effects of active constructive and passive corrective leadership on workplace incivility and the mediating role of fairness perceptions. *Group & Organization Management, 39*, 416–443.

Leiter, M. P., Laschinger, H. K. S., Day, A., & Oore, D. G. (2011). The impact of civility interventions on employee social behavior, distress, and attitudes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 96*, 1258–1274.

Osatuke, K., Moore, S. C., Ward, C., Dyrenforth, S. R., & Belton, L. (2009). Civility, respect, engagement in the workforce (CREW): Nationwide organization development intervention at Veterans Health Administration. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 45*, 384–410.

Paulin, D., & Griffin, B. (2016). The relationships between incivility, team climate for incivility and job-related employee well-being: A multilevel analysis. *Work and Stress, 30*, 132–151.

Ryan, A. M., Sacco, J. M., McFarland, L. A., & Kriska, S. D. (2000). Applicant self-selection: Correlates of withdrawal from a multiple hurdle process. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 85*, 163–179.

Sackett, P. R., & Lievens, F. (2008). Personnel selection. *Annual Review of Psychology, 59*, 419–450.

Sanchez, J. I., & Medkik, N. (2004). The effects of diversity awareness training on differential treatment. *Group & Organization Management, 29*, 517–536.

Schilpzand, P., De Pater, I. E., & Erez, A. (2016). Workplace incivility: A review of the literature and agenda for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 27*, S57–S88.

Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology, 40*, 437–453.

Taylor, S. G., & Pattie, M. W. (2014). When does ethical leadership affect workplace incivility? *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 24, 595–616.

Walsh, B. M., Magley, V. J., Reeves, D. W., Davies-Schrils, K. A., Marmet, M. D, & Gallus, J. A. (2012). Assessing workgroup norms for civility: The development of the Civility Norms Questionnaire-Brief. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 27*, 407–420.

Yang, L. Q., Caughlin, D. E., Gazica, M. W., Truxillo, D. M., & Spector, P. E. (2014). Workplace mistreatment climate and potential employee and organizational outcomes: A meta-analytic review from the target's perspective. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 19*, 315–335.

A Fruitful Framework: Commentary for a More Integrative Approach

Juliana M. Klein and Erick P. Briggs
Saint Louis University

A More Integrative Approach

Compared with more turbulent times in history, some might argue workplace discrimination has seen a downward trend. Others would contend that workplace discrimination has "just gone underground" and become more covert (Herring, 2002, p. 13). Either way, not-so-distant historical events such as the landmark Texaco case in 1996 and the Ford Motor case in 2000 remind us that discrimination demands our attention. Calls for research on interventions have surfaced (Becker, Zawadzki, & Shields, 2014), and proposals such as legal reforms, implicit bias training (Bartlett, 2009), and experiential learning workshops have answered (Cundiff, Zawadzki, Danube, & Shields, 2014). The focal article (Jones, Arena, Nittrouer, Alonso, & Lindsey, 2017) contributes to this discussion as it turns our attention to the construct space of discrimination and presents a framework for organizing its facets

Juliana M. Klein and Erick P. Briggs, Department of Psychology, Saint Louis University.
Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Juliana M. Klein, Department of Psychology, Saint Louis University, 3700 Lindell Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63108. E-mail: jklein30@slu.edu