



## Group identification moderates attitudes toward ingroup members who confront discrimination

Cheryl R. Kaiser<sup>a,\*</sup>, Nao Hagiwara<sup>b,1</sup>, Lori W. Malahy<sup>a,1</sup>, Clara L. Wilkins<sup>a,1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Washington, Box 351525, Seattle, WA 98195-1525, United States

<sup>b</sup> Department of Psychology, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1114, United States

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 19 September 2007

Revised 21 October 2008

Available online 5 May 2009

#### Keywords:

Confronting discrimination

Group identity

Stigma

Ingroup

Racism

Sexism

Self

Social perception

### ABSTRACT

Three studies examined the hypothesis that group identification moderates African Americans', Asian Americans', and women's attitudes toward fellow ingroup members who challenge an outgroup member's discriminatory comments or who do not speak up about the comments. Highly identified racial minorities expressed more positive attitudes toward ingroup members who confronted discriminatory comments compared to those who did not confront; whereas weakly identified minorities did not express different attitudes across the two conditions. Among women, the weakly identified expressed more negative attitudes toward other women who confronted discrimination relative to those who did not confront; whereas highly identified women did not differentially evaluate ingroup members in the two conditions. The less women identified with their group, the more negatively they evaluated ingroup members who confronted sexism. This research highlights the important role of group identification in understanding how members of devalued groups respond toward ingroup members who take a stand against discrimination.

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Women and racial minorities often choose not to publicly challenge others' sexist and racist comments, even when they notice the comments, are bothered by them, and want to say something about them (see Kaiser & Major, 2006; Stangor et al., 2003 for reviews). This reluctance to challenge discrimination is understandable, as women and minorities who confront discrimination are evaluated negatively by those they confront (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Shelton & Stewart, 2004) and by outgroup members who observe the confrontation (Dodd, Giuliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000). Although these negative reactions from outgroup members can make discrimination confrontations an unpleasant experience, the unpleasantness may be mitigated if discrimination confronters are embraced by fellow ingroup members. This manuscript examines how racial minorities and women evaluate ingroup members who confront discrimination and tests whether group identification moderates these evaluations.

### Confronting discrimination

When people privately recognize that they have been a victim of discrimination, one decision they face is whether to confront

the perpetrator of discrimination or to remain silent. Confrontation can be understood as a volitional process aimed at expressing one's disapproval of discriminatory treatment to a person or group of people who are responsible for engaging in discrimination (Kaiser & Miller, 2004).<sup>2</sup> To date, just one published experiment has examined how members of devalued groups react toward fellow ingroup members who confront outgroup members who discriminate against them (Dodd et al., 2001). Female participants evaluated a female target who confronted or ignored a man's blatantly sexist remark (i.e., a comment stating that the female target should cook for a group of men because she is a woman) or ambiguously sexist remark (i.e., a comment stating that the female target should cook for a group of men, but it did not mention gender). Specifically, the female target in the confrontation condition told the perpetrator that the comment was sexist, that she did not like to cook, and that it is not right to say that women should cook. Women liked the target more when she confronted the blatant sexist comments relative to when she did not. Women did not differentially evaluate the target who confronted or ignored the ambiguous sexist remarks. This study

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [ckaiser@u.washington.edu](mailto:ckaiser@u.washington.edu) (C.R. Kaiser).

<sup>1</sup> These authors contributed equally to this work.

<sup>2</sup> It is important to distinguish confronting discrimination from the related construct of attributions to discrimination. Attributions to discrimination are subjective judgments about whether an event is due to unfair treatment stemming from one's group membership (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002). Although these attributions can be shared with others (e.g., Garcia, Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; 2003), only attributions that are shared directly with the perpetrator of prejudice are confrontations.

suggests that women react particularly favorably toward women who speak up about discrimination when it is blatant and that they do not negatively evaluate women who confront discrimination when it is ambiguous.

People may react positively toward ingroup members who confront blatant discrimination because these confrontations benefit the group. First, confrontation can reduce prejudice. For example, White Americans who were told that their responses on a lab task revealed prejudice expressed less stereotypical comments on subsequent tasks (Czopp et al., 2006). Additionally, not speaking up about discrimination can leave others with the impression that prejudicial attitudes are acceptable or legitimate, and this could leave the group vulnerable to continually experiencing prejudice and discrimination (Czopp et al., 2006). Third, speaking up about discrimination can create a sense of group value, empowerment, and solidarity; whereas not speaking up can create difficulties for achieving a positive social identity (Scheepers, Branscombe, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Hill, 2006; Swim & Hyers, 1999). Finally, effective confrontation can create social change that provides material and social resources for the group (Crosby, 1993).

Because confronting discrimination exposes the confronter to a host of negative interpersonal consequences from the outgroup (Dodd et al., 2001; Kaiser & Miller, 2004; Shelton & Stewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999), ingroup members who speak up about discrimination might be perceived as “good group members” who are willing to incur negative personal outcomes in the service of defending and advancing the group’s goals and status. In contrast, ingroup members who do not confront discrimination may be perceived as “bad group members” who do not defend the group when it is threatened. Thus, one might infer that members of devalued groups uniformly support ingroup members who advocate on behalf of the group by speaking out against prejudice and react negatively toward those who do not speak out about it. However, people vary with respect to the importance they place on their group membership and its significance to their self-concepts. This variation might play a significant role in understanding how members of devalued groups respond to ingroup members who confront and do not confront discrimination.

### Group identification

Group identification can be understood as the importance, or centrality, of group membership to the self-concept (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). People who are highly identified define themselves in terms of their group membership whereas those who are weakly identified do not. Of importance, only those who are identified with a group perceive events that occur to the group as self-relevant (Smith, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Research in the Social Identity Theory tradition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) suggests that group identification should moderate evaluations of ingroup members who do and do not confront discrimination. Several studies demonstrate that highly identified group members react especially positively toward ingroup members who help the group achieve a positive social identity and that they react particularly negatively toward those who reflect poorly on the group (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000, Study 2; Biernat, Vescio, & Billings, 1999; Branscombe, Wann, Noel, & Coleman, 1993). As the group’s reputation and image are less self-relevant for the weakly identified, they often react similarly toward ingroup members who reflect positively and negatively on the group. For example, Branscombe and colleagues (1993) found that highly identified group members liked ingroup mem-

bers who showed unwavering support of the ingroup when it was threatened more than those who abandoned the group when it faced problems. This effect was not observed for weakly identified group members. Similarly, only strongly identified group members express support for fellow ingroup members who criticize the ingroup in intergroup contexts, as they view that criticism as an important step toward improving their group’s welfare (Hornsey, De Bruijn, Creed, Allen, Ariyanto, et al., 2005).

These arguments suggest that highly identified group members should react more positively toward ingroup members who advocate on behalf of the group by confronting blatant discrimination than they do toward those who do not confront discrimination. Additionally, as weakly identified group members have less of the self invested in the ingroup, they should show less psychological reactivity when ingroup members confront and do not confront discrimination. Drawing upon this theoretical and empirical groundwork, the present investigation tested the hypothesis that group identification moderates the evaluative consequences of witnessing fellow socially devalued ingroup members confront or not confront discrimination. This research tested this hypothesis among members of three devalued social groups—African Americans (Study 1), Asian Americans (Study 2), and women (Study 3). In these studies, participants read about an ingroup member who experienced a blatant discriminatory event, which they either did or did not confront. Situations involving blatant discrimination ensured that all participants, irrespective of their level of group identification, perceived that the target ingroup member had definitely noticed the discrimination and perceived it as illegitimate. It was hypothesized that highly identified racial minorities and women would express more positive attitudes toward ingroup members who confronted discrimination compared to those who did not confront. Weakly identified group members, in contrast, were not expected to show this effect.

### Study 1

#### Method

##### Participants and research design

Participants were 59 African American undergraduates (74.6% women,  $M$  age = 20.5 years,  $SD$  = 2.2 years) at a large research university who received credit toward a class research requirement for their participation. The study involved one manipulated independent variable (Reaction to Racism: confrontation or no confrontation) and one continuous predictor (Racial Identification). Participants individually completed a web-based measure of racial identification at least a day prior to the laboratory session.

##### Laboratory session

Participants were met at the laboratory by an experimenter who was blind to experimental condition and participants’ racial identification scores. The experimenter explained that the study examined the psychology of impression formation. To disguise the fact that the study concerned ethnicity, White participants or confederates were also present (White participants completed measures for a different study). Participants were told that their role was to review surveys and an essay completed by a student in a previous study and provide their first impression of that person. Participants first reviewed demographic information purportedly completed by the previous participant, which indicated that he was a nineteen year old African American man, as well as some filler scales about his adjustment to life at the university. The target’s reaction to racism was manipulated through his purported essay responses describing a difficult social situation in which he was the target of offensive social behavior. In this essay, participants

**Table 1**  
Study 1 descriptive statistics and intercorrelations ( $N = 59$ ).

	Descriptive statistics		Intercorrelations		
	$\alpha$	$M (SD)$	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Racial ID	.74	3.99 (1.18)		.23	.33*
(2) Manipulation check	.95	2.82 (2.66)			.55**
(3) Target attitudes	.82	3.70 (1.28)			

\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*  $p < .001$ .

learned that the African American target's difficult social situation occurred when he overheard a White acquaintance making racist comments and jokes at a party. Specifically, the target's essay stated:

"I was at a party and a guy I know (who was a little drunk) was ranting racist comments about Blacks. He was telling other people that he wonders why a group of Black students moved into Holmes Hall (a dorm where many honors students live) and segregate themselves and that he thinks all Blacks should move to either Hubbard Hall or Brody (where most Blacks live). He also made some racist jokes (that I won't repeat here). He didn't realize I was in the other room and he stopped when he saw me, but it was awkward."

Participants in the *confrontation condition* read: "I know the guy fairly well and was talking with him alone later and I politely told him that his racist behavior was offensive. I tend to be assertive and speak up when people make very racist comments." Participants in the *no confrontation condition* read: "I know the guy fairly well and was talking with him alone later and wanted to tell him that his behavior was offensive, but I didn't do it. I tend to be really passive and non-confrontational, even when people make very racist comments." Thus, in both of these conditions, it was clear that the target noticed the racism and perceived it as illegitimate.

Participants also examined two scales, again ostensibly completed by the target, measuring the extent to which he publicly acknowledged or failed to acknowledge the offensive incident (i.e., "My behavior towards the person or persons who offended me was passive," and "My reaction to this situation let the person or persons who offended me know that I was offended by their behavior."). Scales ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the confrontation condition, these items were rated as a 1 and a 7, respectively. In the no confrontation condition, they were rated as a 7 and a 1, respectively.

Participants then completed measures assessing their attitudes toward the target and a manipulation check. These items were rated on 7-point scales with endpoints of 0 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*). Table 1 displays the alpha reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations for all variables. Participants were then debriefed.<sup>3</sup>

### Measures

**Racial identification.** Racial identification was assessed with Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) 4-item identity centrality subscale. The items were: "The ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am," "In general, belonging to my ethnic group is an important part of my self-image," "Overall, my ethnic-group membership has very little to do with how I feel about myself," and "The ethnic group I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am" (last two items reversed). There were

no differences between experimental conditions on this measure,  $F(1, 57) = 2.17, p = .15$ .

**Attitudes toward the target.** Participants' attitudes toward the target were assessed with the following five items: "I would want the student as a very close friend," "the student seems to have a good personality," "I would be pleased to have the student as a co-worker," "the student seems considerate," and "I admire the student."

**Manipulation check.** The manipulation check on the target's reaction to racism comprised the following three items: "The student confronted the person(s) who offended him/her," "The student expressed his/her feelings to the person(s) who offended him/her," and "The student responded passively in the difficult social situation" (reverse).

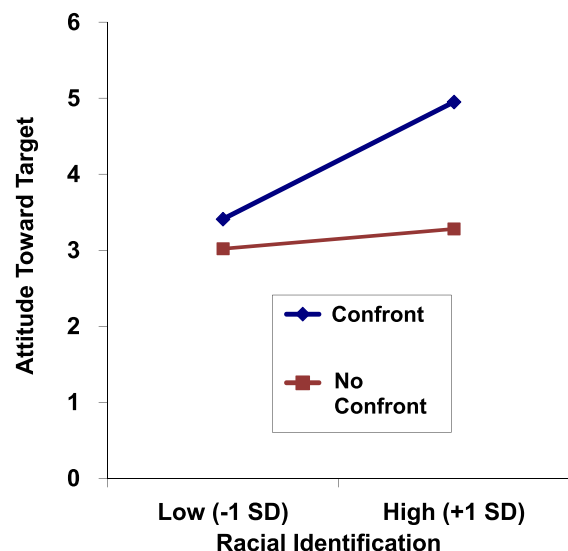
### Results

#### Analysis plan

In hierarchical regression analyses, the centered racial identification and the racism reaction main effects (0 = confrontation condition, 1 = no confrontation condition) were entered on Step 1 and the two-way interaction was entered on Step 2. When a significant two-way interaction occurred, the specific predictions were probed with analyses examining whether participants who were high (1 standard deviation above the mean) and low (1 standard deviation below the mean) in racial identification reacted differently to the target that confronted and did not confront discrimination (Aiken & West, 1991). To further understand the pattern of results, the simple slopes for racial identification within each condition were also probed.

#### Manipulation check

Participants in the confrontation condition reported that the target expressed his displeasure about the offensive situation more ( $M = 5.42, SD = 0.82$ ) than participants in the no confrontation condition did ( $M = 0.47, SD = 1.05$ );  $b = -4.89, SE = .25, t(56) = -19.42, p < .01$ ; Step 1:  $F(2, 56) = 200.80, p < .01; R^2 = .88$ . Racial identification did not predict this variable nor did it interact with experimental condition ( $ps > .26$ ).



**Fig. 1.** Racial identity moderates African Americans' attitudes toward ingroup members who do and do not confront racism.

<sup>3</sup> In all three experiments reported in this paper, we also assessed participants' emotional reactions toward the target (specifically, anger and anxiety). The emotion data were inconsistent across studies, and they are not discussed further. Full information about these findings can be obtained from the first author.

### Attitudes toward the target

The first step of the regression analysis examining attitudes toward the target was significant,  $F(2, 56) = 10.91$ ,  $R^2 = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ . This step revealed a significant main effect of racism reaction ( $b = -1.08$ ,  $SE = .29$ ,  $t(56) = -3.67$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that participants expressed more positive attitudes toward the target who confronted discrimination than the target who did not confront discrimination. There was also a main effect of racial identity ( $b = .27$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $t(56) = 2.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that the more participants identified with their group, the more positively they evaluated ingroup members. Of importance, and consistent with predictions, Step 2 was significant and revealed an interaction between racism reaction and racial identification,  $F(1, 55) = 3.92$ ,  $p = .05$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .05$ ;  $b = -.54$ ,  $SE = .27$ ,  $t(55) = -1.98$ . The slopes comprising this interaction are displayed in Fig. 1.

To probe the specific predictions, we examined the racism reaction effect for participants who were strongly identified (1 SD above the identification mean) and weakly identified (1 SD below the identification mean). Consistent with predictions, strongly identified participants evaluated the target who confronted discrimination more positively than the target who did not confront discrimination ( $b = -1.66$ ,  $SE = .41$ ,  $t(55) = -4.05$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Weakly identified participants did not differentially evaluate the target who confronted and did not confront discrimination ( $b = -.39$ ,  $SE = .45$ ,  $t(55) = -.87$ ,  $p = .39$ ).

To further explore the interaction, we next examined the relationship between racial identification and target attitudes within each racism reaction condition. In the confrontation condition, the more participants identified with their group, the more positively they evaluated the target ( $b = .65$ ,  $SE = .23$ ,  $t(55) = 2.85$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In the no confrontation condition, participants' level of racial identification did not predict their evaluations of the target ( $b = .11$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $t(55) = .79$ ,  $p = .43$ ).

### Discussion

Study 1 supports the hypotheses that group identification moderates devalued group members' attitudes toward ingroup members who confront and do not confront discrimination. Strongly identified African Americans expressed more positive attitudes toward the target who confronted discrimination compared to the target who did not confront. In contrast, weakly identified African Americans did not differentially evaluate the target across conditions. Further, racial identification was related to attitudes toward the target only in the confrontation condition. Together, these findings suggest that highly identified group members are particularly sensitive to whether ingroup members engage in confrontation, a behavior that involves personally putting oneself at risk in the service of benefiting the group.

The findings from Study 1 advance theory and research on confronting discrimination. Specifically, the data point to group identification as an important moderator in understanding how members of devalued social groups evaluate fellow ingroup members who confront and do not confront discrimination. Study 2 examines this research question with a second racial minority group, namely Asian Americans. Study 2 also improves upon the methodology from Study 1 by tightening the design so that it manipulates confrontational behavior that is exclusive to discrimination. Specifically, in Study 1, participants examined surveys in which the target described his behavior as passive or confrontational and also used trait-like terms in describing his response to discrimination (i.e., calling himself a passive or assertive person). These trait descriptors, rather than or in addition to the manipulations, could have affected the results. In Study 2, the passive/confrontational survey items were eliminated and the wording of the manipulation was tightened to avoid introducing general trait information.

## Study 2

### Method

#### Participants and research design

Participants were 71 Asian American undergraduates (66.2% women,  $M$  age = 18.9 years,  $SD = 1.1$  years) at a large research university who received extra credit in psychology classes for their participation. The experiment employed one manipulated variable (Reaction to Racism: confront or no confront) and one continuous predictor (Racial Identification, which was assessed at a mass testing session at the beginning of the academic quarter).

#### Procedure

The procedures directly replicated Study 1, with the exception that the target essays were modified so that they better captured prejudice against Asian Americans. Specifically, in both conditions the target's essay read:

"I was walking down The Ave a couple weeks ago, and a White guy I know was walking in front of me chatting with one of his friends. I overheard him complaining about Asian drivers – that they don't know how to drive and shouldn't be allowed to get drivers licenses. He also made a couple other anti-Asian jokes (that I won't repeat here). As he was turning the corner, he realized I was behind him, and he immediately stopped talking. It was awkward. I know the guy fairly well (he lives on my dorm floor) and I ran into him later that evening."

Participants in the confrontation condition then read: "We were talking alone, and I tactfully confronted him about his racist comments. I told him that as an Asian American, I thought that what he said was wrong—that I found his comments offensive and racist."

Participants in the no confrontation condition read: "We were talking alone, although I wanted to confront him about his racist comments, I couldn't get myself to do it. I wanted to tactfully tell him that as an Asian American, I thought what he said was wrong—that I found his comments offensive and racist. However, I avoided the issue and said nothing at all about his racist comments."

Participants then completed a target attitude measure and a manipulation check, and were then debriefed (see Table 2 for alpha reliabilities, descriptive statistics, and intercorrelations between measures).

#### Measures

**Racial identification.** As in Study 1, racial identification was assessed with **Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992)** 4-item identity centrality subscale. There were no differences between experimental conditions on this measure,  $F(1, 69) = .11$ ,  $p = .74$ .

**Attitudes toward the target.** Participants' attitudes toward the target were measured with three bipolar items assessing whether the target was: unpleasant/pleasant, unlikable/likable, and unfriendly/friendly, which were rated on scales with endpoints of  $-3$  and  $3$ . Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes.

**Table 2**  
Study 2 descriptive statistics and intercorrelations ( $N = 71$ ).

	Descriptive statistics		Intercorrelations		
	$\alpha$	$M$ ( $SD$ )	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Racial ID	.78	4.11 (1.34)			
(2) Manipulation check	.88	2.39 (1.98)			
(3) Target attitudes	.80	.43 (1.33)	-.06	-.04	-.16

**Manipulation check.** The reaction to racism manipulation check comprised two items: “The essay writer behaved in a confrontational way when facing the uncomfortable situation” and “The essay writer behaved in a non-confrontational way when he/she encountered the uncomfortable social situation.” (reverse). These were rated on 0–6 scales.

## Results

### Manipulation check

Participants in the confrontation condition reported that the target expressed his displeasure about the offensive situation more ( $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.89$ ) than participants in the non-confrontation condition did ( $M = 1.26$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ );  $b = -2.12$ ,  $SE = .40$ ,  $t(68) = -5.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Step 1:  $F(2, 68) = 14.10$ ;  $R^2 = .29$ . Racial identification did not predict this variable nor did it interact with experimental condition ( $ps > .40$ ).

### Attitudes toward the target

The first step of the regression analysis on attitudes toward the target was not significant,  $F(2, 68) = .34$ ,  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $p = .71$ . Of importance, Step 2 was significant and revealed the predicted interaction,  $F(1, 67) = 4.34$ ,  $p < .05$ ;  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ;  $b = -.49$ ,  $SE = .24$ ,  $t(67) = -2.08$ . The slopes comprising this interaction can be seen in Fig. 2. Tests of the specific predictions revealed that strongly identified participants reported more positive attitudes toward the ingroup member who confronted discrimination compared to the ingroup member who did not confront discrimination,  $b = -.90$ ,  $SE = .45$ ,  $t(67) = -2.01$ ,  $p < .05$ . Weakly identified participants did not differentially evaluate ingroup members who confronted and did not confront discrimination,  $b = .42$ ,  $SE = .45$ ,  $t(67) = .95$ ,  $p = .35$ .

We next examined the relationship between racial identification and target attitudes within each racism reaction condition. Participants' level of racial identification did not predict their evaluations of the target in either the confrontation condition ( $b = .22$ ,  $SE = .17$ ,  $t(67) = 1.26$ ,  $p = .21$ ) or no confrontation condition ( $b = -.27$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $t(67) = -1.71$ ,  $p = .09$ ).

## Discussion

Study 2 provides further evidence that group identification moderates racial minorities' evaluative reactions toward fellow in-

group members who choose to confront or not confront discrimination. Specifically, highly identified Asian Americans expressed more positive attitudes toward ingroup members who confronted discrimination relative to those who did not confront. This pattern replicates the one observed with African Americans in Study 1. Also consistent with Study 1, weakly identified minorities did not differentially evaluate ingroup members who confronted and did not confront discrimination. This replication is noteworthy as these two racial minority groups differ profoundly in historical life circumstances and relative status in the United States (Fong, 1998; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Tuan, 1998). Unlike Study 1, we did not find that racial identification was associated with more positive evaluations of ingroup members who confronted discrimination, although the pattern was in the predicted direction (see Fig. 2).

Study 3 further tests the generality of the hypotheses by examining how women respond to other women who confront or do not confront sexism.

## Study 3

### Method

#### Participants and research design

Participants were 76 female undergraduates (5.3% African American, 13.2% Asian American, 71.1% White American, 10.5% “other,”  $M$  age = 18.6 years,  $SD = 1.1$  years) at a large research university who received credit toward a class research requirement for their participation. The study involved one manipulated independent variable (Reaction to Sexism: confront or no confront) and one continuous predictor (Gender Identification).

#### Procedure

The procedures directly replicated those described in Study 2, with the exception of some modifications to the target essays. Specifically, the essays began in a similar way as in Study 2, but then diverged in the following way to reflect sexism: “I overheard him arguing that women should never be allowed to run companies, that they're terrible decision-makers, and that they're just too emotional and unintelligent to have that responsibility.” The confrontation manipulation was identical to the one used in Study 2, except that the race-language was replaced with gender-language.

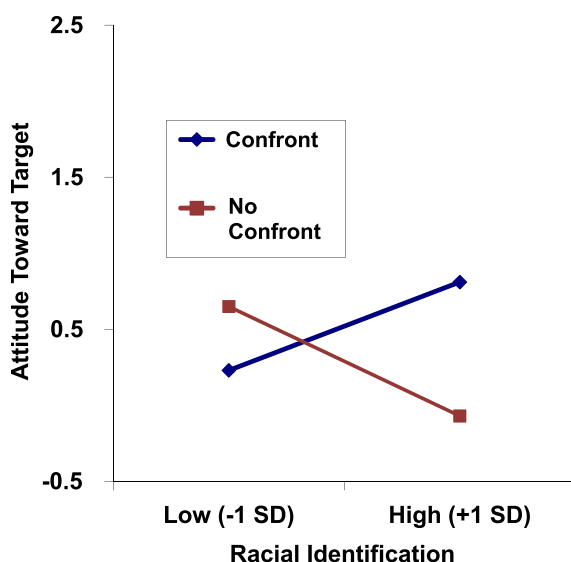


Fig. 2. Racial identity moderates Asian Americans' attitudes toward ingroup members who do and do not confront racism.

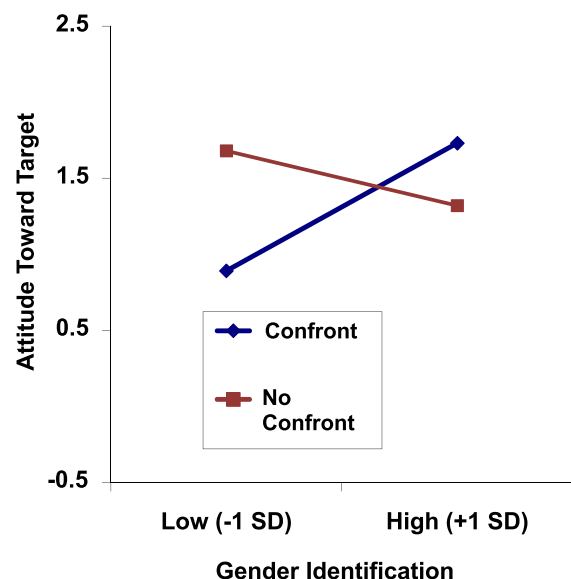


Fig. 3. Gender identity moderates women's attitudes toward ingroup members who do and do not confront sexism.

Participants then completed a measure assessing their attitudes toward the target and a manipulation check. See Table 3 for complete statistical information about these measures. Participants were then debriefed.

### Measures

**Gender identification.** Gender identification was assessed with Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) 4-item identity centrality subscale, phrased with respect to gender. There were no differences between experimental conditions on this measure,  $F(1, 74) = .32, p = .58$ .

**Dependent measures.** The target attitude and manipulation check measures were identical to those in Study 2.

### Results

#### Manipulation check

Participants in the discrimination confrontation condition ( $M = 3.10, SD = 1.83$ ) reported that the target expressed her displeasure about the offensive situation more than participants in the no confrontation condition did ( $M = 0.94, SD = 1.17$ ),  $b = -2.17, SE = .36, t(73) = -6.03, p < .01$ ; Step 1:  $F(2, 73) = 18.25; R^2 = .33$ ). Gender identification did not predict this variable nor did it interact with experimental condition ( $ps > .42$ ).

#### Attitudes toward the target

The first step of the analysis on target attitudes was not significant,  $F(2, 73) = .79, R^2 = .02, p = .46$ . Of importance, Step 2 was significant and revealed the predicted interaction,  $F(1, 72) = 4.03, p < .05; \Delta R^2 = .05; b = -.53, SE = .27, t(72) = -2.01$ . In contrast to the pattern from the first two studies, women who were high in gender identification did not express more positive attitudes toward the ingroup member who confronted discrimination compared to the ingroup member who did not confront ( $b = -.40, SE = .41, t(72) = -.97, p = .33$ ). Rather, women who were low in gender identification reported marginally more negative attitudes toward the ingroup member who confronted discrimination compared to the ingroup member who did not confront ( $b = .77, SE = .42, t(72) = 1.87, p = .066$ ). These slopes can be seen in Fig. 3.

We next examined the relationship between gender identification and target attitudes within each sexism reaction condition. In the confrontation condition, the more participants identified with their group, the more positively they evaluated the target ( $b = .38, SE = .18, t(72) = 2.14, p < .05$ ). In the no confrontation condition, participants' level of gender identification did not predict their evaluations of the target ( $b = -.15, SE = .20, t(72) = -.77, p = .45$ ).

### Discussion

Study 3 provides further evidence that group identity is important for understanding how members of devalued social groups react when they observe ingroup members confront and not confront discrimination. However, the interaction between group identity and the discrimination reaction manipulation manifested differently among female participants as compared to the racial minority

participants in Studies 1 and 2. Specifically, unlike highly identified racial minorities, women who are highly identified did not differ in how they evaluated fellow women who confronted or did not confront sexism. Instead, weakly identified women expressed marginally more negative attitudes toward women who confronted discrimination than women who did not confront discrimination. Additionally, relative to highly identified women, those who were weakly identified expressed more negative attitudes toward women who confronted discrimination. In the general discussion, we explore these intriguing differences between women and racial minorities.

### General discussion

This present research contributes to the emerging literature on confronting discrimination in several important ways. First, it provides three separate empirical tests examining how members of devalued groups respond to ingroup members who confront discrimination. As this question has been examined just once in the published literature, the present research expands and diversifies this small knowledge base. Second, this research advances theory on confronting discrimination by examining the moderating role of group identification. Third, by examining three different socially devalued groups, this research identifies effects that are common among these groups as well as effects that are distinct. These patterns of generality and distinctiveness are informative for research on confronting discrimination.

In all three studies, participants' level of group identification moderated their attitudes toward fellow ingroup members who confronted or did not confront discrimination. For both racial minority groups (African Americans and Asian Americans), the highly identified evaluated ingroup members who confronted discrimination more positively than those who did not confront; whereas the weakly identified showed no differential attitudes toward the target across the two conditions. These patterns are consistent with Social Identity Theory's contention that highly identified group members react positively toward people who advocate on behalf of the group relative to those who do not (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The null effect of experimental condition for weakly identified racial minorities is consistent with the idea that weakly identified group members are less reactive to intergroup experiences, regardless of whether those experiences have positive or negative implications for the group (Branscombe et al., 1993).

Women's attitudes toward the ingroup target, on the other hand, revealed a different pattern. For women, weakly identified group members expressed marginally more negative attitudes toward other women who confronted discrimination relative to those who did not confront. Similarly, the less women identified with their group, the more negatively they evaluated other women who confronted sexism. Highly identified women did not differentially evaluate women who confronted and did not confront discrimination. We have some ideas about why weakly identified women were unique in their propensity to express negativity toward ingroup members who seemingly engaged in a behavior that benefits the larger group.

First, because women have a poorly developed sense of themselves as a devalued group (Gurin, 1985), they identify less with their social group relative to racial minorities. Indeed, the women's average identity level was significantly lower than the identity level of both Asian Americans and African Americans. Thus, women who were low in identity might have been psychologically less identified than racial minorities who were weakly identified. It is also possible that women and minorities have different group norms about the importance of confronting discrimination, with minorities (especially the highly identified) perceiving this as espe-

**Table 3**  
Study 3 descriptive statistics and intercorrelations ( $N = 76$ ).

	Descriptive statistics		Intercorrelations		
	$\alpha$	$M (SD)$	(1)	(2)	(3)
(1) Gender ID	.68	3.49 (1.10)		.04	.13
(2) Manipulation check	.80	2.11 (1.89)			-.20
(3) Target attitudes	.90	1.38 (1.28)			

cially important. Similarly, as women are socialized to be communal and to avoid expressing anger and disagreement with others (Eagly, 1987), participants may have viewed women who confronted sexism as violating communal gender norms. As weakly identified women may not have seen this norm violation as serving their self-interest, this could have caused them to react especially negatively toward women who confronted sexism (Abrams et al., 2000; Rudman, 1998). Finally, sexism is perceived as more acceptable than racism (Czopp & Monteith, 2003), and this may have led participants to perceive women's confrontations as unwarrantedly strong in the context of the sexist comments. This reaction might be particularly characteristic of weakly identified women.

This research has important implications for people who experience prejudice and discrimination and who are considering confronting it. The decision to confront discrimination is a difficult one—people weigh the costs and benefits of this behavior, which can include experiencing negative reactions from high status group members (Dodd et al., 2001; Shelton & Stewart, 2004), experiencing personal satisfaction from defending one's group (Shelton et al., 2006; Swim & Hyers, 1999), and changing the situation and reducing prejudice (Czopp et al., 2006). The present research suggests that the reactions of fellow ingroup members may also play a role in this cost-benefit analysis. Indeed, for highly identified people, the reactions of fellow ingroup members may be more personally relevant than the reactions of outgroup members (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002)—which might explain why members of devalued groups sometimes confront discrimination with full knowledge that they will suffer personally at the hands of outgroup members.

#### *Caveats and future directions*

The present findings may be limited to situations where targets are subjected to clear and unambiguous discriminatory comments. When discrimination is ambiguous or subtle, highly group identified people may feel uncomfortable when fellow ingroup members publicly call attention to discrimination. When ingroup members confront discrimination without supporting evidence, it might result in a sense that ingroup members are attempting to “play the race, gender, etc. card.” This may make people who truly value the group uncomfortable and angry, because it draws negative attention toward the group.

It is also important to return to the Dodd et al. (2001) study described earlier in which women reacted positively toward women who confronted blatant discrimination. This may have occurred because the target in that study experienced personally directed sexist remarks from an interaction partner. In that case, saying nothing about a strong personal insult while the perpetrator watches may have been perceived as acting too passively. Additionally, Dodd et al. (2001) did not examine gender identity in their study, so it is uncertain whether it might have moderated their effects.

The present research was also limited to situations where targets confronted discrimination in a constructive and polite manner. Reactions toward the target may be different, if the target confronted discrimination in a less polite manner (e.g., with violence, aggression, anger) (Czopp et al., 2006). It is also possible that targets who do not confront discrimination might still be perceived positively by the highly identified if they engage in some alternative behavior that helps the group or if they apologize to the group for failing to confront discrimination.

Additionally, although assessing group identification with an individual difference approach is consistent with the vast majority of research examining racial minorities' group identification (see Major et al., 2002 for a review), it is not without problems that are inherent in correlational research. One could question whether the effects were driven by group identification or some third variable that correlates with this construct. System justification beliefs

represent one strong third variable candidate. Specifically, African Americans who identify strongly with their racial group also tend to reject beliefs that justify the current status hierarchy in the US (Jost & Hunyady, 2002; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Thus, system justification beliefs, in addition to, or instead of, racial identification, may be responsible for the observed effects. This is particularly likely to be the case for African Americans, who unlike Asian Americans, show a negative relationship between group identification and system justifying beliefs (Major & O'Brien, 2005).

To address this question, in Study 1, African American participants' endorsement of system justifying beliefs was collected during the online prescreening session. The system justification measure comprised twelve items adapted from Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, and Federico (1998) assessing three predominant system justifying beliefs: Protestant Work Ethic, individual mobility beliefs, and status legitimacy beliefs. Sample items include: “If people work hard they almost always get what they want;” “Advancement in American society is possible for all individuals;” and “America is a just society where differences in status between groups reflect actual group differences” ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

Consistent with system justification theoretical perspectives, racial identification and system justifying beliefs were negatively correlated among African Americans,  $r(59) = -.39, p < .01$ . When the analysis on attitudes toward the target was re-run with system justifying beliefs (rather than racial identification) as the moderator, system justification beliefs did not produce a main effect ( $b = -.20, SE = .20, t(56) = -1.02, p = .34$ ) nor did it interact with experimental condition ( $F(1, 55) = .02, p = .90; \Delta R^2 < .00, b = .05, SE = .40, t(55) = .13$ ). Additionally, when the racial identification analysis was re-examined with system justification beliefs as a covariate, none of the findings changed. Thus, these two analytic exercises argue against a system justification alternative explanation of these findings.

Finally, it will be important to further investigate the argument that the effects observed in these studies stemmed from intragroup processes. Although the present research demonstrated that identification with a devalued group moderates the evaluative consequences of witnessing ingroup members' reactions to discrimination, it did not examine how people react to outgroup members who confront and do not confront discrimination against their own group. The present theorizing suggests that highly group identified people should not react positively when outgroup members confront discrimination against their group. Indeed, in other research, highly identified White Americans did not react positively toward Black Americans who publicly claimed discrimination (Kaiser, Dyrenforth, & Hagiwara, 2006). Additionally, future work has the potential to further delineate what exactly constitutes an intragroup process. For example, some racial minorities might possess an “oppressed minority identity” (Sellers et al., 1998), whereby they engage in collective self-definition that involves defining themselves as part of the larger group of racial minorities (e.g., Blacks, Latinos, Asians) who share a common oppressor (Whites). People who possess an oppressed minority identity might feel better when any minority confronts discrimination compared to when they do not confront. Furthermore, this type of generalized response may indeed constitute an intragroup response, even though people experience emotional reactions stemming from the behaviors of members of racial groups to which they do not objectively belong.

#### **Conclusions**

These studies revealed that group identification moderates how members of socially devalued groups evaluate ingroup members

who confront and do not confront discrimination. As confrontation is an important technique in reducing prejudice (Czopp et al., 2006), it is critical to understand factors that affect the psychological experiences of those who use it. This work advances theory and research on confronting discrimination and makes the point that the degree to which members of devalued groups identify with their group shapes how they react when they witness ingroup members choose to confront or not confront perpetrators of discrimination.

## Acknowledgments

We thank Tony Greenwald, Brenda Major, Shannon McCoy, and Laurie O'Brien for their comments on this manuscript.

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