

## Group Identification and Prejudice: Theoretical and Empirical Advances and Implications

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*This article reviews theoretical perspectives explaining the positive relationship between group identification and perceptions of prejudice. In particular, we focus on the prejudice distribution account, which contends that highly identified minorities report more frequent experiences with prejudice than weakly identified minorities, in part, because majority group members do in fact react more negatively toward highly identified minorities than they do toward the weakly identified. We describe evidence revealing that people accurately detect minority identification, even given minimal information. Further, majority group members use these inferences about identification to guide their attitudes and behaviors toward minorities. We discuss the implications of this research for theoretical perspectives on within-category approaches to the study of prejudice. We also discuss practical implications and offer suggestions for addressing this type of prejudice.*

Imagine two very different Black men. As you think about these men, you probably imagine that they vary on numerous physical and psychological attributes. For example, one man might be short, humorous, and sensitive, and the other might be tall, intellectual, and shy. One thing we suspect that you did not consider was that these men may also vary with respect to the amount of prejudice and discrimination they experience. When psychologists conceptualize prejudice and discrimination, we tend to think with broad, group-based categories. For instance, we examine racism against Blacks, sexism toward women, and homophobia toward gay men and lesbians. Our language reflects an assumption that prejudice

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and discrimination are distributed evenly among all members of a group, with categorical membership being a sufficient condition for experiencing prejudice and discrimination.

Although these broad categories are informative for understanding many instances of prejudice and discrimination, they can mask important within-group differences which lead some members of the category to experience more prejudice and discrimination than others (Maddox, 2004). In this article, we examine how individual differences in group identification shape peoples' experiences with prejudice and discrimination. We begin by providing an overview of theory and research demonstrating that members of devalued groups who personally identify strongly with their group report experiencing more prejudice than those who identify weakly with their group. We then introduce and describe our own theoretical account for this phenomenon, the *prejudice distribution account*, which asserts that differences in perceived prejudice stem from objective reality (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009). In particular, we argue that strongly identified group members are more likely to be the recipients of prejudice and discrimination than weakly identified group members.

### *Perceiving and Experiencing Prejudice*

Theoretical perspectives on social stigma provide evidence that simply knowing whether someone belongs to a stigmatized group is not sufficient for understanding that person's experiences with prejudice. Rather, members of stigmatized groups vary greatly in their reports of being the target of prejudice; some report pervasive experiences, and others report very little or no exposure to prejudice (see Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002; Stangor et al., 2003 for reviews). To explain this variability, contemporary research focuses on identifying personal, situational, and structural factors that shape whether individuals report being a target of prejudice and discrimination. For instance, among the stigmatized, group identification (Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), perceiving the status system as illegitimate (Major et al., 2002), chronically expecting to be stigmatized (Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2006; Pinel, 1999), and endorsing self-silencing beliefs (Swim, Eyssell, Murdoch, & Ferguson, this issue) are associated with greater reports of experiencing prejudice and discrimination. Similarly, people report greater prejudice perceptions when prejudicial comments come from powerful rather than powerless others (Barreto, Ellemers, & Fiske, this issue). In this article, we focus specifically on group identification as a predictor of being the target of prejudice.

Group identification is the importance, or centrality, of a group to one's sense of self (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; McCoy & Major, 2003; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Members of stigmatized groups who are strongly identified with their group report experiencing more prejudice than their weakly

identified counterparts (see Major et al., 2002; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002 for reviews). This positive relationship between group identification and prejudice perceptions has been observed among ethnic minorities, women, lesbians, and the elderly (Major et al., 2002). To explain this relationship, scholars typically have adopted two different theoretical perspectives, which we describe below.

*Prejudice affects group identification.* The earliest explanation for the positive relationship between group identification and perceived prejudice contends that group identification is a coping response that is enacted after experiencing prejudice. This explanation can be traced to Allport (1954, p. 148) who argued, “misery finds balm through the closer association of people who are miserable for the same reason. Threats drive them to seek protective unity within their common membership.” Following in this tradition, Branscombe and colleagues’ (1999) rejection-identification model argues that individuals who experience greater amounts of prejudice subsequently become more identified with their group compared to those who less frequently face prejudice. Branscombe and colleagues have shown, for example, that group identification increases when people are exposed to information arguing that their group experiences prejudice relative to when they are exposed to information conveying that their group experiences positive treatment (Jetten, Branscombe, Schmitt, & Spears, 2001; see Leach, Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, this issue for a thorough discussion of this perspective).

*Group identification affects prejudice perceptions.* A second perspective on the relationship between group identification and perceiving prejudice argues that group identification affects perceptions of prejudice, rather than vice versa. This perspective, which is grounded in social cognitive models of construct activation, argues that people who experience more chronic activation of their group identification are more apt to interpret ambiguous events through the lens of their group membership relative to people who do not experience chronic activation of their social identification (Major et al., 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Shelton & Sellers, 2000). For example, after experiencing an ambiguous negative interaction with Whites, strongly identified ethnic minorities are more likely to label that experience as prejudice compared to their less identified counterparts (Operario & Fiske, 2001). Similarly, after receiving negative test feedback from a potentially sexist evaluator, women who are strongly identified with their gender group are more likely to attribute that feedback to sexism compared to women who are weakly identified with the group (Major et al., 2003). This approach can be conceptualized as a “subjective construal” explanation for the relationship between group identification and prejudice.

In addition to these two prevailing explanations for the relationship between group identification and prejudice, there is a third explanation for this relationship, which has only recently received theoretical and empirical attention. Specifically,

the relationship between group identification and prejudice may occur, in part, because majority group members actually react more negatively toward strongly identified minorities than they do toward weakly identified minorities. We refer to this as the prejudice distribution account of the relationship between group identification and prejudice (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009). Our account diverges from the alternative perspectives because it locates the source of the relationship between identification and prejudice not in internal psychological processes within members of stigmatized groups, but rather in the divergent ways in which majority group members react to strongly and weakly identified minorities.

In the sections that follow, we describe theory and research on the prejudice distribution account. We build upon our initial research examining the prejudice distribution account (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009) in several important ways. First, we explore the important question of whether people can accurately detect the extent to which racial minorities identify with their group. Second, we elaborate upon theoretical processes that drive the prejudice distribution effect and review empirical evidence that prejudice is not distributed evenly across all group members. Given the recency of research testing the prejudice distribution account, some theoretical aspects of the model are in early stages of development and await further exploration. We end with a discussion of the theoretical and practical implications of this research.

### *Detecting Minority Identification*

Understanding whether majority group members can draw accurate inferences about minority identification is a critical step for establishing the prejudice distribution effect, as it would be difficult for majority group members to react differentially toward strongly and weakly identified minorities if they were unable to infer minority identification. Research in our lab provides evidence that majority group members can, in fact, detect the racial identification of Blacks and Latinos with a surprising degree of accuracy (Wilkins, Kaiser, & Rieck, 2009). In this research, we drew upon psychological perspectives that define accuracy as the correspondence between a judgment and a criterion (Kruglanski, 1989).

In one study, Blacks and Latinos completed Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) racial identification subscale (this served as the criterion measure) and had their photographs taken. The images were cropped to reveal just the head and shoulders of each target. A group of naïve judges, blind to the study purpose and hypotheses, then viewed these images and estimated how each depicted individual would complete the Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) racial identification subscale (this served as the judgment measure). Results revealed that the judges accurately inferred the targets' racial identification level. The correlations between the inferred identification judgments and the actual identification criterion were positive and statistically significant,  $r(11)_{\text{Blacks}} = .66, p = .01, r(32)_{\text{Latinos}} = .41, p = .02$ .

These correlations controlled for targets' attractiveness and whether or not they were mixed race.

What is particularly striking about these data is the degree of accuracy that we found for identification ratings. Not only do these correlations indicate medium to large effect sizes, but they are also on par with, and in the case of Blacks substantially higher than, the correlations found in other studies that examine the accuracy of judgments based upon minimal exposure to targets. A meta-analysis of accuracy ratings in thin slice research reveals that the overall effect size ( $r$ ) based upon 38 different results was .39 (Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992). The meta-analysis included studies that examined ratings of behavioral clips up to 5 minutes in length. Notably, our judges displayed comparable accuracy for ratings based upon mere photographs.

What cues might majority group members rely upon in order to accurately infer the racial identification of minorities? In situations in which majorities and minorities have frequent contact with each other, majority group members can use behavioral observations to draw inferences about identification. For example, Whites who are aware that a Black individual is a member of a Black professional or political organization, and that he or she socializes primarily with other Blacks, will likely perceive that individual as being more highly identified than an individual who is less professionally and socially involved in race-related activities (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009). When Whites do not know a particular Black individual, however, these types of behavioral cues to identification cannot be used. When making inferences about the racial identification of a stranger or new acquaintance, perceivers can only base their judgments upon aspects of a target's appearance.

*Phenotypic stereotypicality* (PS), the degree to which an individual looks like a prototypical member of his or her racial group, is one specific aspect of minorities' appearance that plays an important role in judgments and evaluations of racial minorities (see Maddox, 2004 for a review). Aspects of PS, such as skin tone, hair texture, and facial features, affect the degree to which minorities are stereotyped and the way they are treated. For example, Blacks who are higher in PS are described with more negative and stereotypic traits as compared to Blacks who are lower in PS (Maddox, 2004). Likewise, Blacks and Latinos who are higher in PS are subjected to more negative automatic evaluations relative to those who are lower in PS (Livingston & Brewer, 2002; Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002). Further, Black criminals with high PS are more likely to receive harsher criminal sentences, than low PS Black criminals, even after controlling for important aspects of the crime (Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004; Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, 2006).

Given the important role of PS in social perception of racial minorities, we wondered whether this construct might also play a role in identification inferences. As part of the racial identification study described above, we had a second group of

independent judges rate the images of the Black and Latino targets on PS. PS was positively correlated with judges' racial identification inferences,  $r(15)_{\text{Blacks}} = .80, p < .01, r(36)_{\text{Latinos}} = .77, p < .001$ , suggesting that people use PS as a cue to determine the extent to which minorities identify with their racial group. Further, these inferences are grounded in reality, as minorities who are higher in PS actually report being more racially identified than minorities who are lower in PS,  $r(15)_{\text{Blacks}} = .59, p = .02, r(36)_{\text{Latinos}} = .37, p = .03$ .

There are undoubtedly cues other than PS that majority group members rely upon when making judgments about minorities' identification. As people are motivated to have others see them as they see themselves (Swann & Read, 1981), minorities may choose controllable aspects of appearance, such as hairstyle, clothing, and jewelry, accessories, to convey important aspects of the self, such as their racial identification, to others. Minorities might also take the direct route of simply acknowledging their level of identification in their social interactions with majority group members (Hebl & Kleck, 2002). Thus, there are a variety of cues upon which majority group members may rely upon in order to accurately infer minorities' racial identification level.

### *Inferences about Identification Guide Prejudicial Attitudes and Discrimination*

Given that majority group members can detect minority identification, the question becomes whether this information affects majorities' attitudes toward minorities. Several perspectives provide converging evidence that this is indeed the case. For example, the common in-group identification model (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993) contends that Whites express less bias toward minorities who categorize themselves as part of a superordinate group that includes Whites (e.g., as members of a common organization) relative to when they categorize themselves as part of a unique group that does not include Whites (e.g., as Black Americans). In one experiment (Dovidio, Gaertner, Shnabel, Saguy, & Johnson, 2010), White university students watched a videotaped interview with a Black student from their university. In the video, the Black student was asked how he would describe himself. In the common in-group condition, the student said that he saw himself primarily as a student at the university. In the unique identification condition, he described himself primarily as a Black person. The student in the video then proceeded to describe how a recent illness had caused him to fall behind on his senior project: a graduation requirement that required him to recruit participants for a survey study. At the end of the interview, the experimenter gave participants a sealed envelope that purportedly contained a written request from the student for assistance with distributing posters that would help him recruit participants for his project. The results revealed that participants agreed to distribute more posters when the Black student had emphasized his common student identification compared to when he emphasized his unique Black identification.

Participants also expressed more positive attitudes and more empathy toward the student who expressed an identification that was shared by Whites. This effect may have occurred because the student who emphasized a unique Black identification was perceived as being more highly identified with his racial group relative to the target who expressed the common group identification.

Similarly, Shelton (as cited in Sellers & Shelton, 2003) found that Whites react more negatively toward highly identified Blacks than they do toward weakly identified Blacks. In this study, Black participants who had completed a racial identification measure engaged in an interaction with a White partner. These interactions revealed that Whites behaved more negatively toward Black partners who were strongly identified with their racial group compared to Black partners who were weakly identified with their group. Whites may have picked up on minorities' identification level, and that may have influenced interactions with their partners.

The most direct evidence supporting the prejudice distribution account comes from our laboratory. In multiple studies, employing several manipulations of identification and a variety of dependent measures, we have shown that Whites react less favorably toward highly identified racial minorities relative to their weakly identified counterparts. In one study (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009, Study 2), White undergraduates reviewed a series of surveys that were purportedly completed by a Black male college student. Of importance, a critical survey assessed the extent to which the target ostensibly identified with his racial group. This racial identification survey was adapted from Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) identification subscale of the collective self-esteem scale and contained items measuring the importance of race to the student's self-concept. The student's responses on this scale were successfully manipulated to create the impression that he was strongly, moderately, or weakly identified with his racial group. This manipulation was embedded among filler scales, such as those concerning the student's attitudes about recycling and education, which were completed in a constant manner across conditions. Participants expressed more negative attitudes (e.g., perceived the target as less friendly, likable, etc.) toward the strongly racially identified student relative to the moderate and weakly identified student, with these latter two conditions not differing.

Similarly, in another study, we (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009, Study 3) found that White participants evaluated a Latino student who mentioned belonging to the Latin American Student Association (signaling high ethnic identification) more negatively than a Latino student who did not belong to this organization. This basic prejudice distribution effect was investigated six times, and the average effect size was moderate (Cohen's  $d = .51$ ) (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009).

We have expanded upon our initial work on this topic by examining behavioral dependent measures that map onto interracial interactions. Kaiser, Drury, and Malahy (2009) asked White participants to evaluate a Black American student at

their university who had completed a survey indicating that he was strongly or weakly identified with his racial group. Participants were then asked to spend 5 minutes writing an essay about how an interaction with that student would progress. The participants' essays were analyzed to determine whether participants used different types of personal pronouns when describing an interaction with a strongly identified minority relative to a weakly identified minority. We reasoned that the use of plural personal pronouns (e.g., we, us) would indicate more positive, inclusive attitudes relative to the use of singular personal pronouns (e.g., me, I) (Dovidio, Gaertner, Flores Niemann, & Snider, 2001). Thus, we hypothesized that participants would use language comprising more plural personal pronouns compared to singular personal pronouns when imagining an interaction with a weakly identified Black target relative to a highly identified Black target. For the analysis, we created a difference score by subtracting each participant's singular personal pronouns from his or her plural personal pronouns, with higher scores indicating more relative plural/inclusive language. The results confirmed our hypothesis; participants used more plural personal pronouns relative to singular personal pronouns when describing an interaction with a weakly identified Black man compared to a strongly identified Black man. For example, here is an essay in the weakly identified condition that uses more plural personal pronouns than singular personal pronouns:

"I think that our interaction would be easy and casual. This person seems similar enough to me in that we are both adjusting to college life easily, and are here as a product of many factors, including that our parents have supported us to get here, and we both view college as a place to further ourselves in life. We also both agree that recycling is vital, and we could probably talk about that for a while."

Here is an essay from the strongly identified condition that uses only singular personal pronouns:

"I am not sure how the interaction would progress. I'm sure that I could talk to this person for a few moments on a casual basis, but I am not sure for how much longer. I guess if issues presented in his surveys such as recycling came up, I could talk with him about that for a bit since I have fairly similar views as him on that matter. Other than that I am not sure how much longer I could just carry on a conversation with him after only casually meeting him."

Neither participant expects the conversation to be deep or intimate, which makes sense in the context of an interaction with a stranger. But, the former participant clearly conceptualizes the interaction from a collective perspective, often referring to the self and the partner as a single unit (e.g., "we"), whereas the latter participant avoids this type of categorization.

Together, the studies described above provide converging evidence that Whites react differentially toward strongly and weakly identified minorities, which may contribute to divergent prejudice reporting rates among those who vary in racial identification. We are also currently exploring this question in the context



of interracial interactions, which will provide an additional behavioral test of the prejudice distribution account.

### *Why do Whites React More Negatively Toward Highly Identified Minorities?*

There are a number of possible reasons why Whites react more negatively toward strongly identified minorities. We focus on two possible explanations: minority identification acts as a threat to the legitimacy of the status hierarchy and the collective integrity of Whites.

### *Minority Identification Threatens Status Legitimizing Worldviews (SLWs)*

SLWs are culturally shared belief systems that serve to legitimize and justify differences between groups in society (Jost, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In North America, as well as in some other Western cultures, these belief systems share at their core, the notion that people and groups that rise to the top of the status hierarchy do so because they are hard working and talented, whereas people and groups at the lower rungs of the hierarchy are in their position because they are lazy, lack talent, and do not legitimately pursue higher status (see Jost, 2006 for a review). Thus, these beliefs are epistemological, as they provide people with the sense that their social world is meaningful, orderly, and that people and groups deserve their place in the status hierarchy. Examples of SLWs include the belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980), Protestant work ethic (Katz & Hass, 1988), social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and the belief in individual mobility (Major et al., 2002). Like other types of worldviews, SLWs become so well integrated into one's way of life that they become part of one's subjective reality. Because of this, people embrace information that verifies their worldviews and discount, discredit, or otherwise attack information that challenges their worldviews (e.g., King, Knight, & Hebl, this issue).

Are strongly identified minorities perceived as a threat to SLWs? As strongly identified minorities actually endorse SLWs to a lesser degree than weakly identified minorities (Major et al., 2002; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), it may be the case that Whites might draw on their experiences with differentially identified minorities to come to the conclusion that strongly identified ethnic minorities reject SLWs and weakly identified minorities endorse SLWs. Indeed, Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt (2009) found that White participants believed that strongly identified minorities were less likely than weakly identified minorities to endorse Protestant work ethic beliefs, to believe the status system is permeable, and to perceive group differences in the hierarchy as legitimate.

We investigated whether this threat to SLWs mediates the prejudice distribution effect. In one study (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009, Study 5), we found that participants' personal endorsement of SLWs moderates their attitudes toward

strongly and weakly identified minorities. Whites who personally endorse SLWs showed the hypothesized prejudice distribution effect. That is, they evaluated strongly identified minorities more negatively than weakly identified minorities. In contrast, Whites who personally rejected SLWs showed precisely the opposite pattern. These individuals expressed more negative attitudes toward weakly identified minorities than toward highly identified minorities. This reversal of the prejudice distribution effect is consistent with theories of worldview confirmation, as weakly identified minorities are perceived as strongly endorsing SLWs, which is personally threatening to Whites who reject these beliefs.

We more directly tested the role of SLW's in the prejudice distribution effect in another study by examining whether this effect was reduced when we simultaneously manipulated a Black American's identification level and his perceived endorsement of SLWs (Kaiser & Pratt-Hyatt, 2009, Study 6). When participants learned that the Black target rejected SLWs, they expressed negative attitudes toward him, regardless of whether he was strongly or weakly identified. And, when the target embraced SLWs, they reported positive attitudes toward him, particularly when he was highly identified. Thus, these data experimentally demonstrate that highly identified minorities are evaluated more negatively than weakly identified minorities, in part because of what identification communicates about SLW endorsement.

#### *Minority Identification is Interpreted as Harboring Negativity toward Whites*

In addition to threatening beliefs about status legitimacy, highly identified minorities might also threaten beliefs about the integrity, or goodness, of Whites as a social group. Because of a history of tumultuous intergroup relations, Whites might believe that highly identified minorities harbor anti-White attitudes and feel anger and hostility toward Whites (Branscombe et al., 1999), and this may threaten the integrity of Whites as a social group (e.g., Doosje, Spears, Branscombe, & Manstead, 1998; Johns, Schmader, & Lickel, 2005). Weakly identified minorities, in contrast, may be perceived as possessing more favorable attitudes toward Whites, which may in turn put Whites at ease about the goodness of their racial group. Thus, Whites might react positively toward minorities whom they assume possess positive attitudes toward their racial group, and Whites may react negatively toward minorities whom they suspect harbor negative attitudes toward Whites. As scholars of intergroup relations initially assumed that identifying with one's own in-group involved some degree of negativity toward out-groups, it would not be surprising if laypeople also assume that minorities who hold their own group in high regard also hold Whites in low regard (Brewer, 2007).

Indeed, we recently found that White participants perceived strongly identified minorities as harboring more negative attitudes toward Whites relative to weakly identified minorities (Kaiser & Drury, 2009). Of significance, this effect

was especially large (Cohen's  $d = 1.6$ ). It is interesting to note that in the real world, the actual correlation between minority identification and negative attitudes toward Whites is modest at best. For example, among Black Americans, the correlation between their scores on the Phinney (1992) multigroup identification measure and their hostility toward Whites is small ( $r = .35$ ) (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). In our own lab, we have found that Black Americans' and Latino Americans scores on Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) identification centrality subscale are uncorrelated with their responses on feeling thermometers assessing their attitudes toward White Americans,  $r(72)_{\text{Blacks}} = .05, p = .65, r(28)_{\text{Latinos}} = -.06, p = .77$  (Kaiser, 2009). These data are consistent with Brewer's (2007) theoretical perspective arguing that in-group favoritism can occur without out-group derogation. These data also suggest that Whites' negativity toward highly identified minorities is based, partially, upon an incorrect assumption about the implications of minority identification.

### *Summary*

We argued that the relationship between minority identification and perceptions of prejudice results in part because Whites react more negatively toward strongly identified minorities than they do toward weakly identified minorities. This explanation diverges from prevailing theoretical perspectives, which have explained this relationship using internal psychological processes within minorities, such as their construal of negative events. Instead, we argue that the relationship between group identification and prejudice derives from the social environment. We summarized data showing that zero-acquaintance judges can detect minority identification with a surprising degree of accuracy. Importantly, we reviewed evidence revealing that Whites use their inferences about minority identification in their evaluations of minorities. Specifically, Whites direct their prejudice toward the strongly identified. We explored whether this prejudice distribution effect occurs because strongly identified minorities are perceived to threaten the legitimacy of the status hierarchy and to endorse negative attitudes toward Whites. We next turn toward examining the theoretical and practical implications of this research.

### *Theoretical Implications for Approaching the Study of Prejudice*

In addition to advancing theory on the relationship between group identification and prejudice, the research we reviewed raises questions about some common theoretical assumptions in social psychological perspectives on stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Traditionally, these perspectives are based upon the premise that bias involves disparate attitudes toward and treatment of members of one broad social category (e.g., Black Americans) compared to members of a different broad social category (e.g., White Americans) (see Fiske, 1998 for a

review). The implicit assumption underlying these between-category approaches is that prejudice and discrimination are distributed fairly evenly among members of a category. Although these between-category comparisons explain many forms of bias, our reliance on this approach obscures our ability to discover bias that operates differently.

A within-category approach provides an alternative perspective for understanding stereotypes, prejudice, and discrimination. This approach assumes that there is variability in all types of psychological, physical, and social dimensions within minority groups. Further, meaningful variation along within-category dimensions contribute to one's experiences as a group member, with people who belong to particular subsets of the category experiencing more bias than others. Although our review highlighted racial identification as a source of within-group variation in exposure to bias, other within-category variables such as, PS, social class, national origin, religion, and language are important within-group sources of variation that could leave some subsets of minorities more vulnerable to prejudice than others. Understanding within-category sources of prejudice has important implications for the between-category biases we so frequently examine. We suspect that many instances of between-category prejudice may be driven by reactions to particular subsets of a minority group, rather than by reactions to the group more generally. Identifying these within-category factors will lead to greater precision in the study of prejudice and may lead us to reconsider theoretical models that treat members of a social category as broad homogenous entities (Blair et al., 2004; Hughes & Hertel, 1990; Ko, Judd, & Blair, 2006; Maddox, 2004; Uhlmann et al., 2002).

### *Practical Implications*

Discrimination has profound consequences for its targets including limiting access to educational and employment opportunities, health care, bank loans, and due process in the criminal justice system (Barrett & George, 2005). Prejudice and discrimination also threaten one's integrity as a human being and the value associated with one's social group, which can adversely impact mental and physical health (Major et al., 2002). Given these insidious effects of prejudice and discrimination, it is important to understand factors that leave people vulnerable to experiencing it. By taking a within-category approach to prejudice, researchers and policy makers can more precisely identify subsets of minorities that will be particularly likely to bear the brunt of prejudice, and this could be used to develop targeted intervention programs.

Understanding within-group variability in exposure to prejudice is also crucial because it helps us to more thoroughly understand bias-related phenomena. For example, White Americans might consider their positive relationships with weakly identified minorities as compelling evidence that they are unbiased, and this could be used to justify negative treatment of other minorities. The prejudice distribution

account allows for the possibility that individuals can hold positive and nonbiased attitudes toward some members of a category (e.g., weakly identified minorities) while simultaneously harboring racial bias toward other members of the category (e.g., strongly identified minorities). Thus, it allows for recognition of bias where it exists.

Another potential consequence of identification-driven biases is that they may result in weakly identified minorities experiencing more opportunities for professional and social advancement than strongly identified minorities. If the weakly identified members of disadvantaged groups receive more opportunities to advance in society (e.g., in the workplace), those individuals will have more opportunities to advocate on behalf of other in-group members. However, weakly identified minorities may not advocate on behalf of their in-groups and in fact may pursue individualistic advancement in society and organizations without regard for their group members (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). The weakly identified may also exhibit out-group favoritism whereby they engage in behaviors that harm the in-group and prevent the group from advancing (Ellemers, van den Heuvel, de Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004).

Although we focused on understanding how individual differences within minority groups shape their experiences with prejudice, our analysis should not be interpreted as blaming strongly identified minorities for their experiences with prejudice or suggesting that they identify less strongly with their group. Rather, efforts to mitigate identification-driven bias should focus on changing the perpetrators of bias. Further, our analysis should not be interpreted as signifying that identifying with a group is generally a liability. Identifying with a group can be profoundly beneficial (e.g., Crabtree, Haslam, Postmes, & Haslam, this issue; Leach et al., this issue).

In this article, we describe our prejudice distribution account of the relationship between group identification and prejudice perceptions to highlight the benefits of taking a within-category approach to the study of prejudice. Such an approach allows for improved precision in understanding why members of devalued groups report such wide variability in their experiences with prejudice and discrimination. Importantly, this nuanced approach illuminates new potential strategies for combating bias. A within-group approach reveals that racial bias can exist even in situations in which a traditional categorical view would obscure this reality. All of these factors contribute to a more complete understanding of social stigma and its consequences.

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