

# Distributing Prejudice Unequally: Do Whites Direct Their Prejudice Toward Strongly Identified Minorities?

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Across 6 studies, Whites expressed more negative attitudes toward strongly identified racial minorities than toward weakly identified minorities. Whites who personally endorsed worldviews that legitimize the status hierarchy were particularly likely to express negative attitudes toward strongly identified minorities relative to weakly identified minorities, whereas Whites who personally rejected status-legitimizing worldviews displayed the opposite pattern. In addition, Whites' biases against strongly identified minorities dissipated when strongly identified minorities expressed strong endorsement of status-legitimizing worldviews. These studies suggest that Whites do not distribute their prejudicial attitudes equally among all members of minority groups and that some subsets of minorities (the strongly identified) might bear the brunt of racial prejudice.

*Keywords:* group identification, prejudice, stigma, legitimacy, race/ethnicity

Racial minorities who are strongly identified with their group report experiencing more prejudice than do their weakly identified counterparts (see Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002, and Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001, for reviews). Scholars typically assume that the relationship between group identity and greater prejudice perceptions stems from an internal psychological process within racial minorities. For example, some contend that perceiving prejudice causes minorities to become more group identified (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). Alternatively, others assert that strongly identified minorities are more likely to attribute ambiguous events to prejudice relative to weakly identified minorities (Major, Quinton, & Schmader, 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

However, the relationship between group identity and prejudice could also stem from something external to minorities. Specifically, we explore whether this relationship occurs in part because Whites actually react more negatively toward strongly identified minorities than to weakly identified minorities. We refer to this as the *prejudice-distribution account* of the relationship between group identity and prejudice. Further, we argue that Whites react negatively toward strongly identified minorities because Whites

perceive them as rejecting beliefs that legitimize the status hierarchy. We develop these ideas and offer six empirical tests of these hypotheses. Evidence consistent with these hypotheses would provide important theoretical implications for research on the relationship between group identity and prejudice. It would also have practical implications, such as identifying a subset of individuals who are particularly vulnerable to being targeted by prejudice.

## Whites' Attitudes Toward Strongly and Weakly Identified Minorities

Is there evidence that Whites react more negatively toward strongly identified racial minorities? Sellers and Shelton (2003) examined Blacks' racial identification and their reports of experiencing racist hassles (e.g., being denied service, exposure to racist jokes) both during their first semester of college and then again at the end of the academic year. Strongly identified Blacks reported experiencing more racist hassles over the year relative to weakly identified Blacks. It is important to note that this relationship persisted, even when researchers controlled for participants' initial reports of racial hassles during their first semester. As controlling for initial reports of racial hassles also controls for third variables (e.g., negative affectivity) that might affect chronic perceptions of racial hassles more generally, this makes the relationship between identification and experiencing racial hassles at the second time point especially compelling. However, because this study relied on Blacks' self-reports of discrimination, it is impossible to determine whether Whites actually reacted differently toward strongly and weakly identified Blacks. Nonetheless, Sellers and Shelton recognized that "Whites may be picking up cues from more highly identified African Americans, which results in Whites reacting in more negative ways toward these African Americans" (Sellers & Shelton, 2003, p. 1091). In fact, they noted unpublished findings (Shelton, 2002) showing that Whites do behave more negatively toward strongly identified Black interaction partners than toward weakly identified Black partners.

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Similarly, Dovidio, Gaertner, Shnabel, Saguy, and Johnson (in press) found that White college students expressed more empathy toward and were more willing to help a Black confederate who described himself with a shared group identity (as a fellow member of their campus community) compared with a Black confederate who described himself in ways that emphasized his unique Black identity. This effect may have occurred because the confederate who expressed a shared identity was also perceived as weakly identified with his racial group. Together, these studies suggest that Whites may react more negatively toward minorities who emphasize the role of their racial group in their self-concept compared with those who minimize their racial group membership. In the present investigation, we directly explore this question and identify theoretical mechanisms that can explain this effect. Specifically, we assert that Whites express more negative attitudes toward strongly rather than weakly identified minorities because Whites assume that the former endorse a belief system that challenges prevailing status arrangements in society.

### Status-Legitimizing Worldviews

Most human societies are structured hierarchically, where groups at the top rungs of the hierarchy have greater access to material (e.g., property, income) and social capital (e.g., power, respect) than do groups at the lower rungs of the hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Because individuals possess a fundamental desire to see their world as fair and legitimate, cultural beliefs and worldviews are created to explain and justify the status system (Lerner, 1980). Scholars in a variety of fields, such as psychology, sociology, and political science, use many terms to describe worldviews that legitimize status differences in societies. These include stratification beliefs (Bobo & Hutchings, 1996), social-mobility belief structures (Hogg & Abrams, 1988), hierarchy-enhancing myths (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), system-justifying beliefs (Jost & Hunyady, 2005), and ideologies (Jost, 2006). In this article, we refer to these beliefs as *status-legitimizing worldviews* (SLWs; see Major, Kaiser, O'Brien, & McCoy, 2007). Examples of SLWs include the belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980), Protestant work ethic (Katz & Hass, 1988), and the belief in individual mobility (Major, Gramzow, et al., 2002). By locating the causes of inequality within individual effort and deservingness, these worldviews function to legitimize status differences within a society.

SLWs also provide people with a meaningful understanding of social reality and describe cultural norms for achieving value and self-worth (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2000). By so doing, these worldviews reduce uncertainty and promote successful engagement with one's surroundings (e.g., Fiske, 2004). Consequently, people are strongly motivated to confirm their worldviews and to defend them from threats that suggest that they may be inaccurate (Jost, 2006; Kaiser, Dyrenforth, & Hagiwara, 2006; Major et al., 2007; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In addition, because SLWs confer and justify social and material benefits for groups at the top of the status hierarchy, such as Whites, these groups are especially likely to endorse these worldviews and are particularly likely to react defensively when SLWs are challenged (Kaiser et al., 2006; Major, Gramzow, et al., 2002; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

### Minority Identification Challenges SLWs

There are reasons why Whites may assume that strongly identified minorities reject SLWs. Because strongly identified minorities actually endorse SLWs to a lesser degree than do weakly identified minorities (Major, Gramzow, et al., 2002; O'Brien & Major, 2005; Sellers & Shelton, 2003), Whites might draw on personal interactions with differentially identified minorities to come to the conclusion that strongly identified ethnic minorities reject SLWs and weakly identified minorities endorse SLWs. In addition, because of exposure to visible and group-minded minority political figures whose presence in the media becomes synonymous with debates on whether the status system is fair (e.g., Reverends Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson), Whites might come to associate group-identified minorities with the rejection of SLWs through a process akin to illusory correlation (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). Indeed, these individuals may be assumed to endorse a status-delegitimizing worldview, in which status differences are presumed to stem from systematic injustice (Major et al., 2007; Sellers & Shelton, 2003). For these reasons, minority identification can come to serve a belief expressive function (Swann & Read, 1981), communicating divergent beliefs about status legitimacy.

The extent to which ethnic minorities validate and disconfirm SLWs is likely to affect how White Americans react toward them. Indeed, successful group living depends upon people's ability to detect threats to their group's values and status arrangements and to defend the group from those who threaten its way of life (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Kurzban & Leary, 2001). One way to eliminate such value threats is by expressing negativity toward people who challenge the ingroup's values and worldviews and by making it difficult for these people to enter the ingroup's social system (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Kaiser et al., 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Solomon et al., 2000). By excluding those who threaten the group's worldview from their social world, people can ensure that their values and way of life persevere.

This rationale leads to several predictions. First, Whites will evaluate strongly identified minorities more negatively than weakly identified minorities (Hypothesis 1; tested in all studies). Second, Whites will assume that strongly identified minorities reject SLWs relative to weakly identified minorities (Hypothesis 2; tested in Study 5). Third, Whites who more strongly endorse SLWs should be especially more likely to negatively evaluate strongly identified minorities than weakly identified minorities (Hypothesis 3; tested in Study 5). Finally, Whites' differential attitudes toward strongly and weakly identified minorities should be mediated by perceptions that the former reject SLWs (Hypothesis 4; tested in Studies 5 and 6).

Before describing our research, it is important to highlight our approach to assessing prejudicial attitudes. First, we conceptualize prejudice as a general positive or negative evaluation of individuals based on their group membership (Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002). Prejudice is often expressed as less liking or positivity toward one group relative to another group, rather than as outright hostility toward one of those groups (Fiske, 2002). Second, our use of the term *group* differs from its typical use in models of racial bias, which generally assume that once individuals are categorized into broad racial categories (e.g., Blacks and Whites), there is homogeneity among members of those groups (e.g., Wilder, 1984). Instead, we follow in the recent tradition of

scholars who have argued that this broad approach to categorization can neglect meaningful dimensions of variability within minority groups, which leaves some subgroups of minorities more vulnerable to experiencing prejudice than others. For example, people react more negatively toward Blacks with more Afrocentric physical features, compared with less Afrocentric looking Blacks (Blair, Judd, Sadler, & Jenkins, 2002; Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004; Maddox, 2004). Similarly, Hispanics are subjected to differential bias as a function of many subgroup dimensions that social psychologists often ignore in bias research (e.g., social class, national origin, skin tone; Uhlmann, Dasgupta, Elgueta, Greenwald, & Swanson, 2002). This subgroup approach to racial bias has parallels in gender research, showing that antagonistic sexism is directed only toward subgroups of women who threaten men's status and not toward women who embody traditional feminine stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 2001). These various approaches share a common assumption that the expression of prejudice can be more fully understood by examining important subcategories within minority groups. Further, these perspectives highlight that where group lines are drawn is always a matter of context—these lines can be expanded (e.g., Blacks and Whites can be broadly categorized as Americans and compared with non-Americans) and constrained (one subgroup of minorities vs. another subgroup) according to the situation, our needs, and salient group differences (Dovidio, Gaertner, Flores Niemann, & Snider, 2001).

In the present investigation, we contend that group identification is one important subcategory within minority groups—indeed, it fundamentally captures the extent to which individuals psychologically adopt the group into their self-concept. Differentiation along this dimension should affect Whites' expression of prejudice, with Whites expressing more prejudice toward strongly identified minorities than weakly identified ones.

### Studies 1 and 2

The first two studies address whether Whites react differently toward strongly identified Blacks relative to weakly identified Blacks. Because these studies use similar methods, we describe them together. We hypothesized that Whites would evaluate strongly identified Blacks less positively than weakly and moderately identified Blacks (heretofore referred to as the prejudice-distribution effect).

### Method

#### Participants and Research Design

*Study 1.* Participants were 80 White undergraduates ( $M$  age = 19.14 years,  $SD$  = 1.23 years; 80.0% women), who participated in exchange for partial credit toward a course requirement. The study involved one manipulated independent variable (target's identification level: low and high). In addition, for exploratory purposes, we assessed participants' personal levels of anti-Black attitudes online prior to the study to determine whether this variable moderated the prejudice-distribution effect.

*Study 2.* Participants were 85 White undergraduate students ( $M$  age = 19.03 years,  $SD$  = 1.36 years; 91.4% women), recruited in the same manner as in Study 1. The target-identity manipulation had three levels in this study (low, moderate, and high).

### Procedure

Participants arrived in groups at the laboratory, where they were met by an experimenter who was blind to condition. The experimenter explained that participants would be providing their first impressions of a student who completed a series of surveys as part of a previous study. Participants received this packet of surveys which contained a demographic sheet indicating that the target student was an 18-year-old Black male student at the university. We used male targets because Whites are especially threatened by and express more bias toward minority men than minority women (Sidanius & Veniegas, 2000; we return to this point in the Discussion).

Participants were next exposed to the critical survey, which served as the manipulation of the target's level of identification. *Group identification* was conceptualized as the importance or centrality of the group to one's sense of self (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; McCoy & Major, 2003; Tropp & Wright, 2001). This self-concept approach is beneficial because it is explicitly devoid of evaluative content that might characterize constructs related to identity, such as ideologies about the manifestation of identity (e.g., separatism, assimilation). On this identity survey, the target ostensibly completed five items assessing the extent to which he identified with his racial group: (a) "Overall, my racial/ethnic group membership has very little to do with how I feel about myself," (b) "The racial/ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am," (c) "The racial/ethnic group I belong to is irrelevant to my sense of what kind of person I am," (d) "In general, belonging to my racial/ethnic group is an important part of my self-image," and (e) "I am strongly identified with my racial/ethnic group." The first four items come from Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale. The survey items were rated on a scale with endpoints of 0 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*). In the low-identity condition, the target's responses to identity items a through e were 6, 0, 5, 1, and 0, respectively. In the high-identity condition, the target's responses to these items were 0, 6, 1, 5, and 6, respectively. In the moderate-identity condition (Study 2 only), the target's responses hovered around the scale midpoint. We embedded the identity manipulation among other neutral surveys that were completed in a constant manner across the conditions.

After examining the target's survey material, participants completed a measure assessing their attitudes toward the target as well as a manipulation check. Participants were then probed for suspicion and debriefed.

### Measures

*Anti-Black attitudes.* Prior to the lab session, participants in Study 1 completed an online version of Brigham's (1993) Attitudes Toward Blacks Scale. Sample items from this 20-item scale include: "It would not bother me if my new roommate was Black" (reverse), and "Black people are demanding too much too fast in their push for equal rights." Items were rated on a scales with endpoints of 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*;  $\alpha$  = .90), with higher scores signifying stronger anti-Black attitudes.

*Attitudes toward the target.* In Study 1, attitudes toward the target were assessed with seven items: "I would want the survey-completer as a very close friend," "The survey completer seems to have a very good personality," "I would enjoy working on a group

project with the survey completer,” “The survey completer seems like he would be easy to get along with,” “I respect the survey completer,” “I admire the survey completer,” and “The survey completer seems considerate.” Items were rated on a 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*) scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ). In Study 2, attitudes toward the target were assessed with four semantic differential scales assessing the extent to which participants perceived the target as unpleasant/pleasant, unlikable/likable, unfriendly/friendly, and irritating/nice. The scales were anchored with endpoints of  $-3$  and  $3$ , with higher scores indicating more positive attitudes ( $\alpha = .94$ ). To provide a direct comparison across studies, a constant of  $3$  was added to Study 2 attitude scores, creating a  $0-6$  scale.

*Manipulation check and suspicion.* Participants were then asked to list the target’s racial group and indicate (on a  $0-6$  scale) how important the target’s race was to his sense of self. Finally, participants provided a written description of their perception of the study’s purpose.

## Results

### Data Screening

On all dependent measures in the article, scores were trimmed within condition so that no individual score was greater or less than two standard deviations from each measure’s mean. This strategy normalizes the data and prevents extreme scores from unduly influencing the results (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2006). This had minimal to no influence on the data reported in the article.<sup>1</sup>

### Suspicion and Manipulation Check

Six participants were excluded from analyses: 5 participants incorrectly identified the target’s race (2 in Study 1 and 3 in Study 2), and 1 (in Study 2) expressed suspicion.

The identification manipulation was successful in both studies. In Study 1, participants perceived the strongly identified target ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ) as more identified than the weakly identified target ( $M = 1.32$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ),  $F(1, 74) = 248.35$ ,  $p < .01$ . In Study 2, Tukey honestly significant difference tests revealed that participants perceived the strongly identified target ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) as significantly more identified than the moderately identified target ( $M = 2.72$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), who was in turn perceived as significantly more identified than the weakly identified target ( $M = 1.44$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ),  $F(2, 76) = 83.53$ ,  $p < .01$ .

### Attitudes Toward the Target

*Study 1.* We regressed participants’ attitudes toward the target on identification condition ( $0 = \text{low identity}$ ,  $1 = \text{high identity}$ ), anti-Black attitudes (centered at its mean), and the Identification Condition  $\times$  Anti-Black Attitude interaction. The main effects were entered on the first step, followed by the interaction on the second step. The first step of the analysis was significant,  $F(2, 75) = 8.08$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .18$ . As predicted, participants expressed less positivity toward the strongly identified Black target (unadjusted  $M = 3.87$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) relative to the weakly identified Black target (unadjusted  $M = 4.41$ ,  $SD = .96$ ),  $B = -0.50$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $t(75) = -2.82$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .66$ . In addition, more prejudiced participants evaluated the Black target less positively,  $B = -0.27$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t(75) = -2.63$ ,  $p < .05$ . Step 2 of this analysis was not significant,  $\Delta r^2 = .00$ ,

$F(1, 74) = 0.05$ ,  $p = .83$ . Thus, strongly identified Blacks were evaluated less positively than weakly identified Blacks—and this response pattern characterized both high- and low-prejudiced respondents.

*Study 2.* There was a main effect for identity condition,  $F(2, 78) = 5.86$ ,  $p < .01$ . Tukey honestly significant difference tests indicated that the strongly identified Blacks ( $M = 4.93$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ) were evaluated less positively than moderately identified Blacks ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ) and weakly identified Blacks ( $M = 5.46$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ), with the latter two conditions not differing from each other ( $d = .73$  for the high identified condition, compared with the combined mean in the other two conditions). Thus, the presence of strong levels of identity, rather than the presence of extremely weak levels of identity, appears to drive this effect.

## Study 3

Although Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate that Whites react less positively toward strongly identified minorities than weakly identified minorities, we conducted a replication employing an alternative strategy for manipulating strong and weak levels of group identity. Study 3 also examined Whites’ reactions to a second stigmatized ethnic group: Latinos. We hypothesized that Whites would evaluate strongly identified Latinos less positively than weakly identified Latinos.

## Method

### Participants and Procedures

Participants were 34 White undergraduates ( $M$  age = 19.21 years,  $SD = 1.34$  years; 70.6% women), who participated in exchange for partial credit toward a course requirement. The study involved one manipulated independent variable (target’s identification level: low or high).

The experimenter explained that participants would be providing their first impressions of a Latino student who completed a series of surveys. We manipulated the target’s level of identification through his responses to an open-ended self-descriptive essay. In the high-identification condition, the target’s self-description contained a reference to his ethnic group (which we reasoned would convey that his group was central to his sense of self) and mentioned his membership in a Latino student social group. Specifically, participants saw the following:

My name is XXXX [there was a black marker strip in the place of what presumably was the target’s name] and I am a freshman at the University of Missouri—Columbia. I am Latino. I have brown hair and brown eyes. I am 18 years old. My hometown is Joplin. I am currently undecided about my major. I belong to a number of clubs on campus, including the Latin American Student Association and Rec Volleyball. In my free time, I like to hang out with friends and watch movies.

In the low-identification condition, the paragraph was identical, except the target did not explicitly state his ethnicity (although it was clearly marked on the descriptive sheet presented prior to the essay)

<sup>1</sup> Because of missing data on various measures, degrees of freedom differ slightly across analyses in the article.

and did not mention belonging to an ethnicity-related group (instead, he mentioned membership in the Missouri Student Association).

Participants then completed the target attitudes measure from Study 1 ( $\alpha = .61$ ), a manipulation check, and were then probed for suspicion and debriefed.

### Results

#### *Suspicion and Manipulation Check*

Two participants incorrectly identified the target as White and were thus excluded from all analyses. Participants perceived the strongly identified target ( $M = 4.42$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) as more identified than the weakly identified target ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ),  $F(1, 30) = 4.31$ ,  $p < .05$ .

#### *Attitudes Toward the Target*

Consistent with hypotheses, participants evaluated the strongly identified Latino target ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ ) less positively than the weakly identified Latino target ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ),  $F(1, 30) = 4.14$ ,  $p = .05$ ,  $d = .71$ . Thus, replicating Studies 1 and 2, Whites differed in their attitudes toward strongly and weakly identified minorities.

### Discussion

Studies 1–3 demonstrate the generality of the prejudice-distribution effect by showing that it characterizes Whites' evaluations of Latinos and Blacks. It is noteworthy that this effect was observed in Study 3, despite the fairly weak level of identity manipulation. Indeed, participants in the low-identification condition, on average, perceived this target to be moderately identified with his ethnic group (scores were just above the scale midpoint of the manipulation check). This is consistent with Study 2, which demonstrated that strongly identified minorities are evaluated less positively than moderately identified minorities.

### Study 4

We conducted a fourth study to test the boundaries of the prejudice-distribution effect. Specifically, we deemed it important to demonstrate that this effect would not characterize Whites' attitudes toward fellow strongly and weakly identified Whites. Because White identification does not threaten the legitimacy of the status hierarchy and may in fact bolster the hierarchy (O'Brien & Major, 2005), we suspected that participants would not evaluate strongly identified Whites more negatively than weakly identified Whites and could even prefer the former. To address this issue, we added a control condition in which participants evaluated a strongly or weakly identified White target. We hypothesized that participants would react less positively toward strongly identified minorities than weakly identified minorities but would not show this pattern in their evaluations of differentially identified Whites.

### Method

#### *Participants and Procedures*

Participants were 142 White undergraduates ( $M$  age = 19.60 years,  $SD = 3.08$  years; 59.4% women), who participated for extra credit in

a course. There were two independent variables: target's identification level (low or high) and target's race (Black or White).

The procedures replicated those in Study 1, with a few exceptions. First, the target's race was communicated at the top of the identity-manipulation scale with a prompt that asked the target to provide a social group to which he belonged and to use that group when completing the scale. The target wrote either Black American or Scottish American. We described the White target as Scottish American because we were concerned that Whites, who do not often view themselves through the lens of race, would perceive a strongly identified "White" as a supremacist.

Second, the low-identification condition was modified so that scores on the scale manipulation were not as extremely low as they were in Study 1. Specifically, the target's ostensible group-identity-scale responses were almost all two points removed from the lowest scale endpoint (the scale ranged from 0–6). The high-identification condition remained the same as the one described in Study 1. The target attitude-dependent measure ( $\alpha = .88$ ) was the same one used in Study 2, and a constant of 3 was added to scores, creating a 0–6 scale.

### Results

#### *Suspicion and Manipulation Check*

Four participants expressed suspicion about the study's purpose, and 2 misremembered the target's race; they were removed from all analyses. Participants perceived the strongly identified target ( $M = 5.54$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) as more identified than the weakly identified target ( $M = 2.02$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ),  $F(1, 132) = 327.26$ ,  $p < .01$ . It is important to note that the identity-level effect was not moderated by target's race,  $F(1, 132) = 0.89$ ,  $p = .35$ .

#### *Attitudes Toward the Target*

The  $2 \times 2$  analysis of variance on target attitudes revealed the predicted Identity Level  $\times$  Target Race interaction,  $F(1, 132) = 3.65$ ,  $p = .058$ , although it was marginally significant. Simple effects tests revealed the pattern predicted by the prejudice-distribution account. Specifically, when the target was Black, participants evaluated the strongly identified target marginally less positively ( $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) than the weakly identified target ( $M = 5.11$ ,  $SD = .68$ ),  $F(1, 132) = 3.67$ ,  $p = .058$ ,  $d = .46$ . In contrast, when the target was White (Scottish American), the strongly ( $M = 4.84$ ,  $SD = .94$ ) and weakly ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) identified targets were not differentially evaluated,  $F(1, 132) = 0.76$ ,  $p = .39$ ,  $d = .21$ .

### Discussion

Study 4 provides further support for our prejudice-distribution account of the group-identity–prejudice relationship. Specifically, Whites evaluated strongly identified Blacks less positively than weakly identified Blacks but did not differentially evaluate strongly and weakly identified Whites. This racial-group specificity is consistent with our theoretical argument that only minority identity challenges Whites' SLWs. It is important to note, however, that race and ethnicity were confounded in the manipulation, as White identity was manipulated with ethnicity (Scottish) and minority identity was manipulated with race. We made this

decision because a manipulation of White racial identification might strike our participants as unusual and could result in perceptions of the target as a racist, which would lead to negative evaluations of that individual. Nonetheless, Study 5 does include a manipulation of White racial identity.

Although the data show the predicted difference in target attitudes in the Black target condition, it is important to recognize that Blacks were not overall evaluated less positively than Whites. Our predictions concern differential attitudes toward distinct subsets of minorities (a subgroup approach to prejudice), rather than differential reactions toward minorities relative to Whites. Because Whites are reluctant to express negative attitudes toward minorities on self-report measures (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), the fact that Whites expressed equal to more liking of minorities relative to Whites is not surprising or counter to hypotheses.

We next turned our attention toward discovering why strongly identified minorities are evaluated less positively than weakly identified minorities. We believe that this effect occurs because strongly identified minorities pose a challenge to SLWs.

### Study 5

Study 5 examines Whites' assumptions about the extent to which strongly and weakly identified minorities endorse SLWs. This study also examines whether the prejudice-distribution effect is most characteristic of Whites who personally endorse SLWs. The design involved two independent variables—target's race (Latino or White), target's identification level (high or low)—and one measured predictor (participants' personal endorsement of SLWs). We predicted that strongly identified minorities would be perceived as harboring beliefs that challenge status legitimacy, compared with weakly identified minorities.

We also predicted that Whites' endorsement of SLWs would moderate their attitudes toward strongly and weakly identified minorities. Specifically, we predicted that Whites who themselves strongly endorse SLWs should evaluate strongly identified minorities (who challenge their SLWs) less positively than weakly identified minorities (who confirm their SLWs). And Whites who reject SLWs should display the opposite pattern; that is, they should evaluate strongly identified minorities (who confirm their status-delegitimizing worldviews) more positively than weakly identified minorities (who challenge status-delegitimizing worldviews). This interaction should be mediated by perceptions of the target's endorsement of SLWs.

We predicted that, if anything, strongly identified Whites would be perceived as more strongly supporting SLWs relative to weakly identified Whites. In addition, if a White target's identity level communicates differing levels of support for SLWs, then Whites who endorse SLWs should evaluate weakly identified Whites (who challenge their SLWs) less positively than strongly identified Whites (who confirm their SLWs). Whites who reject SLWs should show the opposite pattern.

### Method

#### Participants and Procedures

Participants were 137 White undergraduates ( $M$  age = 19.37 years,  $SD$  = 1.40 years; 70.1% women), who participated in exchange for credit toward a course requirement.

Participants examined surveys purportedly completed by a Latino or White man who was strongly or weakly identified with his respective ethnic/racial group. The White target was referred to as "White," rather than Scottish American, in this study. Identity was manipulated in the manner described in Study 1. After examining this information, participants completed measures assessing the extent to which they perceived the target as supportive of SLWs and their attitudes toward the target.

### Measures

*SLW.* Prior to the study, participants completed an online version of O'Brien and Major's (2005) SLW measure (which they adapted from Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). The scale comprises 16 items, which assess four major components of SLWs. These include just world beliefs (e.g., "I feel that people earn the punishments and rewards they get"), Protestant work ethic beliefs ("If people work hard, they almost always get what they want"), individual mobility beliefs ("Advancement in American society is possible for all individuals"), and status legitimacy beliefs ("Differences in status between groups in American society are fair"). This overarching measure is consistent with the conceptualization of SLWs as a broad belief system encompassing several core beliefs about the relationship between individuals' effort and life outcomes (e.g., Jost & Hunyady, 2005; O'Brien & Major, 2005). Items were rated on scales with endpoints of 0 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*), with higher scores signifying greater support for SLWs ( $\alpha$  = .79).<sup>2</sup>

*Perceptions of targets' endorsement of SLWs.* Perceptions of the target's endorsement of SLWs were assessed with the same SLW measure participants previously completed during the online prescreening session, although this time they were instructed to complete the measure as if they were the target. In other words, they estimated how the target would complete the scale. The 16 items were completed on a scale with endpoints of 0 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*;  $\alpha$  = .85). Higher scores represent greater perceived endorsement of SLWs.

*Attitudes toward the target.* Target attitudes were assessed with the four semantic differential scales described in Study 2, which we transformed to a 0–6 scale by adding constant of 3 ( $\alpha$  = .89).

*Manipulation check and suspicion.* Participants completed the same manipulation checks and suspicion items described in Study 1.

### Results

#### Suspicion and Manipulation Check

One participant inaccurately reported the target's race and was excluded from analyses. Participants perceived the target in the high-identity condition ( $M$  = 5.52,  $SD$  = 0.87) as more identified than the target in the low-identity condition ( $M$  = 1.08,  $SD$  = 1.13),  $F(1, 131) = 654.41, p < .01$ . There was a marginal Target

<sup>2</sup> Examining one component of SLWs while controlling for other components of the worldview covaries out the central nature of this construct (shared variance among components). Thus, we do not examine the unique contributions of each subscale.

Race  $\times$  Target Identification Level interaction,  $F(1, 131) = 3.05$ ,  $p = .06$ . This interaction revealed that the target-identification manipulation was successful in both target-race conditions but was somewhat stronger in magnitude in the Latino target condition ( $M_s = 5.74$  and  $0.97$  in the high and low conditions, respectively) relative to the White target condition ( $M_s = 5.29$  and  $1.18$  in the high and low conditions, respectively).

### Analysis Plan

We used regression analyses to examine the hypotheses. Participant's personal endorsement of SLWs (mean centered), target identification level (0 = *low identity*, 1 = *high identity*), and target race (0 = *White target*, 1 = *Latino target*) were entered on the first step, and the two-way and three-way interactions were entered on the second and third steps, respectively.<sup>3</sup>

### Perceptions of the Targets' Endorsement of the SLWs

The first step of the regression analysis examining participants' perceptions of the target's endorsement of SLWs was significant,  $F(3, 131) = 12.49$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $r^2 = .22$ . There were significant main effects of target's race,  $B = -0.34$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t(131) = -3.54$ ,  $p < .01$ , and participants' endorsement of SLWs,  $B = 0.43$ ,  $SE = .08$ ,  $t(131) = 5.37$ ,  $p < .01$ . Consistent with hypotheses, Step 2 accounted for a significant increase in variability,  $\Delta r^2 = .11$ ,  $F(3, 128) = 6.74$ ,  $p < .01$ . As expected, there was a significant Target Identification Level  $\times$  Target Race interaction,  $B = -0.81$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $t(128) = -4.44$ ,  $p < .01$ . Step 3 was not significant,  $\Delta r^2 = .00$ ,  $F(1, 127) = 0.51$ ,  $p = .48$ .

When the target was Latino, the strongly identified target was perceived as a weaker endorser of SLWs (unadjusted  $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ) relative to the weakly identified target (unadjusted  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ),  $B = -0.50$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $t(128) = -3.83$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .66$ . In contrast, when the target was White, the strongly identified target was perceived as a stronger endorser of SLWs (unadjusted  $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) relative to the weakly identified White target (unadjusted  $M = 3.00$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ),  $B = 0.32$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $t(128) = 2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .70$ . Thus, high identification among ethnic minorities communicated less support for SLWs, and high identification among Whites communicated more support for SLWs. None of the remaining two-way interactions were significant ( $ps > .54$ ).

### Attitudes Toward the Target

We next examined the hypothesis that participants' personal endorsement of SLWs moderates the prejudice-distribution effect. The first step of the regression analysis was significant,  $F(3, 132) = 3.83$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $r^2 = .08$ , and revealed main effects of target race,  $B = 0.34$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $t(132) = 2.16$ ,  $p < .05$ , and target identity level,  $B = -0.32$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $t(132) = -2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ . Step 2 was not significant,  $\Delta r^2 = .04$ ,  $F(3, 129) = 1.82$ ,  $p = .15$ . However, consistent with hypotheses, Step 3 was significant,  $\Delta r^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1, 128) = 9.06$ ,  $p < .01$ , as was the Participants' SLW Endorsement  $\times$  Target Race  $\times$  Target Identification Level interaction ( $B = -1.63$ ,  $SE = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ). This three-way interaction was probed within each target-race condition.

*SLWs and the Latino Target.* In the Latino target condition, the Participants' SLW Endorsement  $\times$  Target Identification Level interaction was significant,  $B = -1.06$ ,  $SE = .39$ ,  $t(128) = -2.73$ ,  $p < .01$ . To examine the specific predictions, we tested the identity-level condition effect for participants who personally were strong endorsers of SLWs (1 *SD* above the mean on the SLW scale) and for participants who personally rejected SLWs (1 *SD* below the mean of the SLW scale; Aiken & West, 1991). As can be seen in Figure 1A, Whites who strongly endorsed SLWs evaluated the strongly identified Latino target less positively than the weakly identified Latino target,  $B = -0.61$ ,  $SE = .31$ ,  $t(128) = -1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ . In contrast, Whites who rejected SLWs evaluated the strongly identified Latino target more positively than the weakly identified Latino target,  $B = 0.69$ ,  $SE = .33$ ,  $t(128) = 2.10$ ,  $p < .05$ .

*SLWs and the White target.* In the White target condition, the Participants' SLW Endorsement  $\times$  Target Identification Level interaction was not significant,  $B = 0.58$ ,  $SE = .38$ ,  $t(128) = 1.52$ ,  $p = .13$ . Despite the absence of a significant interaction, the pattern of data in Figure 1B appears consistent with hypotheses for participants who rejected SLWs. Whites who rejected SLWs (1 *SD* below the mean of the SLW scale) evaluated strongly identified Whites less positively than weakly identified Whites,  $B = -0.96$ ,  $SE = .30$ ,  $t(128) = -3.22$ ,  $p < .01$ . In contrast, Whites who strongly endorsed SLWs (1 *SD* above the mean on SLWs) did not differ in their evaluations of strongly and weakly identified White targets,  $B = -0.26$ ,  $SE = .33$ ,  $t(128) = -0.78$ ,  $p = .44$ .

### Mediation

We next examined whether perceptions of the targets' endorsement of SLWs mediated the Participants' SLW  $\times$  Target Race  $\times$  Target Identification Level interaction on target attitudes. The hypothesis requires moderated mediational analyses. This involves first demonstrating that the three-way interaction described above is significant, which we have already shown. The next analysis involves examining whether perceptions of the target's endorsement of SLWs are associated with participants' attitudes toward the target and that target race and participants' endorsement of SLWs moderate this relationship. In this analysis, target's race, target's perceived endorsement of SLWs, participants' endorsement of SLWs, all two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction predict target attitudes. Successful mediation involves demonstrating that the Target Race  $\times$  Target SLW  $\times$  Participant SLW interaction is significant. This three-way interaction was not significant,  $B = 0.62$ ,  $SE = .40$ ,  $t(127) = 1.57$ ,  $p = .12$ . Thus, there is no evidence that perceptions of the targets' endorsement of SLWs mediated the prejudice-distribution effect.

### Discussion

Consistent with predictions, participants' endorsement of SLWs moderated their attitudes toward strongly and weakly identified

<sup>3</sup> SLWs are weakly but positively correlated with White identity (O'Brien & Major, 2005). Thus, we assessed participants' White identity (during the prescreening session) with the identity subscale of Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) Collective Self-Esteem Scale. The results were unchanged when White identity and all its interaction terms were entered into the analyses.

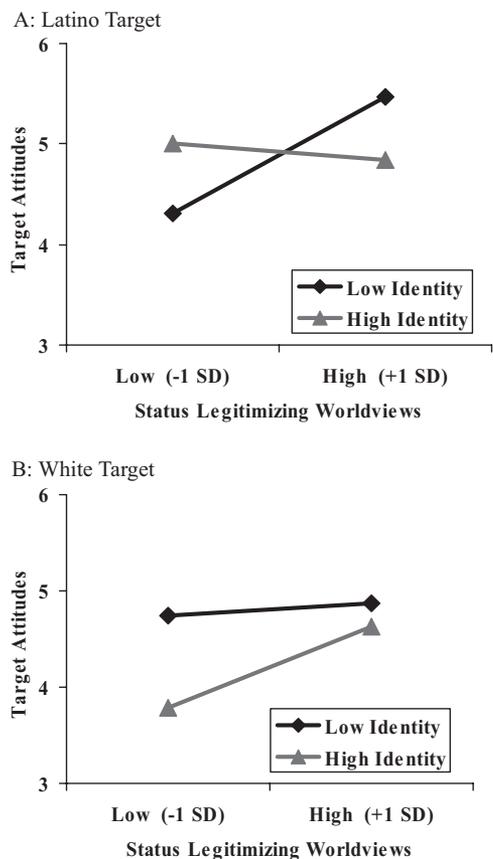


Figure 1. The relationship between status legitimizing worldviews and attitudes toward strongly and weakly identified Latino Americans (A) and White Americans (B).

Latinos. Specifically, participants who strongly endorsed SLWs evaluated strongly identified Latinos less positively than weakly identified Latinos, whereas participants who rejected SLWs displayed precisely the opposite pattern. These patterns are consistent with theories of worldview confirmation and disconfirmation that argue that people evaluate individuals who challenge their beliefs more negatively than people who confirm their beliefs.

Also consistent with hypotheses, strongly identified Latinos were perceived as rejecting SLWs relative to weakly identified Latinos. In contrast, strongly identified Whites were perceived as endorsing SLWs relative to weakly identified Whites. However, this divergence in perceptions of the target's beliefs about status legitimacy did not mediate the prejudice-distribution effect. Although this is inconsistent with hypotheses, mediational analyses are notoriously weak in studies with a small sample size, such as this one (Fritz & MacKinnon, 2007; Shrout & Bolger, 2002). In addition, some mediators are difficult to measure, and metaperceptions like those assessed in this study (e.g., "I think the target thinks the status system is unfair") might be difficult to assess, as they require stepping into another's mental processes. For these reasons, Spencer, Zanna, and Fong (2005) have encouraged more manipulation (rather than measurement) of mediators, as this approach often provides a more powerful and causal test of

psychological process. We adopt this experimentally guided mediational approach in Study 6.

Study 5 again demonstrated that the prejudice-distribution effect was specific to attitudes toward ethnic minorities and did not adequately characterize evaluations of strongly and weakly identified Whites. If anything, Whites who rejected SLWs evaluated strongly identified Whites (whose identity level challenged their worldview) less positively than weakly identified Whites (whose identity level confirmed their worldview). This is consistent with worldview-confirmation perspectives, as Whites who reject SLWs should in fact prefer weakly identified Whites over highly identified Whites. However, White participants who endorsed SLWs did not differentially evaluate strongly and weakly identified Whites, which is not consistent with worldview-confirmation perspectives. This may have occurred because strongly identified Whites are viewed as racist, and participants may have been reluctant to express affinity for such people.

It is important to note that the prejudice-distribution effect was fully moderated by Whites' endorsement of SLWs. In other words, unlike in Studies 1–4, there was no main effect of the Latino target's level of identification on subsequent attitudes toward the target ( $p = .87$ ). We did not anticipate full moderation, but we have some ideas about why this occurred. People may have a less well-developed sense of Latino identification, compared with Black identification, and this could have led to more variability in the meaning of Latino identification. Indeed, Latinos are a widely diverse group, and their more recent immigration to the United States may make them a less visible minority than Blacks. This study was also conducted during a time when prejudice toward Latino immigrants was receiving a great deal of media coverage, and perhaps participants with moderate scores on the SLW measure were more cautious about expressing negative attitudes toward strongly identified Latinos. Later, we provide a meta-analytic test of the prejudice-distribution main effect, which estimates its strength better than any individual study alone.

In addition, as the first five studies examined the evaluative aspect of intergroup bias (negative attitudes as a proxy for prejudice; Crandall et al., 2002), we used Study 6 as an opportunity to assess behavioral intentions toward the target. Behavioral intentions are conceptually closer to discriminatory behavior and, thus, provide a test of whether the prejudice-distribution effect extends beyond evaluations and toward actions.

## Study 6

Study 6 experimentally investigates whether the prejudice-distribution effect occurs because strongly identified minorities reject SLWs relative to weakly identified minorities. The study involved two independent variables: target's identification level (low or high) and target's endorsement of SLWs (low, high, or no information provided). We predicted that when participants had no information about the target's endorsement of SLWs, they would evaluate strongly identified minorities less positively than weakly identified minorities. However, when participants had information about the target's endorsement of SLWs, we anticipated that they would express less positivity toward minorities who rejected these

worldviews relative to those who endorsed them, irrespective of whether the minorities were strongly or weakly group identified.<sup>4</sup>

### Method

#### Participants and Procedures

Participants were 181 White undergraduates ( $M$  age = 19.04 years,  $SD$  = 1.28 years; 58.6% women), who participated in exchange for extra credit in a course. Participants viewed a questionnaire packet ostensibly completed by a Black student. As in Study 1, participants first viewed a group-identification scale on which the target indicated that his racial group was central to his sense of self or not central to his sense of self. In addition, the target completed an item indicating that he belonged to a racial organization (Black Student Association) in the high-identity condition and indicated that he did not belong to any racial organizations in the low-identity condition. It was important to provide a particularly strong identity manipulation, as evidence that the target's SLWs endorsement mediates the prejudice-distribution effect is more impressive when the identity manipulation is strong and more difficult to mitigate.

The target SLW manipulation was on the same page as the identity manipulation. It consisted of survey responses that revealed strong endorsement of SLWs or weak endorsement of SLWs. In the no-SLW-information condition, these items were not included in the packet. The SLW items were as follows: "If people work hard they almost always get what they want"; "Most people who don't get ahead should not blame the system; they really have only themselves to blame"; "America is an open society where all individuals can achieve higher status"; "Advancement in American society is possible for all individuals"; "Individual members of certain groups are often unable to advance in American society" (reverse); and "Differences in status between groups in American society are the result of injustice" (reverse). In the strong-endorsement condition, the target's responses hovered around the top of the scale, and in the low-endorsement condition, they hovered around the low end of the scale.

Participants completed measures assessing behavioral intentions toward the target, attitudes toward the target, and checks on the identity and SLW manipulations. Participants were then probed for suspicion and debriefed.

#### Measures

**Behavioral intentions toward the target.** Behavioral intentions were assessed with three items asking participants to indicate how much they were interested in meeting the target, how much they would want to add the target as their friend on Facebook (a popular social networking website), and how willing they would be to loan their class notes to the target. Items were rated on a bipolar scale with endpoints of  $-3$  and  $3$  ( $\alpha$  = .78). A constant of 3 was added to these scores, creating a 0–6 scale.

**Attitudes toward the target.** The five target-attitude items were as follows: "The survey completer seems to have a very good personality," "The survey completer seems like he would be easy to get along with," "I respect the survey completer," "I admire the survey completer," and "The survey completer seems considerate." Scale endpoints were 0 (*strongly disagree*) and 6 (*strongly agree*;  $\alpha$  = .87).

**Manipulation check and suspicion.** Participants completed the same manipulation check and suspicion items described in Study 1, as well as two items (on a 0–6 scale) assessing the extent to which the target endorsed SLWs: "How much do you think the survey-completer believes that success in life is the result of hard work," and "How much do you think the survey-completer believes that status differences between groups in America are fair" ( $\alpha$  = .67).

### Results

#### Suspicion and Manipulation Check

No participants were suspicious, and all correctly identified the target's race. Participants perceived the strongly identified target ( $M$  = 5.78,  $SD$  = 0.52) as more identified than the weakly identified target ( $M$  = 1.62,  $SD$  = 1.67),  $F(1, 175) = 460.02$ ,  $p < .01$ . No other effects were significant ( $ps > .10$ ).

Participants perceived that the target in the high-SLW condition ( $M$  = 4.58,  $SD$  = .92) endorsed this worldview significantly more than the target in the low-SLW condition ( $M$  = 1.69,  $SD$  = 1.34), with the no-information target in between and significantly different from the other conditions ( $M$  = 3.61,  $SD$  = .87),  $F(2, 175) = 117.74$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Tukey honestly significant difference tests were used for comparisons. No other effects were significant ( $ps > .22$ ).

#### Behavioral Intentions Toward the Target

There was a main effect for target's SLW level on behavioral intentions,  $F(2, 175) = 6.30$ ,  $p < .01$ . Consistent with hypotheses, the Target SLW  $\times$  Target Identity Level interaction subsumed this effect,  $F(2, 175) = 5.37$ ,  $p < .01$ . The interaction was examined with simple effects tests probing the effect of target-identity level at each level of target SLW.

Consistent with the prejudice-distribution account, and as can be seen in Figure 2, when participants had no information about the target's endorsement of SLWs, participants expressed less positive behavioral intentions toward the strongly identified target ( $M$  = 4.48,  $SD$  = 0.87), relative to the weakly identified target ( $M$  = 4.96,  $SD$  = 0.78),  $F(1, 175) = 3.96$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .58$ . However, this effect was not observed once information about the target's endorsement of SLWs was provided. When the target rejected SLWs, participants did not express less positive behavioral intentions toward strongly identified targets ( $M$  = 4.38,  $SD$  = 0.94) than weakly identified targets ( $M$  = 4.15,  $SD$  = 1.10),  $F(1, 175) = 0.80$ ,  $p = .37$ ,  $d = -.22$ . And when the target endorsed SLWs, participants did not express less positive behavioral intentions toward the strongly identified target ( $M$  = 5.12,  $SD$  = .73) than the weakly identified target ( $M$  = 4.55,  $SD$  = 1.03). In fact, the weakly identified target was evaluated significantly less positively

<sup>4</sup>Theories of worldview threat often assert that people experience distress when they experience challenges to their worldviews (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2004). Thus, Whites might feel more threatened when they encounter strongly identified minorities than when they encounter weakly identified minorities. We included a self-report measure of threat in this final study to examine this hypothesis. The threat findings did not support hypotheses and are not discussed further. The threat results are available upon request from Cheryl R. Kaiser.

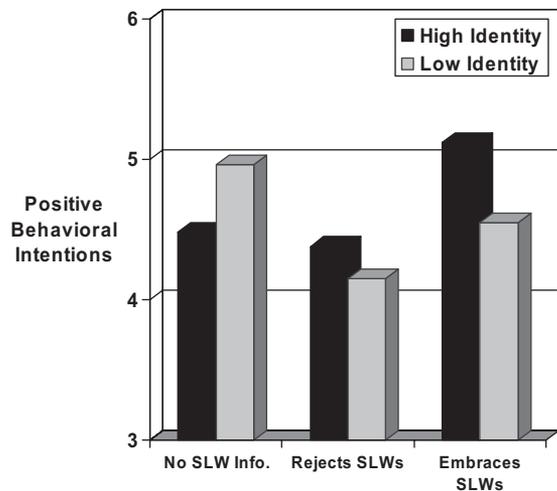


Figure 2. The effects of group identity and status legitimizing worldviews (SLWs) on behavioral intentions.

than the strongly identified target when both expressed strong endorsement of SLWs, a surprising effect upon which we elaborate in the discussion,  $F(1, 175) = 7.12, p < .01, d = -.64$ .

Another way to examine these data is by comparing whether behavioral intentions toward the target who endorsed and rejected SLWs differed within each identity-level condition. Our theorizing predicted that Whites should express less positive intentions toward Blacks who reject SLWs relative to Blacks who endorse SLWs, regardless of how group identified that target is. When the target expressed strong levels of identification, participants expressed less positive behavioral intentions toward the target who rejected SLWs than the target who endorsed SLWs,  $F(1, 175) = 9.54, p < .01$ . Likewise, when the target expressed low levels of identification, the target who rejected SLWs was subjected to marginally less positive behavioral intentions than the target who endorsed SLWs,  $F(1, 175) = 3.12, p < .08$ .

#### Attitudes Toward the Target

We conducted the same analyses described above on the attitude-toward-the-target dependent measure. There was a main effect for target's SLW level,  $F(2, 175) = 9.77, p < .01$ , and the predicted Target SLW  $\times$  Target Identity Level interaction was significant,  $F(2, 175) = 8.89, p < .01$ .

Consistent with the behavioral-intentions analyses, when participants had no information about the target's endorsement of SLWs, participants expressed less positive attitudes toward the strongly identified target ( $M = 3.92, SD = 0.72$ ), compared with the weakly identified target ( $M = 4.41, SD = 0.90$ ),  $F(1, 175) = 3.83, p = .05, d = .60$ . However, once information about the target's endorsement of SLWs was provided, the prejudice-distribution effect was not observed. When the target rejected SLWs, strongly identified targets ( $M = 3.66, SD = 0.85$ ) were not evaluated differently than weakly identified targets ( $M = 3.75, SD = 1.03$ ),  $F(1, 175) = 0.21, p = .65, d = .13$ . And when the target endorsed SLWs, the strongly identified target ( $M = 4.86, SD = .75$ ) was not evaluated differently from the weakly identified target ( $M = 4.02, SD = 1.15$ ). As with the behavioral-intention analyses, we again

observed that the weakly identified target was evaluated significantly less positively than the strongly identified target when both expressed strong endorsement of SLWs,  $F(1, 175) = 15.02, p < .01, d = -.87$ .

We also tested whether attitudes toward the target who endorsed and rejected SLWs differed within each identity-level condition. In the strong-identity condition, the target who rejected SLWs was rated significantly less positively than the target who endorsed SLWs,  $F(1, 175) = 24.99, p < .01$ . In the weak-identity condition, the target who rejected SLWs was not evaluated less positively than the target who endorsed SLWs, although the means were in the predicted direction,  $F(1, 175) = 1.32, p = .25$ .

#### Discussion

Study 6 provides further support for the prejudice-distribution account of the relationship between group identification and prejudice. Specifically, when participants had no information about the target's endorsement of SLWs, they expressed less interest in befriending and less positive attitudes toward the strongly identified Black target than the weakly identified Black target. It is important to note that Study 6 provides evidence that perceptions of the target's SLWs mediated this effect. Specifically, when Whites learned that the target endorsed SLWs, they no longer expressed less positivity toward the strongly identified target, compared with the weakly identified target. Likewise, when Whites learned that the target rejected SLWs, they reacted less positively toward him, even when he was weakly identified. In other words, perceptions of the targets' SLWs overpowered the effects of the identity manipulation, providing experimental evidence for the mediating role of perceived SLW endorsement (Spencer et al., 2005).

One unexpected but interesting effect was that when the target endorsed SLWs, Whites reacted less positively toward the weakly identified target than toward the strongly identified target. One possibility is that Whites were surprised by a Black American who both disidentified with his racial group and strongly endorsed SLWs that ultimately disadvantage his own group. Such an individual might be viewed as trying too hard to distance from his group, and even our White participants might have viewed him as insufficiently in touch with issues facing minorities. Or perhaps this person simply seemed so unusual to our participants that they were wary of befriending him. If the effect is reliable, understanding it will prove important.

#### Meta-Analytic Test of the Prejudice-Distribution Effect

As this article outlines six studies testing the prejudice-distribution effect, a meta-analytic examination of the effect size is informative. To do that, we used the windows version of META (Kenny & Xuan, 2007) to compare the target-attitude data in the high-minority-identity condition relative to the lower-minority-identity condition in all six studies. As Study 2 includes both a moderate- and low-identity condition, we aggregated these two conditions into a single "lower-identity" condition. As Study 6 provides two measures of effect size, we limited its influence on the results by analyzing just the behavioral-intentions measure. The test was conducted on 393 participants across the six studies and measured the magnitude of the effect with Cohen's  $d$  with a

Hedges correction. The analysis revealed a significant effect,  $d = .51$ ,  $t(5) = 4.27$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that the prejudice-distribution effect is a reliable one that is moderate in magnitude.

### General Discussion

Six studies provide converging evidence that Whites react less positively toward strongly identified racial minorities than they do toward weakly identified minorities. This research offers one explanation for why strongly identified ethnic minorities report experiencing more prejudice than their weakly identified counterparts—specifically, it locates the cause of the relationship in Whites' attitudes. Our approach differs substantially from previous investigations of the relationship between group identity and prejudice, which have focused on internal psychological processes, such as whether perceiving prejudice causes minorities to become more identified with their group (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999) and whether group identification serves as a lens that increases subjective perceptions of prejudice (Major et al., 2003; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Shelton & Sellers, 2000).

We theorized that Whites would react less positively toward strongly identified minorities because Whites would perceive these individuals as rejecting SLWs, relative to weakly identified minorities. Because SLWs provide people with a meaningful understanding of their social world and serve to justify existing status arrangements in society, Whites should be strongly motivated to defend SLWs when faced with individuals whose beliefs challenge their worldviews (Jost, 2006; Kaiser et al., 2006; Major et al., 2007; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). To the extent that strongly identified minorities threaten SLWs, Whites are motivated to exclude them from their social world by expressing more prejudice toward them. By avoiding relationships with the strongly identified, Whites are able to maintain their belief that the world is fair and that their group deserves its privileged position in the status hierarchy.

Several pieces of evidence are consistent with this SLW-confirmation perspective. First, in Study 5, Whites who personally endorsed SLWs evaluated strongly identified minorities more negatively than weakly identified minorities. Whites who rejected SLWs showed the opposite pattern, which is also consistent with worldview-confirmation perspectives. Second, Whites perceived strongly identified minorities as more likely to reject SLWs relative to weakly identified minorities. Finally, Study 6 experimentally demonstrated that SLWs mediated the prejudice-distribution effect. That is, although Whites evaluated strongly identified minorities less positively than weakly identified minorities when no information about the target's endorsement of SLWs was provided, this effect disappeared when participants had information about the target's endorsement of SLWs.

It is important to recognize that in all studies, participants did not overall express extremely negative attitudes toward any of the targets—indeed, participants used only the positive evaluative half of the attitude scales. This reluctance to express “truly negative” attitudes is not surprising or counter to hypotheses. Because participants did not receive any actual negative facts/trait characteristics about the targets, person positivity biases would in fact predict that participants would use only the positive part of the scale (Sears, 1983). This is also consistent with models that characterize prejudice as withholding positive outcomes from a deval-

ued group (Fiske, 2002). Furthermore, when one considers these ratings in light of the observation that White participants are motivated to evaluate minorities especially positively on self-report measures (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), the mean differences across the strong- and weak-identity conditions obtained in these studies speak to the potential power of this effect.

### Future Directions

Although these studies provide important insights into the relationship between group identification and prejudice, they are not without limitation. First, in Study 5, the prejudice-distribution effect was observed only for participants who personally endorsed SLWs. That is, unlike in the other studies, there was no overall main effect of the identity-level manipulation. As we discussed previously, this may have occurred because Whites have a less well-developed sense of Latino identity relative to Black identity. We currently are conducting work to more closely tap into the meaning of Latino identity, and this should contribute toward understanding the robustness of this effect. Our initial work related to this question has replicated the pattern observed in Study 5, which suggests that participants' personal endorsement of SLWs might be particularly relevant in understanding their attitudes toward Latino Americans. At present, we recommend caution when extending the prejudice-distribution main effect beyond Whites' reactions to Blacks. Related to this, future research would benefit by examining how differentially group-identified targets from a wide variety of socially devalued groups are evaluated.

Second, there are a number of other potentially interesting ways one could manipulate identity. For instance, this could be done with confederates who display cues (e.g., speech, dress, behavior) that somehow communicate that their race is central to their sense of self. In addition, it would be interesting to examine whether one's actual level of identity leaks out nonverbally and could be detected by naïve observers (e.g., “thin slices of identification,” Ambady, Bernieri, & Richeson, 2000). In fact, in recent research in our lab (Wilkins, Kaiser, & Rieck, 2008), we asked non-Black and Latino judges to examine photographs of unknown Black and Latino targets who had previously completed a measure of racial identification and to guess the personal level of racial identity of each target. The judge–target correlation was positive and significant for both minority groups, suggesting that minorities do successfully communicate their personal level of identity, and others pick up on it. Understanding how identity is communicated is critical, as one's personal level of identity is a private experience that needs to be expressed somehow for others to react toward it. We are currently examining interracial interactions in the lab and investigating how Whites pick up on their minority partners' actual level of identity (and the cues they use in inferring this) and how this assessment shapes their interactions with their minority partner. This interaction study will also provide an important test of whether the effects discovered in these studies are observed with Whites' actual verbal and nonverbal behavior toward minorities. Behavioral effects will be important in generalizing from prejudice (which we assessed in the present investigation) to discrimination.

Third, we operationalized group identity as the centrality of the group to one's self-concept. This conceptualization is consistent with prevailing theoretical perspectives on identity that adopt a self-concept approach (e.g., Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; McCoy &

Major, 2003). However, other scholars argue that racial identity can also be expressed through different types of ideologies. For example, Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, and Chavous (1998) argued that racial identity can be expressed through several different ideologies, such as nationalist ideologies (focusing on the uniqueness of being Black), oppressed minority ideologies (focusing on the common oppression of all minority groups), assimilationist ideologies (focusing on the similarities between Blacks and the rest of American society), and humanist ideologies (focusing on all humans as a larger superordinate human race). In future research, it would be informative to understand how the expression of different ideologies contributes to the amount of prejudice that is bestowed upon minorities. As nationalist and oppressed minority ideologies are most oppositional to SLWs, we suspect that minorities who endorse these ideologies might be particularly vulnerable to experiencing prejudice.

Fourth, although we focused on the role of SLWs in producing the prejudice-distribution effect, this effect is likely multiply determined. For example, in addition to posing a threat to SLWs, strongly identified minorities might be perceived as harboring negative attitudes toward Whites, and this could explain Whites' less favorable attitudes toward the highly identified. In fact, Whites are particularly concerned that minorities harbor negative opinions of them (i.e., metastereotypes), and these evaluative concerns can result in impaired intergroup interactions (Vorauer, 2006). Furthermore, these concerns may be particularly salient when minorities perceive the status system as unfair. Thus, the SLW manipulation in Study 6 could have both threatened worldviews and activated metaperceptions. Another possibility is that Whites assume that strongly identified minorities adopt models of diversity that highlight differences among groups (e.g., multiculturalism), whereas weakly identified minorities adopt models that highlight sameness among all humans (e.g., colorblindness, a common ingroup identity; Dovidio et al., 2001). Perceptions of these differing beliefs about diversity could contribute to the prejudice-distribution effect. Research in our lab is currently investigating these possibilities.

Fifth, an important caveat is that these studies exclusively examined reactions to male targets. Because men are perceived as more threatening than women, and because Black men in particular are seen as threatening, Whites are especially likely to direct their prejudice toward Black men (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Sidanius & Veniegas, 2002). Status differences in gender may prevent minority women (even those who are highly identified) from being perceived as sufficiently threatening and powerful to influence the status hierarchy. Future studies examining target gender will be informative with respect to this issue.

Sixth, although we argued that identification with majority groups does not threaten SLWs, this conclusion should be interpreted with caution. Specifically, in Study 4, we used ethnicity (Scottish American) as a proxy for White race. We did so because we were concerned that identifying with the racial category "White" would cause participants to see the highly identified target as a supremacist. However, identifying with an ethnic group may not carry the same qualitative meaning as identifying with a racial group, as the former is not directly involved in interracial interactions. Although we did use a White target in Study 5, Whites who endorsed SLWs did not prefer the highly identified White to the weakly identified White, which is inconsistent with theories of

worldview confirmation. This finding may have resulted because even Whites who endorse SLWs are reluctant to express positivity toward highly identified Whites. Thus, manipulating identity with a high-status group is methodologically challenging.

In these studies, we restricted our focus to understanding the reactions of White participants toward minorities. Because prejudice by Whites against minorities is a pervasive problem, it is a good starting point for this line of research. However, it will be important to examine how ethnic minorities react toward strongly and weakly identified fellow ingroup members. Because Black Americans and Latino Americans are less likely to endorse SLWs relative to Whites (Schmader, Major, & Gramzow, 2001), they might be particularly fond of ingroup members who identify with the group and particularly wary of ingroup members who are perceived as inadequately identified with the group (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). Ingroup members considered not identified enough may be perceived as disloyal or as sellouts to their race and may be particularly likely to bear the brunt of negative treatment from the ingroup (Marques et al., 1988)—this type of rejection can be especially psychologically harmful (Postmes & Branscombe, 2002).

Finally, it is important to recognize that we are not suggesting that minorities stop identifying with their group. Because ingroups protect and provide material resources (Neuberg & Cottrell, 2002), confer a sense of self-worth (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), reduce uncertainty (Hogg, 2000), imbue the social world with meaning (Solomon et al., 2000), and fulfill both distinctiveness and acceptance needs (Brewer, 1991), identifying with one's group is undoubtedly beneficial. However, our data suggest that group identification may have a downside; strongly identified minorities may find themselves experiencing more prejudice than their less identified counterparts. Experiencing prejudice and discrimination has a number of negative consequences for important life outcomes, including mental and physical health, as well as access to important resources such as income, education, health care, and legal due process (Barrett & George, 2005; Constantine & Sue, 2006; Krieger, 2000; Pager, 2007; Williams, 1999), and strongly identified minorities may bear the brunt of racial prejudice and discrimination. Identifying strategies that prevent Whites from expressing more negativity toward the strongly identified will be an important step in reducing prejudice and discrimination.

### *Conclusion*

This investigation tested an alternative explanation for the well-established positive relationship between group identification and perceived prejudice. Our research suggests that Whites react less positively toward strongly identified minorities than weakly identified minorities and that this occurs in part because the former are presumed to reject SLWs. Our research also supports theoretical perspectives that encourage expanding conceptualizations of prejudice toward incorporating dimensions of variability within minority groups that leaves some subgroups of minorities more vulnerable to experiencing prejudice than others (Blair et al., 2002; Eberhardt et al., 2004; Maddox, 2004). Finally, our research makes the important point that strongly identified minorities are not engaging in paranoid hypervigilance when they claim to experience increased levels of prejudice and that weakly identified minorities are not engaging in self-deception when they report

experiencing low levels of prejudice—rather, they may simply be reporting on reality as they experience it.

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