

Capitolo 6

Case Study 1

I am Black, and I am happy

As described in the text, being a member of a stigmatized groups does not necessarily mean that you will have lower self-esteem. In fact, individuals from certain groups, such as African Americans, who identify strongly with their racial group tend to have higher self-esteem and are at lower risk for depression. But does being highly identified with a negatively valued group also translate to greater happiness? It turns out the answer is *yes!*

African Americans across the state of Michigan were mailed surveys and asked to answer a number of questions including how strongly they identified with their racial group, and how satisfied they were their lives (Yap, Settles & Pratt-Hyatt, 2011, [DOI: [10.1037/a0022535](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022535)]). The results showed that the more strongly the participants identified with being African American, the happier they were. The results for the female participants suggested that the link between racial identity and happiness could be explained by the greater belongingness that comes with identifying oneself as a part of a meaningful group.

Reference

- Yap, S. C. Y., Settles, I. H. & Pratt-Hyatt, J. S. (2011). [DOI: [10.1037/a0022535](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022535)]. Mediators of the relationship between racial identity and life satisfaction in a community sample of African American women and men. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 17*, 89–97.

Case Study 2

The lasting impact of stigma

Believe it or not, stereotypes influence us all. In any given situation, a woman might feel nervous to take a math test, a Black applicant may feel stress when applying for a job, and even a White male may feel that his ability to empathize with others may come into question. In each of these situations, the nerves and stress may come from people's fear of confirming a negative stereotype about their group. Women aren't as good at math. Blacks are lazy. White men aren't in touch with their feelings. This fear is known as *stereotype threat* and, depending on the situation, it can affect us all (Steele, 1997).

Stereotype threat is an uncomfortable experience, but given its situational nature, could there be any lasting effects of this threat? It turns out that the answer to this question is yes. Inzlicht and Kang

(2010) [DOI: 10.1037/a0018951] had female college students from a Canadian university take part in their research. In each study, half of the female participants experienced stereotype threat (e.g., they believed that they would be taking a math test that would be diagnostic of their abilities) whereas the other half of the participants did not experience threat. The participants then took part in an ostensibly unrelated second experiment that they believed was unrelated to the first task. Across four separate studies, the researchers showed that female participants who had experienced stereotype threat: (1) were more aggressive to a partner that they believed gave them negative feedback; (2) ate more ice cream as part of a supposed taste test; (3) made more risky decisions; and (4) demonstrated less self-control. The authors explain that the experience of stereotype threat exhausts people's ability to self-regulate and that lack of "willpower" results in behavior that may be unhealthy for the individual in the long run.

Reference

- Inzlicht, M. & Kang, S. K. (2010). [DOI: 10.1037/a0018951]. Stereotype threat spillover: How coping with threats to social identity affects aggression, eating, decision making, and attention. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99, 467–481.
- Steele, C.M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, 52, 613-629.

Case Study 3

See me as female, not as Asian

Imagine that you're trying to get in to a popular course on your campus, only to be told that the course is closed and the instructor will not let you in. How would you try to make sense of this refusal? Might it be due to your race or to your gender? We all have a number of in-groups that we can identify with at a moment's notice. As described in the text, one way that stigmatized individuals can protect their sense of self is to re-direct their attention from a societally devalued identity to an identity that is valued more highly in a particular situation. But what if two of your most salient identities have the potential to be negatively valued? Do prejudice and discrimination against both identities hurt equally as bad?

Remedios, Chasteen, and Paek (2011) [DOI: [10.1177/1368430211411594](https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430211411594)] from the University of Toronto set out to determine whether sexism or racism against members of a minority group would be equally deleterious. In Study 1, Asian female college students were asked to imagine that a professor would not let them in to a course. Each of the participants were then given a different explanation for why the professor wouldn't let them in. Participants in the racism condition were told that the professor didn't let any Koreans in (i.e., if the participant was Korean) but he had let 10

White students in. Participants in the sexism condition learned that the professor didn't let any female students in but he had let 10 male participants in. Finally, participants in the individual rejection condition were told that the professor didn't let them in because he thought they were unintelligent. After imagining such a rejection, the participants then rated the extent to which they blamed the rejection on discrimination, on something internal about themselves, or something external (e.g. about the professor). The results showed that the participants were more likely to make internal attributions for racism ("It was something about me") than for sexism. Despite this internal attribution, the participants did realize that they had been discriminated against, therefore they didn't blame themselves more for the race-based discrimination.

In the second study, Asian female participants were asked to recall a rejection experience from their own lives. Again, 1/3 of the participants recalled a past experience with racism, 1/3 recalled a past experience with sexism, and 1/3 recalled a personal rejection experience. The results of this study showed that the participants again were more likely to internalize racism as opposed to sexism and that they also feel greater levels of depression after remembering a past experience with racism. In Study 3, Asian females rated the extent to which they experienced racism and sexism. The results of this study showed that racism was more salient to the participants than sexism.

The authors suggest that perhaps the reason why the experience of racism takes more of a toll on these participants than does sexism, is because it is a more salient part of their identity. Based on the attributions that were made in the first two studies, it appears that Asian Canadian women attribute racism to something internal about themselves, making these experiences seem like more of a personal affront. In contrast, experiences of sexism may be attributed to failings of the other person, not the self. Regardless, the results of this study suggest that all prejudice is not experienced the same and, in certain situations, one's more salient identities may not offer protection from rejection by others.

Reference

- Remedios, J.D., Chasteen, A. L., & Paek, J. D. (2011). [DOI: [10.1177/1368430211411594](https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430211411594)]. Not all prejudices are experienced equally: Comparing experiences of racism and sexism in female minorities. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 15, 273–287.

Case Study 4

You don't know me: Hiding your true self at work

Is it better to have a concealable stigma or a visible stigma? That is the question. On the surface, it seems obvious that a concealable stigma, such as homosexuality or having a stutter, would be "better" to have because people could hide their status and be in control of when, or if, to tell

people. Then again, how hard would it be to keep such a secret and always live in fear that others will find out and discriminate against you? Recent research by Madera, King, and Hebl (2012) [DOI: [10.1037/a0027724](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027724)] shows that trying to keep one's stigmatized status a secret at work can have detrimental effects on one's health.

In their study, Madera et al. (2012) surveyed a number of employees and asked them to rate which of any social groups they identified with (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), which identities they displayed/acknowledged at work, whether any identities were suppressed/concealed at work, whether they had noticed discrimination against someone from their identity group at work, their job satisfaction and any intentions they had to quit their job.

The results showed that individuals who manifested concealable identities at work (e.g., told coworkers they were gay) experienced less discrimination and were happier at work. In contrast, employees who suppressed an identity (e.g., hid the fact that they were gay) noticed more discrimination against others with whom they shared a group identity, were less satisfied with their jobs, and were more inclined to quit their job.

These results suggest that managing one's concealed identity takes work (no pun intended) and can lead to negative outcomes for employees. This strain may come from not feeling comfortable to disclose an important part of yourself or even hearing the negative comments your coworkers make about others because they are unaware of your concealed identity. Regardless, these findings provide an important message for employers, which is the importance of creating open and accepting workplaces. Until the work environment is a place of acceptance for all, employees will still feel compelled to keep part of their identity secret, thereby creating a less satisfied and productive workforce.

Reference

- Madera, J. M., King, E. B., & Hebl, M. R. (2012). [DOI: [10.1037/a0027724](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027724)]. Bringing social identity to work: The influence of manifestation and suppression on perceived discrimination, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 18*, 165–170.

Case Study 5

It gets better: Providing support to targets of prejudice

A good deal of research has focused on perceptions of stigmatized individuals from the perspective of those who are in the non-stigmatized majority. Stigma is anything that sets someone apart from the norm. Anyone who has ever stood out before knows that feeling different from everyone else

can be a very isolating and uncomfortable experience. In situations such as those, what could a person who is not in your situation do to make you feel better?

Recent research by Rattan and Ambady (2014) [DOI: 10.1177/0146167213519480] explored the virtual messages that are sent via social media and how those messages affect their recipients. Specifically, they analysed different types of messages posted on the *It Gets Better* website and examined whether or not lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and questioning (LGBTQ) youth were comforted by the messages. This website was developed in 2010 after a series of youths took their lives after being bullied because of their presumed or actual sexual orientation. The videos posted on this site are overwhelmingly messages of support for this population.

In the first study, 50 of the most commonly viewed videos from the *It Gets Better* website were coded for social connection versus social change messages. Social connection messages are those in which the person in the video expresses liking, caring, and support for the viewer. In contrast, social change messages were those in which the viewer predicted that prejudiced views would change and that family members and friends would become more accepting. The results of this first study showed that, while all of the videos delivered a message of comfort, about half of the videos conveyed a social connection message and about a quarter conveyed a social change message. But how do LGBTQ viewers respond to such messages? The goal of the next study was to determine whether the different messages were more or less comforting to LGBTQ viewers. In this study, participants who self-identified as lesbian or gay rated messages that had social connection themes and those that had social change themes in terms of how comforting they were. The results showed that the participants perceived both types of messages as being comforting, but they were slightly more comforted by the social change messages.

These results are related to the findings discussed in your text by Bergsieker, Shelton and Richeson (2010) [DOI: 10.1037/a0018474]. In the slightly different context of an interracial interaction, the goal of Whites is to be liked and seen as unbiased, whereas the goal of Blacks is to be respected and seen as competent. If it is a common wish to be respected, rather than liked in interactions like these, then perhaps it makes sense that LGBTQ individuals are slightly more comforted by social change messages. These messages promise a future where prejudice will decrease and people will be treated fairly, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Visit the It Gets Better website for more information... www.itgetsbetter.org/

References

- Bergsieker, H. B., Shelton, J. N. & Richeson, J. A. (2010). [DOI: 10.1037/a0018474]. To be liked versus respected: Divergent goals in interracial interactions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99, 248–264.

- Rattan, A. & Ambady, N. (2014). [DOI: 10.1177/0146167213519480]. How “It Gets Better”: Effectively communicating support to targets of prejudice. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40, 555–566.

Case Study 6

Changing the definition of in-group

The definition of in-group can be changed by recategorizing individuals. This can be done in a various different ways. One way is to recategorize individuals into one superordinate group; “they” and “us” become “we.” The former intergroup boundaries are replaced with a single, inclusive boundary. Another way to recategorize individuals is to see them as separate individuals instead of belonging to a group. This separate-individuals representation is another strategy next to one-group representation to reduce intergroup bias, and it transforms one’s salient personal identity from “we” to “me.”

Gaertner et al. (1989) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.57.2.239] demonstrated that both strategies reduced intergroup bias. However, they reduced this bias in different ways. One-group representation reduced intergroup bias by evaluating the former out-group members more positively; while separate-individuals representation reduced intergroup bias by evaluating former in-group members less positively. In addition, in one-group representation, interactions with former out-group members were regarded as more friendly, cooperative, and trusting than in the separate-individuals representation. So reducing intergroup bias by recategorizing individuals into one superordinate group is preferred to the separate-individuals representation.

Reference

- Gaertner, S. L., Mann, J., Murrell, A., & Dovidio, J. F. (1989). [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.57.2.239]. Reducing intergroup bias: The benefits of recategorization. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 57, 239–249.