

The Stigma of Privilege: Racial Identity and Stigma Consciousness Among Biracial Individuals

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Abstract Racial identification is a complex and dynamic process for multiracial individuals, who as members of multiple racial groups have been shown to self-identify or be identified by others differently, depending on the social context. For biracial individuals who have white and minority ancestry, such identity shifting (e.g., from minority to white, or vice versa) may be a way to cope with the threats to their racial identity that can be signaled by the presence or absence of whites and/or minorities in their social environment. We examine whether *stigma consciousness* (Pinel in *J Pers Soc Psychol* 76(1):114–128, 1999; i.e., the chronic awareness of the stereotyping and prejudice that minorities face) interacts with the sociocultural context to predict social identity threat, belonging, and racial identification. Using experience sampling methodology, minority/white biracial individuals (27 Asian/white, 22 black/white, and 26 Latino/white) reported the racial composition of their environment, social identity threat for their component racial identities, overall feelings of belonging, and racial identification over a 1-week period. Results suggest that stigma consciousness predicts the extent to which biracial people identify with their white background and experience belonging in different racial contexts. We discuss racial identity shifting in response to context-based threats as a protective strategy for biracial people, and identity where participants' sociocultural contexts and experiences with racial identity and threat

differ as a result of their minority racial group or ascribed race.

Keywords Multiracial · Race · Intergroup relations · Collective self-esteem · Stigma consciousness · Social identity

Introduction

Census data reveals that the US multiracial population has approached more than nine million individuals, the vast majority of whom are actually biracial individuals of minority/white descent (Brunsma 2005; Humes et al. 2011; Jones and Symens-Smith 2001; Saulny 2011). Indeed, the minority/white biracial population is the largest and fastest growing segment of the multiracial population (Lee and Bean 2004) and one of the largest and fastest growing segments of the US population overall (US Census Bureau 2011). Beyond the growing visibility of the biracial population, many researchers have noted that biracial populations challenge the idea that race is rooted in a valid biological or genetic reality and that racial identification processes are static, unidimensional, and unaffected by situational factors (e.g., Lee and Bean 2004; Root 1996; Sanchez and Garcia 2009; see also Jackson 2011). Consequently, research examining the causes and meanings of racial identification in biracial populations (especially biracial individuals who experience their multiple racial identities as valued or devalued depending on the social context) may advance social scientific thinking to more complex and dynamic ideas about race that better accommodate America's growing racial diversity. Thus, there is a great need for multiracial research in general and for work that examines the context-based factors that affect identity shifting in biracial populations in particular.

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Indeed, the literature on multiracial identity has underscored the malleability and context-bound nature of racial self-categorization. For example, this work demonstrates that multiracial populations are likely to change both the importance of their racial identity across contexts and their racial self-categorization across time (Harris and Sim 2002; Hitlin et al. 2006; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Sanchez et al. 2009; Sanchez and Garcia 2009). In fact, multiracial people are four times more likely to change their identity than to keep a consistent racial identity (Hitlin et al. 2006), meaning that a person who identifies as biracial Asian/white today will likely self-categorize as Asian or white at a later date. Though monoracial people also show racial identity fluctuation (e.g., cultural frame switching; Hong et al. 2000; see also Brown et al. 2006; Penner and Sapperstein 2008), multiracial people of all racial groups may be more likely to change their racial identification in accordance with the social context (Hitlin et al. 2006; Harris and Sim 2002). In particular, the presence of a similar other, such as a person who belongs to a shared racial group, could affect the extent to which a biracial person identified as a member of his or her component racial groups. At the same time, individual difference variables such as levels of *stigma consciousness* (i.e., the chronic awareness of and expectation of experiencing, racial discrimination, and prejudice; Pinel 1999) may cause some biracial individuals to be more chronically vigilant of, and affected by, identity-threatening signals in their immediate environment.

The present study explores whether stigma consciousness interacts with the *sociocultural context* (i.e., the presence of whites or minorities in the immediate environment) to impact when biracial people who have both minority and white ancestry are likely to identify with their minority and/or white identities. We also seek to identify a mechanism that accounts for the psychological process of racial identity shifting in the sociocultural context. In doing so, we examine whether the experiences of stigma, belonging, identification, or identity threat vary for biracial individuals who belong to different racial/ethnic minority groups (e.g., white/Asian vs. white/Latino). We also examine whether these experiences vary for biracial individuals based on ascribed identity, or the racial identity that such individuals believe they are primarily given by others. Thus, this research represents a dynamic and context-based approach to racial identification.

Race and Biracial Identification

The racial categorization of biracial (and multiracial) individuals, by self and other, reveals much about the social construction of race and the formation of racial categories. Although scientists once believed, as some lay people still do, that racial categories reflect true biological or genetic differences between racial groups (Smedley and

Smedley 2005; Williams and Eberhardt 2008), scholars now construe race as socially constructed according to social, economic, political, historical, and national frameworks (Markus 2008; Omi and Winant 1986; Smedley and Smedley 2005). Biracial populations confounded biological and genetic perspectives on race, which view racial categories as singular, impermeable, and natural, as well as racial models and classification systems that were built on such assumptions because they traverse racial boundaries (Smedley and Smedley 2005; Spencer 2006; Haslam et al. 2000).

Biracial populations also reveal how racial categories are formed based on arbitrary physical distinctions to maintain status differentials between groups. In particular, minority/white biracial populations highlight how such racial distinctions have been enforced by processes that seek to maintain power and privilege in among high status (i.e., white) groups (e.g., Graves 2002; Omi and Winant 1986; Smedley and Smedley 2005; Spencer 1997). For example, the historical “one drop rule,” under which any person with any amount of African ancestry was categorized as black, ensured that biracial people would be classified in accordance with the rule of *hypodescent* (under which an individual with any minority ancestry is categorized as such; see Davis 1991; Good et al. in press). Indeed, this rule sought to relegate biracial individuals to lower-status groups in order to preserve the social and economic power of the higher-status (white) group by constraining the racial categorization options of biracial individuals. Although this rule has long since been legally enforced, it is notable that individuals still categorize both black/white and Asian/white biracial targets predominantly as minority (Ho et al. 2011; Peery and Bodenhausen 2008). However, the tendency to categorize minority/white biracial people in accordance with hypodescent may be more prominent for biracial targets who have black (vs. Asian) minority ancestry, and when categorization tasks require perceivers to make automatic (vs. deliberative) judgments (Ho et al. 2011; Peery and Bodenhausen 2008). Consequently, some researchers suggest that multiracial individuals who have black ancestry are particularly conscribed in their racial identification choices (Christian 2000; Lee and Bean 2007; Khanna 2011; Phillips et al. 2007; Samuels 2006).

Therefore, for biracial individuals of all racial backgrounds, racial identity is a complex and multi-determined process that is influenced by both internal and external factors (Cross 1991; Helms 1990; Phillips et al. 2007; Phinney and Rotheram 1987; Root 1996; Samuels 2009). Indeed, biracial people’s racial identification has been shown to be influenced by, among other factors, phenotype and other factors related to physical appearance, experiences with discrimination, exposure to role models or engagement in racial/ethnic communities or practices, and acceptance from racial ingroup members (e.g.,

LaFromboise et al. 1993; Khanna 2011; Phillips et al. 2007; Rockquemore 1999; Rockquemore et al. 2009; Rockquemore and Lazloffy 2003; Root 1998; Shih and Sanchez 2005; Tashiro 2002; Townsend et al. 2009; for a review, see Sanchez et al. 2012). Multiracial individuals have even been shown to experience discrimination and rejection from monoracial members of their own racial group (e.g., Shih and Sanchez 2005; Storrs 1999). Thus, when constructing their racial identity, biracial people contend not only with their own personal feelings, but also with the way in which other people perceive and categorize them (e.g., as minority or as white; Gaskins 1999; Khanna 2010, 2011; Nakashima 1992; Newsome 2001; Root 1996). Consequently, we examine how ascribed race affects biracial individuals' experiences with belonging, racial identity, and threat. Moreover, the process of racial identification for biracial people is particularly fluid, subject to changes over time, and context-bound.

Sociocultural Context

Biracial identity is particularly malleable and thus sensitive to variations across contexts (Harris and Sim 2002; Hitlin et al. 2006; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002; Sanchez et al. 2009; Sanchez and Garcia 2009). Therefore, a socially-situated approach to biracial identity that considers the contextual cues that influence racial identity and its related meanings (e.g., racial identification; social identity threat) is necessary. Previous research has demonstrated that one such cue may be the presence of similar others (Frable et al. 1998; Moss-Racusin et al. 2010; Murphy et al. 2007; Yip 2005). Stigmatized group members who are in the presence of similarly stigmatized others report higher self-esteem, greater positive affect, and lower anxiety compared to when there is an absence of similarly stigmatized others (Frable et al. 1998). Both women and racial and ethnic minorities have been shown to perform better when there is greater gender or racial diversity, respectively, because the presence of similar others reduces the identity threat that they experience (e.g., Kanter 1977; Sekaquaptewa and Thompson 2003; Wilton et al. 2012). In women, the presence of similar others (women) also contributes to greater feelings of belonging (Murphy et al. 2007). In addition, men who experience their gender identity as important but devalued also relate better to close others who have similarly devalued identities (Moss-Racusin et al. 2010). Together this work suggests that, when around similar (versus dissimilar) others who are likely to accept and value their shared stigmatized group identity, stigmatized group members (1) feel psychologically closer to their stigmatized identity and (2) experience less identity-related threat and higher belonging (see also Murphy et al. 2007). In support of this notion, research indicates

that the presence of racially similar others increases the salience of one's ethnic identity in the moment (Yip 2005).

Identity Threat and Racial Identification

Individuals can experience *social identity threat* when they experience their social identity as devalued (e.g., Branscombe et al. 1999; Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008; Steele and Aronson 1995). Stigmatized individuals engage in coping mechanisms to buffer the self from negative evaluations, such as by psychologically distancing themselves from either a situation that devalues their identity or the devalued identity itself (Major and O'Brien 2005; Major and Schmader 1998; Murphy et al. 2007; Pinel 1999; Schmader et al. 2001). For example, if a female Princeton student feels devalued in math contexts due to her gender identity, she may remove herself from situations that emphasize her gender identity (which is devalued in math contexts) by choosing not to pursue math a high level. Alternatively, she could psychologically distance herself from her devalued gender identity by increasing the importance of her Princeton identity (which is valued in math contexts), and having done so, choose to pursue math at a high level.

Previous work on identity adaptiveness suggests that individuals shift their identification in response to identity threats across a variety of social categories, including both gender and race (e.g., Pittinsky et al. 1999; Shih 2004; Shih et al. 1999; see also Shih et al. 2010). Biracial individuals belong to two racial groups. Therefore, they may seek to buffer themselves from the negative effects of racial identity threat by identifying more strongly with the racial group that is more adaptive in the social context and psychologically distancing themselves from the racial identity that is less adaptive in the same context. That is not to say that shifting racial identification would automatically engender categorization by others as a member of a particular racial group (e.g., as black). Rather, like the female Princeton math student who emphasizes her Princeton identity in math contexts but does not lose her gender identity, the biracial individual may focus in the moment on the racial identity that he or she feels will be more valued. Even biracial people who *primarily* identify, or are identified (ascribed), as a member of one racial group (e.g., as white and not as multiracial or minority, or vice versa) may shift their racial identification in response to a particular context-based threat. Biracial individuals hold particularly flexible and nuanced views of race (Shih et al. 2007), so they may be able to adapt their racial identity in a given context regardless of their physical appearance or ascribed racial identity. This pattern is consistent with the high rates of racial identity switching reported in multiracial populations (e.g., Hitlin

et al. 2006). Consequently, we examine whether biracial people's level of identification with their two racial identities (i.e., from white to minority, or vice versa) varies in accordance with whether they perceive that identity to be valued by others in the context. However, we also examine whether or not participants' ascribed racial identity (as well as actual minority group) plays a role in such processes.

Stigma Consciousness and Social Identity Threat

Stigma consciousness is the chronic awareness of negative stereotypes about one's social identities and the subsequent expectation that others will interpret one's behaviors in terms of these negative stereotypes (Pinel 1999). Racial minorities who are high in stigma consciousness tend to be more attuned to race-related threats (Pinel 1999) and thus feel that their identities are constantly under threat. As a result, they tend to report increased psychological distress, greater susceptibility to stereotype threat (i.e., perform poorly on analytic tests), lower self-esteem, and reduced trust, especially in largely white environments such as academic institutions (Mendoza-Denton et al. 2002; Pinel et al. 2005; Sellers and Shelton 2003). Indeed, individuals who are chronically aware of stigma anticipate greater discrimination and take a more vigilant approach to interactions with outgroup members who they expect to be perpetrators of prejudice (Pinel 2002).

Stigma consciousness provides a valuable approach to understanding patterns of racial identity shifting among minority/white biracial individuals within the sociocultural environment. Because racial minorities who are high in stigma consciousness expect to be treated in particular contexts as a result of their race, minority/white biracial individuals who are high in stigma consciousness should experience their white or minority identities differently when they are in the presence of whites and/or similar-race minorities. In other words, stigma consciousness should influence the value of their racial background in different sociocultural contexts and thus their racial identification.

Therefore, the presence or absence of either whites or same-race minorities defines the sociocultural context for minority/white biracial people, which should influence racial identification and overall feelings of belonging by conveying the value (and thus the perceived threat) of having that identity in the context. For example, being around minorities may put biracial individuals' white identity under threat, while being around whites may put their minority identity under threat. When biracial individuals experience racial identity threat, they may psychologically distance themselves from the threatened racial

identity and bring themselves psychologically closer to the unthreatened racial identity by shifting their racial identification in that context. However, this may only be the case for biracial individuals who are high in stigma consciousness and thus vigilant to identity-threatening cues in the sociocultural context.

The Present Study

Using experience sampling methodology (Barrett and Feldman-Barrett 2000), the present study examines whether minority/white biracial individuals shift their racial identification as a means to cope with threats to their racial identity. We took initial assessments of participants' levels of stigma consciousness and ascribed racial identity. Then, we collected daily reports of participants' the sociocultural context (i.e., the presence of minorities and whites), social identity threats, belonging, and racial identification. We predicted that individual differences in stigma consciousness would moderate the relationships between the sociocultural context, and identity threat, belonging, and racial identification such that individuals who had higher levels of stigma consciousness would experience identity shifts consistent with identity threats. Specifically, we hypothesized that when biracial individuals who were higher in stigma consciousness were in contexts where minorities were present, they would report greater levels of belonging, greater white identity threat, lower minority identity threat, lower white identification, and greater identification as minority than those biracial individuals who were lower in stigma consciousness. In addition, we predicted that for individuals who were higher in stigma consciousness, identity threats would mediate the relationships between the sociocultural context and both belonging and racial identification. Furthermore, we explored whether participants' ascribed race (i.e., whether they view themselves as perceived by others primarily as minority or white) and participant minority race (e.g., black, Latino, or Asian) would also impact their experiences with belonging, identification, and threat.

Method

Participants

Seventy eight minority/white biracial individuals from New Jersey and California participated in the study in exchange for \$50. Participants consisted of 22 black/white,

27 Asian/white, and 26 Latino/white biracial¹ respondents. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 55 with a mean age of 22.67 years (SD = 7.00; 62.7 % women).

Procedure and Materials

Participants were recruited through advertisements and flyers to participate in a week-long diary data collection. The study had two stages. In the initial (i.e., pretest) stage, we collected participants' demographic information (e.g., age), ascribed racial identity, and measured levels of stigma consciousness. In the diary data collection period, we provided participants with palm pilots that administered brief 5-min questionnaires measuring the racial composition of each participant's environment, as well as his or her feelings of belonging, threat, and racial identification (see Diary Data Collection Measures, below) at random time points between 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. for each participant. Utilizing a signal contingent method (Bolger et al. 2003; Reis and Gable 2000), we programmed the palm pilots to beep seven times each day for 1 week. On average, participants completed 37.70 reports for 8.03 days. Alphas for all within-person questions were computed across both participants and contexts. The present study reports on a subset of the data collected.

¹ We use the term "biracial" to describe the Latino/white biracial people in our sample because participants were recruited for the study if they considered themselves to be biracial (i.e., of two different races). This approach is consistent with other multiracial researchers (e.g., Ho et al. 2011), who also use the term "biracial" to describe Latino/white samples. We recognize that because there is no official Latino/Hispanic racial category in the US, individuals who have Latino/Hispanic and white/European ancestry are most precisely described as "bi-ethnic" and not biracial unless they also belong to two racial groups (e.g., are white/European and black/Latino). However, we also acknowledge that there is still considerable discussion and confusion about whether Latinos are a racial or an ethnic group (Hitlin et al. 2006; Navarro 2012; Sanchez et al. 2012), which underscores the malleability and social construction of racial categories and thus affords flexibility with the use of related terms. Additionally, Latinos view themselves as distinct from white, black, Asian, and other racial groups (e.g., Cohn 2012; Navarro 2012), and many individuals who have both Latino/Hispanic and white/European ancestry consider themselves biracial (see Sanchez et al. 2012). Indeed, the failure to include a Latino/Hispanic racial group on the most recent (2010) U.S. Census caused 18 million Latinos (approximately 35 % of the Latino population) to not identify with any racial group. Latinos are also often viewed as distinct from white, black, Asian and other racial groups (e.g., as less American than blacks or whites, Dovidio et al. 2010; as having distinct stereotypes, Fiske et al. 2002). Furthermore, multiracial and multiethnic Americans are often grouped together as under the umbrella term "mixed race" (Saulny 2011), and the literatures that explore multiracial and multiethnic identity processes are largely overlapping (e.g., exploring themes of identity shifting, issues with imposed versus internal identification).

Pretest Measures

Stigma Consciousness

We administered Pinel's (1999) 10-item Stigma Consciousness Scale, which includes items such as, "Most whites have a problem viewing racial minorities as equals," during the initial questionnaire session of the study ($\alpha = .79$).

Ascribed Race

Participants specified the racial group (e.g., white, Asian) to which others most often perceived them as belonging. We created a binomial variable wherein participants were identified as being primarily perceived by others as either "white" (dummy coded as 0) or "minority" (e.g., Asian, black, Latino; dummy coded as 1).

Diary Data Collection Measures

Consistent with prior methodology, all diary data measures described below were single-item measures collected via the palm pilot utilizing the ESP Program (Barrett and Feldman-Barrett 2000). With experience sampling methodology, items are asked repeatedly over time. As such, there is a need for concision in survey design in order to facilitate survey completion. Moreover, reliability can be determined by aggregating single items over time; multiple items are not essential for establishing reliability (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson 1987).

Racial Composition

Participants were asked about the racial composition of their immediate social context (e.g., percentage of minority and white people). Participants only answered questions about the racial composition of the context catered to their specific background. For example, Asian/whites were asked about the presence of whites and Asians, but not about Latinos or blacks. We asked, "Right now, how many people of Asian descent are around you (excluding yourself)? Please give your best approximation." Participants responded on a scale with the following anchors: (1) Alone or None (0 %), (2) Almost none (1–25 %), (3) Less than half (25–50 %), (4) About half (50 %), (5) More than half (50–75 %), (6) Almost all (75–100 %). In addition, participants were asked in a separate question whether they were alone so that we could analyze the presence of minorities and whites while controlling for the overall effects of being alone in the social context.

Table 1 Means and standard errors for all variables (controlling for age) by participant minority racial group and ascribed race

	Minority racial group			Ascribed race		
	Black/white (n = 22)	Latino/white (n = 26)	Asian/white (n = 27)	Minority (n = 51)	White (n = 24)	Total (n = 75)
Stigma consciousness	4.61 (0.28)	3.85 (0.20)	3.95 (0.25)	3.97 (0.24)	4.29 (.15)	4.14 (0.14)
Belonging	4.34 (0.18)	4.10 (0.13)	4.16 (0.16)	4.16 (0.10)	4.24 (0.16)	4.20 (0.09)
White identification	3.51 (0.20)	3.70 (0.15)	3.75 (0.18)	3.46 (0.11)	3.85 (0.18)	3.65 (0.10)
White ID threat	3.16 (0.19)	3.57 (0.17)	3.17 (0.14)	3.40 (0.10)	3.20 (0.17)	3.30 (0.10)
Minority identification	3.95 (0.21)	3.38 (0.15) ^a	4.08 (0.19) ^a	3.78 (0.11)	3.82 (0.18)	3.82 (0.11)
Minority ID threat	3.36 (0.18)	3.48 (0.13)	3.48 (0.17)	3.64 (0.10) ^b	3.25 (0.16) ^b	3.44 (0.09)
Minority presence	2.19 (0.20)	1.67 (0.14) ^c	2.45 (0.18) ^c	2.17 (0.11)	2.03 (0.17)	2.10 (0.10)
White presence	1.96 (0.24)	2.59 (0.17)	2.49 (0.21)	2.34 (0.13)	2.35 (0.21)	2.35 (0.12)

Means adjusted for participant age are displayed in the above table, with the standard errors in parentheses. Letters in superscript denote means that differ significantly at the .05 level on a particular variable

To compare the presence of minorities to their absence as well as the presence of whites to their absence in a manner consistent with previous approaches examining the benefits of the presence of similar others (e.g., Frable et al. 1998), we collapsed all responses from 1 to 100 % such that we created a “whites present” variable where 0 = no whites present and 1 = white present and a “minorities present” variable where 0 = no minorities of their shared background and 1 = minorities present of their shared background. Preliminary analyses suggested that the presence of similar others, rather than the percentage measure, was a better predictor (e.g., explained more variance) of the outcomes. Therefore, all analyses compare the presence of whites to their absence, and the presence of minorities to their absence, while controlling for whether or not the participant was alone during the time of their report. Reporting of racial composition was randomized such that participants either received racial composition questions first or last.

Social Identity Threat

On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), the following question (from CSE-R; Luhtanen and Crocker 1992) was asked about the perceived value of each their racial backgrounds, “At this moment, I feel that my [white or minority] racial background is valued by others.”

Belonging

On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), the following question was asked about participants’ feelings of belonging, “Right now, I feel that people don’t seem to like me very much,” (reverse coded).

Racial Identification

On a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), the following question (from CSE-R; Luhtanen and Crocker 1992) was asked about the extent to which they identified with their racial backgrounds, “At this moment, I feel that my [white or minority] racial background is an important part of myself image.”

Results

Participants completed a total of 2,943 reports and reported being in the presence of minorities 37 % of the time and whites 40 % of the time.²

Mean Analyses

We first examined whether there were differences in participants’ levels of stigma consciousness, belonging, racial identification, social identity threat, primary perceived racial identification (i.e., whether the participant was perceived as white or minority), or the number of white or minority others in the social context, as a result of their minority racial group (i.e., whether the participant was

² For all analyses, we strictly adhered to the standard level of significance recognized by the greater social scientific community ($p < .05$) as a cutoff point for interpreting exploratory moderation analyses. Thus, marginal effects are not discussed for exploratory effects unless they are necessary to decompose a significant interaction.

Table 2 Interclass correlation computation (ICC) for belonging, racial identification, and identity threat

	τ	σ^2	ICC
Belonging	0.73	0.77	0.48
White identification	0.53	0.37	0.59
White ID threat	0.42	0.44	0.49
Minority identification	0.43	0.42	0.51
Minority ID threat	0.47	0.40	0.54

We conducted an HLM analysis without any predictors at either level 1 or level 2 (i.e., fully unconditional model) to determine the within- and between-person variance for belonging, identity value, and identification. The output from these HLM analyses was used to compute the interclass correlation (ICC) to determine the between-person variance. The ICC is computed as $\tau/(\tau + \sigma^2)$, where τ is the variance for the intercept and σ^2 is the within-person variance

black/white vs. Latino/white vs. Asian/white). Preliminary analyses suggested that we control for age, but no effects of gender or data collection setting (CA or NJ) were found. Thus, we conducted 3 (minority racial group: black/white vs. Latino/white vs. Asian/white) \times 2 ascribed race: minority vs. white) analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) controlling for age separately on each continuous dependent variable (i.e., stigma consciousness, racial identification, belonging, and social identity threat). We also conducted a nonparametric ANCOVA (i.e., independent samples Kruskal–Wallis test) on ascribed race because the variable was categorical. Covariate-adjusted means and standard errors for all continuous variables are shown for the full sample and separately by participant minority racial group (i.e., black/white vs. Latino/white vs. Asian/white) and ascribed race in Table 1.

The ANCOVA analyses revealed significant effects of minority racial group on both minority racial identification, $F(1,68) = 5.04$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .13$, and the frequency that they were in contexts with same-race minorities, $F(1,68) = 6.22$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .16$. Post hoc tests using Bonferroni's procedure revealed that white/Latino participants reported both lower levels of minority racial identification, $p = .01$, and less frequent presence of minorities in their context, $p < .01$, than Asian/white biracial participants. There were no significant main effects of, or interactions between, participant minority racial group and ascribed race on stigma consciousness, belonging, white identification or identity threat, or average number of whites in the context. Notably, we found a significant main effect of age on belonging, $F(1,68) = 5.61$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .08$, white identification, $F(1,68) = 8.42$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .11$, white identity threat, $F(1,68) = 3.83$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$, and minority presence, $F(1,68) = 5.21$, $p = .05$,

$\eta^2 = .07$. Moreover, the nonparametric ANCOVA (i.e., independent samples Kruskal–Wallis test) revealed that the distribution of ascribed (white vs. minority) race was not the same across biracial participants, $H(2) = 11.91$, $p < .01$. Rather, Latino/white individuals reported being ascribed a white (vs. minority) racial identity more often than either black/white or Asian/white individuals, but there was no difference between black/white and Asian/white participants in ascribed race.

Hierarchical Linear Modeling of Moderation Effects

We used hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk and Raudenbush 1992) to examine our nested and repeated measures design using restricted maximum-likelihood models. All between-person variables were standardized prior to conducting HLM analyses. Within-person variables were group mean centered (i.e., deviations from participants' own baseline) within HLM. Thus, significant within-person effects indicate differences from participants' own baselines. See Table 2 for interclass correlations and Table 3 for correlations between state and person variables in the study. Following earlier analyses, we controlled for participant age but not gender or data collection setting in all HLM analyses.

To test the hypothesis that stigma consciousness moderated responses to the presence of minorities or whites on identity threat, belonging, and racial identification, we examined whether the within-person (level 1) effects of having some minorities or whites present (i.e., the “whites present” and “minorities present” variables) in the social context on racial identification, belonging, and social identity threat depended on between-person (level 2) differences in stigma consciousness, minority group background, and ascribed race. To examine the effects of the three racial minority groups to which participants belonged, we compared black versus Asian identity and Latino versus Asian identity. Thus, there were two dummy coded variables “black ID” (1 = black, 0 = Asian) and “Latino ID” (1 = Latino, 0 = Asian). Asians are generally considered higher in status than blacks and Latinos (e.g., Ho et al. 2011); therefore, we dummy coded the variables in this way in order to compare the effect of a higher versus a lower-status racial minority identity. In this equation, we also controlled for the between-person (level 2) effects of participant age. The HLM equations were as follows:

Level-1 Model

$$Y = P0 + P1 * (\text{White Presence}) + P2 * (\text{Minority Presence}) + P3 * (\text{Alone}) + E$$

Level-2 Model

Table 3 Partial correlations between pretest and state variables (controlling for age) for all participants

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Stigma consciousness	–								
2. Belonging	0.02	–							
3. White ID	–0.04	0.02	–						
4. White ID threat	–0.03	0.13	0.59*	–					
5. Minority ID	0.15	0.09	0.31**	0.09	–				
6. Minority ID threat	0.07	0.17	0.46**	0.67**	0.48**	–			
7. Minority presence	–0.11	–0.03	0.13	0.23	0.02	0.10	–		
8. White presence	0.35**	0.09	0.03	–0.07	0.35**	0.25*	0.01	–	
9. Ascribed race	0.22	–0.03	–0.27**	–0.01	0.12	0.23	–0.12	0.22	–

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

$$P0 = B00 + B01 * (SC) + B02 * (Black ID) + B03 * (Latino ID) + B04 * (Ascribed Race) + B05(Age) + R0$$

Table 4 Final estimation of fixed effects from HLM analyses predicting belonging with racial composition of the context as level 1 predictors and stigma consciousness, minority group and appearance as level 2 predictors

	Belonging <i>b</i> (SE)
Intercept (average situation level; B00)	4.17 (0.11)***
Individual (Level 2)	
Stigma consciousness (B01)	0.01 (0.09)
Black ID (B02)	0.03 (0.09)
Latino ID (B03)	–0.09 (0.10)
Ascribed race (B04)	–0.06 (0.09)
Age (B05)	–0.19 (0.08)*
Situation context (Level 1)	
White presence (B10)	0.03 (0.06)
Minority presence (B20)	0.06 (0.07)
Alone (B30)	0.01 (0.08)
Interaction between level 1 and level 2	
White presence × SC (B11)	–0.15 (0.05)**
White presence × black ID (B12)	0.16 (0.06)**
White presence × Latino ID (B13)	0.10 (0.06)
White presence × black ID × SC (B14)	–0.06 (0.06)
White presence × Latino ID × SC (B15)	0.08 (0.05)
White presence × Ascribed race (B16)	0.08 (0.05)
Minority Presence × SC (B21)	0.09 (0.06)
Minority Presence × black ID (B22)	–0.13 (0.07)
Minority Presence × Latino ID (B23)	–0.04 (0.06)
Minority Presence × black ID × SC (B24)	0.12 (0.06)
Minority Presence × Latino ID × SC (B25)	–0.05 (0.06)
Minority Presence × Ascribed Race (B26)	–0.02 (0.06)

SC stigma consciousness; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

$$P1 = B10 + B11 * (White Presence * SC) + B12 * (White Presence * Black ID) + B13 * (White Presence * Latino ID) + B14 * (White Presence * Black ID * SC) + B15 * (White Presence * Latino ID * SC) + B16 * (White Presence * Ascribed Race) + R1$$

$$P2 = B20 + B21 * (Minority Presence * SC) + B22 * (Minority Presence * Black ID) + B23 * (Minority Presence * Latino ID) + B24 * (Minority Presence * Black ID * SC) + B25 * (Minority Presence * Latino ID * SC) + B26 * (Minority Presence * Ascribed Race) + R2$$

$$P3 = B40 + R3$$

To examine significant interactions, we conducted simple slopes analysis using the procedures set forth by Aiken and West (1991). The regression coefficients and standard errors for all main effects and interactions are shown for belonging in Table 4, white identity and white identity threat in Table 5, and minority identity and minority identity threat in Table 6.

Belonging

Consistent with hypotheses, HLM analyses revealed that stigma consciousness moderated the effect of having whites present on feelings of belonging. Simple slopes analysis revealed that for participants higher in SC, the presence of whites was associated with lower feelings of belonging in the sociocultural context, $\beta = -0.16$, $t(73) = -2.00$, $p = .05$, whereas for those lower in SC, the presence of whites was associated with a non-significant trend of greater feelings of belonging in the sociocultural context, $\beta = 0.13$, $t(73) = 1.59$, $p = .12$; See Fig. 1.

Table 5 Final estimation of fixed effects from HLM analyses predicting white identification and identity threat with racial composition of the context as level 1 predictors and stigma consciousness, minority group and ascribed race as level 2 predictors

	White ID <i>b</i> (SE)	White ID threat <i>b</i> (SE)
Intercept (average situation level; B00)	3.55 (0.08)***	3.32 (0.09)***
Individual (Level 2)		
Stigma consciousness (B01)	0.02 (0.09)	0.02 (0.08)
Black ID (B02)	−0.03 (0.10)	−0.05 (0.10)
Latino ID (B03)	−0.00 (0.10)	0.15 (0.10)
Ascribed race (B04)	−0.27 (0.09)***	0.06 (0.09)
Age (B05)	−0.25 (0.09)**	−0.18 (0.08)*
Situation context (Level 1)		
White presence (B10)	0.09 (0.04)	0.21 (0.05)***
Minority presence (B20)	0.02 (0.05)	−0.03 (0.05)
Alone (B30)	0.01 (0.04)	0.03 (0.05)
Interaction between level 1 and level 2		
White presence × SC (B11)	0.07 (0.05)	0.10 (0.05)*
White presence × black ID (B12)	0.01 (0.05)	0.04 (0.05)
White presence × Latino ID (B13)	−0.02 (0.05)	−0.01 (0.05)
White presence × black ID × SC (B14)	−0.05 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
White presence × Latino ID × SC (B15)	−0.02 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)
White presence × Ascribed race (B16)	−0.04 (0.05)	−0.03 (0.05)
Minority presence × SC (B21)	−0.16 (0.05)***	−0.12 (0.05)**
Minority presence × black ID (B22)	0.05 (0.05)	−0.04 (0.05)
Minority presence × Latino ID (B23)	0.06 (0.05)	−0.02 (0.05)
Minority presence × black ID × SC (B24)	0.05 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Minority presence × Latino ID × SC (B25)	0.07 (0.05)	0.06 (0.05)
Minority presence × Ascribed race (B26)	0.06 (0.05)	0.03 (0.05)

SC stigma consciousness;

* $p < .05$, ** $p \leq .01$,

*** $p < .001$

Moreover, HLM analyses revealed that the presence of whites also moderated the effect of black (vs. Asian) racial identity on feelings of belonging. Decomposing this effect, we found that the presence of whites resulted in opposite, though non-significant, feelings of belonging for black/white and Asian/white participants. Specifically, the presence of whites resulted in greater feelings of belonging for black/white participants, $\beta = 0.19$, $t(19) = 1.19$, $p = .25$, but lower feelings of belonging for Asian/white participants, $\beta = -0.11$, $t(27) = -1.45$, $p = .16$. There were also no other main effects or interactions on belonging.

Racial Identification

White Identification

We found a significant interaction between minority presence and stigma consciousness on white identification. Consistent with expectations, simple slopes analysis revealed that for participants higher in stigma consciousness, the presence of minorities predicted lower white identification, $\beta = -0.14$, $t(70) = -2.28$, $p = .03$, whereas for those lower in stigma consciousness, the presence of minorities predicted greater white

identification, $\beta = 0.18$, $t(70) = 2.77$, $p = .01$; see Fig. 2. HLM analyses also revealed significant main effects of age and perceived race on white identification, such that older age and being perceived as minority (more than as white) were associated with less white identification. There were no other significant main effects or interactions on white identification.

Minority Identification

There were no significant main effects or interactions between stigma consciousness, minority race, perceived race, and the sociocultural context on minority identification.

Social Identity Threat

White Identity Threat

We found significant main effects of age and white presence on white identity threat, such that younger age and the presence of whites was associated with less white identity threat (i.e., greater white identity value). Consistent with hypotheses, HLM analyses further revealed a significant

Table 6 Final estimation of fixed effects from HLM analyses predicting minority identification and identity threat with racial composition of the context as level 1 predictors and stigma consciousness, minority group and ascribed race as level 2 predictors

	Minority ID <i>b</i> (SE)	Minority ID threat <i>b</i> (SE)
Intercept (average situation level; B00)	3.77 (0.09)***	3.60 (0.08)***
Individual (Level 2)		
Stigma consciousness (B01)	0.12 (0.11)	0.01 (0.09)
Black ID (B02)	-0.03 (0.11)	-0.07 (0.09)
Latino ID (B03)	-0.18 (0.10)	-0.05 (0.1)
Ascribed race (B04)	-0.05 (0.10)	0.11 (0.09)
Age (B05)	-0.13 (0.10)	-0.09 (0.08)
Situation context (Level 1)		
White presence (B10)	0.00 (0.04)	-0.08 (0.04)
Minority presence (B20)	0.06 (0.04)	0.09 (0.06)
Alone (B30)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.12 (0.04)**
Interaction between level 1 and level 2		
White presence × SC (B11)	-0.02 (0.04)	-0.05 (0.04)
White presence × black ID (B12)	0.00 (0.03)	0.06 (0.05)
White presence × Latino ID (B13)	0.03 (0.03)	0.11 (0.05)*
White presence × black ID × SC (B14)	-0.05 (0.04)	-0.08 (0.05)
White presence × Latino ID × SC (B15)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.02 (0.04)
White presence × Ascribed race (B16)	0.02 (0.04)	0.11 (0.04)**
Minority presence × SC (B21)	-0.01 (0.04)	0.06 (0.06)
Minority presence × black ID (B22)	-0.07 (0.04)	-0.08 (0.06)
Minority presence × Latino ID (B23)	-0.01 (0.06)	-0.08 (0.06)
Minority presence × black ID × SC (B24)	0.06 (0.03)	0.04 (0.06)
Minority presence × Latino ID × SC (B25)	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.06)
Minority presence × Ascribed race (B26)	0.00 (0.05)	-0.01 (0.06)

SC stigma consciousness;
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$,
*** $p < .001$; higher minority value corresponds to less identity threat

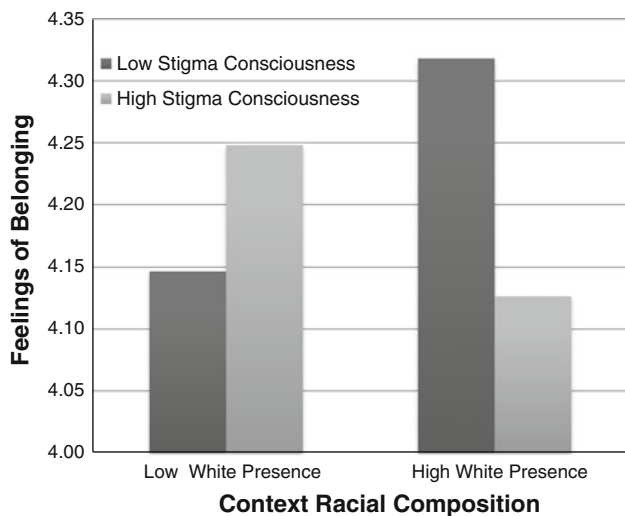


Fig. 1 Effect of white presence on belonging by stigma consciousness

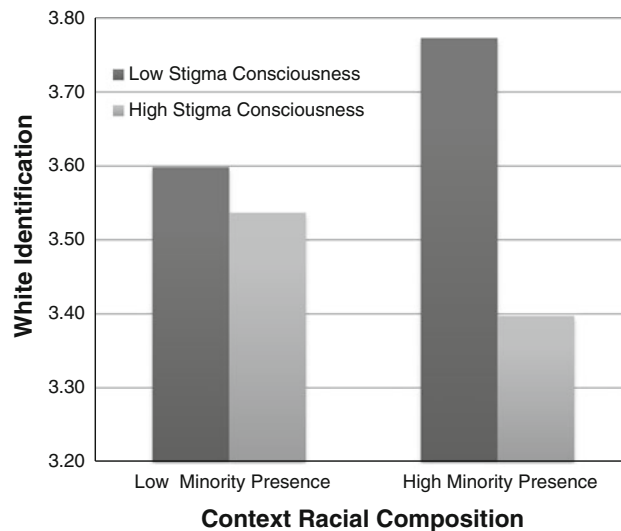


Fig. 2 Effect of minority presence on white identification by stigma consciousness

interaction between minority presence and stigma consciousness on white identity threat. Simple slopes analysis revealed that for participants higher in stigma

consciousness, the presence of other minorities predicted greater white identity threat (i.e., lower perceived value of their white identity), $\beta = -0.15$, $t(70) = -2.29$, $p = .03$,

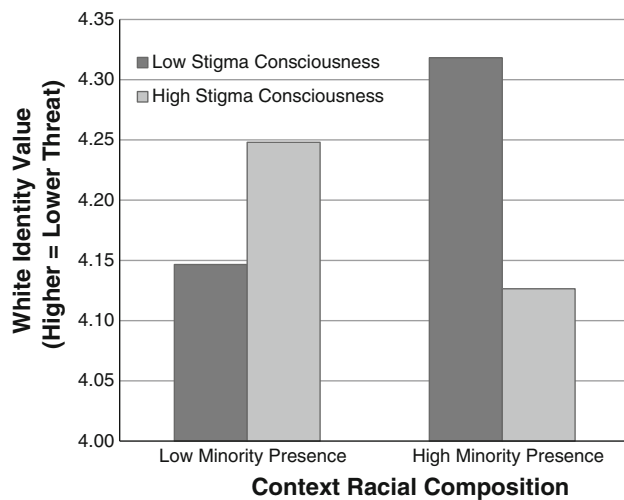


Fig. 3 Effect of minority presence on white social identity threat by stigma consciousness

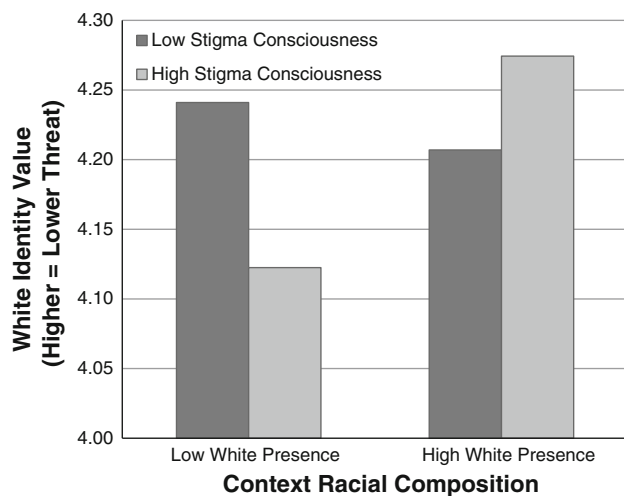


Fig. 4 Effect of white presence on white identification by stigma consciousness

whereas for those lower in stigma consciousness, the presence of other minorities was associated with a non-significant trend in the opposite direction (i.e., lower white identity threat, or greater perceived value of their white identity), $\beta = 0.11$, $t(70) = 1.57$, $p = .12$; see Fig. 3.

We also found a significant interaction between white presence and stigma consciousness on white identity threat. Simple slopes analysis revealed that for participants higher in stigma consciousness, the presence of whites was associated with less white identity threat (i.e., higher perceived value of their white identity), $\beta = 0.31$, $t(70) = 4.62$, $p < .001$, whereas for those lower in stigma consciousness, the presence of whites associated with a marginally significant trend in the opposite direction (i.e., greater white identity threat or lower perceived value of their white identity), $\beta = 0.12$, $t(70) = 1.70$, $p = .12$; see Fig. 4.

There were no other significant main effects or interactions, including no effects of ascribed race or minority racial group, on white identity threat.

Minority Identity Threat

HLM analysis revealed that the presence of minorities and being alone in the context was associated with less minority identity threat, but stigma consciousness did not moderate the effects of the sociocultural context on minority identity threat. We also found two significant interactions between white presence and Latino (vs. Asian) minority identity and between white presence and ascribed identity on minority identity threat. The presence of whites did not effect the minority identity threat (i.e., minority identity value) experienced by Latino/white participants, $\beta = 0.03$, $t(23) = 0.33$, $p = .75$. However, for Asian/white participants, the presence of whites was associated with marginally greater minority identity threat (i.e., lower minority identity value), $\beta = -0.14$, $t(27) = -1.88$, $p = .07$. Moreover, for those who were perceived as white, the presence of whites was associated with greater minority identity threat (i.e., lower minority public regard), $\beta = -0.23$, $t(18) = -2.36$, $p = .03$, whereas for those who were perceived as minority, the presence of whites did not have an effect on their public regard, $\beta = -0.00$,

Table 7 Final estimation of fixed effects from HLM analyses predicting white identification with identity value as level 1 predictor and stigma consciousness as level 2 predictor

	White identification <i>b</i> (SE)
Intercept (average situation level; B00)	3.59 (0.09)***
Individual (Level 2)	
Stigma consciousness (B01)	0.04 (0.04)
Black ID (B02)	-0.07 (0.10)
Latino ID (B03)	-0.02 (0.11)
Ascribed race (B04)	-0.23 (0.10)*
Age (B05)	-0.27 (0.10)**
Situation context (Level 1)	
White ID value (B10)	0.41 (0.04)***
Alone (B30)	-0.01 (0.02)
Interaction between level 1 and level 2	
White ID value \times SC (B11)	0.04 (0.04)
White ID value \times black ID (B12)	-0.06 (0.05)
White ID value \times Latino ID (B13)	0.03 (0.05)
White ID value \times black ID \times SC (B14)	0.03 (0.05)
White ID value \times Latino ID \times SC (B15)	-0.01 (0.05)
White ID value \times Ascribed race (B16)	0.05 (0.04)

SC stigma consciousness; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

$t(45) = -0.06, p = .96$. There were no other significant main effects or interactions on minority identity threat.

Mediations by Identity Threat

To test the hypotheses that for individuals who were high in stigma consciousness, identity threats would mediate the relationships between the sociocultural context and both belonging and racial identification, we conducted the Baron and Kenny (1986) next steps of moderated mediation (Muller et al. 2005) and computed confidence intervals based on an asymmetrical distribution of the mediated (indirect) effect to confirm mediation.

Belonging

Initial analysis supported several aspects of the prediction that identity threats would mediate the relationship between sociocultural context and overall feelings of belonging. First, stigma consciousness moderated the effect of sociocultural context on belongingness such that those higher in stigma consciousness felt lower belonging around whites and higher belonging around minorities. However, stigma consciousness did not moderate the effect of context on minority identity threat. Thus, we did not test for mediation of belongingness findings by minority identity threat.

White Identification

Consistent with the predictions, we found that stigma consciousness moderated the effect of minority presence on white identity threat and white identification. Because we proposed identity threats as mediators of the relationship between sociocultural context and identification, we tested whether white identity threat mediated the relationship between the presence of minorities and level of white identification for those higher in SC. We already demonstrated in the former analyses that the presence of minorities was associated with decreases in white identification and increases in white identity threat for those higher in SC. To test the Baron and Kenny (1986) next steps of moderated mediation (Muller et al. 2005), we examined whether the perceived value of white identity (white identity threat) predicted level of white identification. Indeed, white identity value predicted white identification regardless of stigma consciousness (see Table 7). Lastly, we tested whether the interaction between minority presence and stigma consciousness on white identification was still significant when white identity (mediator) was added as a Level 1 predictor. The interactive effect was reduced (from $\beta = -.16, p < .001$ to $\beta = -.08, p = .01$). To confirm partial mediation, we computed confidence

intervals based on an asymmetrical distribution of the mediated (indirect) effect using the PRODCLIN program (MacKinnon et al. 2007). The resulting 95 % confidence intervals ($-.09, -.02$) did not include zero, indicating a reliable mediated effect.

Discussion

As expected, we found that minority/white biracial individuals who had elevated levels of stigma consciousness tended to feel less belonging around whites, while those lower in stigma consciousness did not show effects of the sociocultural context on belonging. Also as expected, those higher in stigma consciousness showed lesser white identity threat around whites and greater white identity threat when around other minorities of their own racial minority group, which accounted for their lower white identification when in the presence of minorities of their own racial minority group. Stigma consciousness did not moderate the effect of white presence on minority identity threat and minority identification. Instead, the presence of minorities was also associated with lesser minority identity threat regardless of levels of stigma consciousness. In other words, biracial people, overall, felt that their minority identity was valued when around other minorities of their racial group. Additionally, Asian/white participants were found to experience marginally greater levels of minority identity threat when in the presence of whites, but Latino/white and black/white participants did not.

Consistent with personal narratives and other research (e.g., Jackson 2011; Lou et al. 2011; Samuels 2009; Tashiro 2002), the data reveal some differences between participants' experiences with belonging, racial identity and threat and the sociocultural context as a result of their minority racial group and ascribed race. We found that Latino/white individuals reported being viewed as white (vs. minority) more than either black/white or Asian/white individuals, as well as lower levels of minority racial identification and being around fewer racial minorities than Asian/white individuals. We also found that when in the presence of whites, those who were predominantly perceived as minority reported reduced white identification, but that those who were predominantly perceived as white reported increased minority racial identity threat. Contrary to prior work that suggests that black/white biracial individuals may be particularly strained in their racial identity choices as a result of their historical experiences with discrimination (e.g., Christian 2000; Lee and Bean 2007; Khanna 2011; Phillips et al. 2007; Samuels 2006), we did not find that black/white participants experienced greater stigma consciousness or identity threat or lower belonging or white racial identification, than either Asian/white or Latino/white

participants. While we acknowledge that racial categories are rooted in arbitrary (monoracial) physical distinctions that do not fully address biracial people, this paper offers an important and oft-unexplored account of some of the differences between the three largest segments of the multiracial population (Jones and Symens-Smith 2001). In doing so, we highlight the need for future research to account for potentially different experiences with race and identity that biracial individuals who have different racial backgrounds or (physical or behavioral) appearances may experience.

Moreover, the data suggest that, for minority/white biracial individuals, stigma consciousness explains patterns of white identification and threat better than it does patterns of minority identification and threat. This implication is notable because stigma consciousness in monoracial minorities relates to concern about minority identity only, even though monoracial minorities show evidence of identity shifting (though less frequently than multiracials; e.g., cultural frame switching, Hong et al. 2000). However, if white identity is understood as one that symbolizes the oppression of minorities, the privilege and oppression associated with white identity can be a source of tension for biracial people who have white ancestry (Storrs 1999). Given that white identity may be understudied because it is seen as a “default” and valued racial group (McDermott and Samson 2005), the present research represents an important extension of both the stigma consciousness and identity literatures.

The current study uniquely examined the role of stigma consciousness, together with ascribed racial identity and minority racial group, in perceptions of threat, belonging, and identification for biracial people of white and minority ancestry. Unique to biracial individuals, they can shift their racial identification away from one devalued racial identity to another because they have more than one racial identity (Sanchez et al. 2009). Research on identity adaptiveness suggests that alternating social identities may be an effective strategy for performance in threatening contexts (Pittinsky et al. 1999; Shih et al. 1999). However, this strategy may be most common for those who acutely perceive social identity threat in the context. Indeed, we found that biracial people experienced greater white identity threat when other minorities were present. Moreover, we showed that they tended to show lower white identification in that context, suggesting that they may have psychologically distanced themselves from the devalued identity. Thus, they showed evidence of identity shifting in this context.

We also found that those higher in stigma consciousness reported lower belonging when around whites. These findings were not driven by perceptions of minority identity threat. Instead, these findings may have resulted from perceptions of similarity. That is, minorities who have higher levels of stigma consciousness may perceive

themselves to be more similar to other minorities and more dissimilar from whites as a result of their greater perceived racial stigma. The shared minority experience of being discriminated against and treated unfairly based on their racial background may psychologically bring them closer to others who experience that same stigma. Thus, their perceptions of similarity rather than identity threat, per se, may have driven their feelings of belonging. Perceptions of similarity (whether driven by appearance or other factors) to other minorities have been shown to predict patterns of biracial identification (Ahnallen et al. 2006; Brunsma and Rockquemore 2001; Good et al. 2010). Perceptions of similarity among biracial individuals higher in stigma consciousness may also explain why those higher in stigma consciousness feel that their white identity is under threat around other minorities. Biracial people higher in stigma consciousness may assume that other minorities share their high levels of stigma consciousness. They may believe that other minorities hold a negative prototype for whiteness as a result of racism, and thus, they may experience negative attitudes about their own white heritage.

This research introduces a new perspective for the identity shifts experienced by biracial individuals. However, more work is necessary to fully understand the unique identity of biracial individuals. Given the need for concise surveys in experience sampling methodology to facilitate survey completion, we only measured the presence of same-race individuals in the social context. Future research should address whether the presence of other-race minorities in the social context would similarly influence the racial identification of biracial individuals. In other words, would the presence of Asians influence the racial identification of black/white biracial individuals? Together with the present research, the relatively little work examining how monoracial minorities perceive other-race minorities (Craig and Richeson 2012; Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Richeson and Craig 2011; Shapiro and Neuberg 2008) could help provide a fruitful framework for pursuing a project of this kind. For example, this research shows that racial minorities may view other non-whites as part of a similarly stigmatized minority ingroup or “coalition” (Craig and Richeson 2012), but that the desire to avoid being personally discriminated may increase their likelihood of discriminating an individual from another non-white racial group (Shapiro and Neuberg 2008). Additionally, given the research recognizing that multiracial people also experience discrimination or exclusion from their constituent racial minority groups (Shih and Sanchez 2005; others), future research should explore social contexts in which multiracial individuals do not view ingroup monoracial minorities as similarly stigmatized or as similar others.

Biracial research has tended to focus on black/white (and to a lesser extent, Asian/white) populations, and there is limited work on Latino/white populations (and Native American/

white and Native Hawaiian/white populations; e.g., Jackson 2011; Sanchez et al. 2012; Wilton et al. 2012). Therefore, a strength of this research is that the observed effects were found for minority/white biracial individuals from various racial minority backgrounds. Future work should continue to examine what differences, if any, underlie patterns of identity shifting for biracial individuals of different racial backgrounds. African Americans, Latinos, and Asians experience different levels and forms of social stigma, and each group also has different experiences with biracial identity (Shih and Sanchez 2005, 2009; Suyemoto and Dimas 2003). This work could shed light on the relatively small, yet statistically significant, effects reported in this research. For example, we found that Latino/white individuals reported being ascribed a white identity more than either black/white or Asian/white individuals, which may impact how they enact their racial, ethnic, or cultural identity (e.g., by speaking Spanish) based on the social context. Additionally, future work should explore the interaction of stigma consciousness and socio-cultural context on the identity shifting behaviors of biracial individuals who have other racial minority backgrounds (e.g., white/Native American individuals), as well as biracial individuals who have dual-minority identities (e.g., black/Asian individuals). We sought to recruit biracial individuals who had any combination of white and minority racial ancestry, and our sample reflects the racial and ethnic demographic composition of our collection sites. However, we recognize the limitation of not having biracial individuals who have other racial minority identities (e.g., white/Native American; white/Pacific Islander) in our sample. Future research should also seek to replicate these findings using a fluid measure of stigma consciousness.

Conclusion

The present data suggest that individual differences in stigma consciousness interact with the sociocultural context to predict white identification, white identity threat, and belongingness. These findings add to a growing literature on the variability and context-dependent nature of racial identification. Moreover, these results suggest that awareness of racial stigma may affect how biracial individuals (and perhaps, other minorities) construe their racial contexts that could drive identification and belongingness.

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