INTRODUCTION

Although past research has demonstrated that people who are highly motivated to control prejudice avoid hypodescent (i.e., Black categorization bias) of racial-ambiguous faces (Chen et al., 2014), it does not address how (a) perceivers’ ethnic-racial identity and (b) contexts moderate this relation. We examine if sharing group membership with a multiracial face impacts the way in which motivated to control prejudice people categorize multiracial faces. Only motivated Whites, who partly share group membership with Black-White multiracials, are further motivated to protect their group’s privileged image and status by excluding Black-White multiracials from their ingroup. Second, we examine whether self-image threatening contexts, which are known to influence social categorizations, interact with egalitarian motives to influence categorizations. Self-threatened individuals are less likely to rely on stigmatized categorizations when they can rely on alternate important self-resources (cf. Sherman & Cohen, 2006).

PREDICTIONS

1. Strongly internally motivated to control prejudice White individuals will tend toward multiracial categorizations of racially ambiguous faces following self-image threat (Experiment 1).
2. Strongly internally motivated to control prejudice non-White, non-Black individuals will tend toward White categorizations of these same faces following self-image threat (Experiment 2).
3. Self-threat will not affect the categorizations of weakly motivated to control prejudice participants (Experiments 1 & 2).

METHOD

MANIPULATED VARIABLE

- **Self-threat:** We adopted a negative performance feedback procedure to manipulate self-image threat. Participants were told they were making a computerized nationally administered intelligence test that measured verbal and reasoning abilities.
  - Negative feedback condition received a bogus score at the 47th percentile.
  - No feedback condition did not receive a score.

MEASURED VARIABLES

- **Motivation to control prejudice:** Plant and Devine’s (1998) internal and external motivation to control prejudice scales (IMS and EMS, respectively).
- **Multiracial face categorizations:** Participants categorized 18 Black-White racially ambiguous faces from Pauker et al. (2009) as Black or White as quickly as possible, 3 times each.

PROCEDURE

Participants were told they would complete two separate studies. “Study 1,” presented as an investigation of “cognitive abilities,” allowed us to administer the self-image threat manipulation.

“Study 2,” presented as a “social categorization task,” allowed us to measure multiracial face categorizations.

RESULTS

Categorization scores. We averaged the sum of Black (coded 0) and White (coded 1) categorizations, then subtracted .5, and finally took the absolute value. Higher scores (closer to +.5) indicate a monoracial (Black or White) categorization bias, lower scores (closer to 0) indicate a multiracial (equal Black and White) categorization bias.

**IMS.** There was a marginally significant IMS X Feedback condition interaction, ΔF(1, 39) = 2.72, p = .10, R2 = .12, β = .40 (see Figure 1A). Among high IMS participants, self-threat led to more multiracial categorizations of racially ambiguous faces (Mself-threat = .38) compared to not receiving a threat (Mbaseline = .20), β = .49, p < .03 (P1). However, among low IMS participants, categorizations did not vary as a function of self-threat, β = .02, ns (P3). No other relations were statistically significant.

**EMS.** The EMS X Feedback condition interaction was not significant, ΔF(1, 39) = .19, ns, R2 = .07, β = .10 (see Figure 1B).

EXPERIMENT 2 – NON-WHITE, NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS

Categorization scores. We averaged the sum of Black (coded 0) and White (coded 1) categorizations, then subtracted .5, and finally took the absolute value. Higher scores (closer to +.5) indicate a monoracial (Black or White) categorization bias, lower scores (closer to 0) indicate a multiracial (equal Black and White) categorization bias.

**IMS.** A significant IMS X Feedback condition interaction emerged, ΔF(1, 49) = 5.59, p < .01, R2 = .15, β = .54, similar to the patterns among high IMS participants (see Figure 2B). Self-threatened high EMS participants made White categorizations of racially ambiguous faces (Mself-threat = .66) when compared to non-threatened high EMS participants (Mbaseline = .49), β = .47, p < .05. This was not the case among low EMS participants, β = .27, ns. Additionally, among non-threatened participants, higher EMS, β = .36, p < .05, predicted non-biased categorizations of racially ambiguous faces. All other relations were not statistically significant.

CONCLUSION

Taken together, this research demonstrates that multiracial face categorizations may address self-image needs among people who are highly motivated to control prejudice. Our data show that in a self-threatening context, highly motivated to control prejudice people regulate their judgments of multiracial faces; however, the avoidance of hypodescent judgments under threat appears differently depending on ethnic-racial group membership. While highly motivated White participants under threat tend toward multiracial categorizations, highly motivated non-White, non-Black participants under threat tend toward White categorizations. Thus, this research reveals the personal motives and contexts that reduce hypodescent.

REFERENCES


CONTACT INFORMATION

Alexandra K. Margevich, amargevich@psychology.rutgers.edu, 973-353-3829
Luis M. Rivera, luis@psychology.rutgers.edu, 973-353-5995

Self-Resources Color the Processing and Categorization of Racially Ambiguous Faces

Alexandra K. Margevich & Luis M. Rivera

Rutgers University—Newark