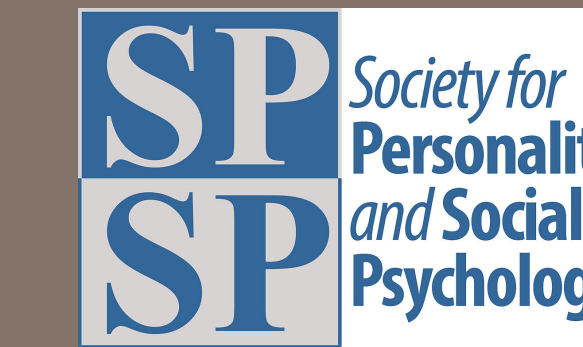
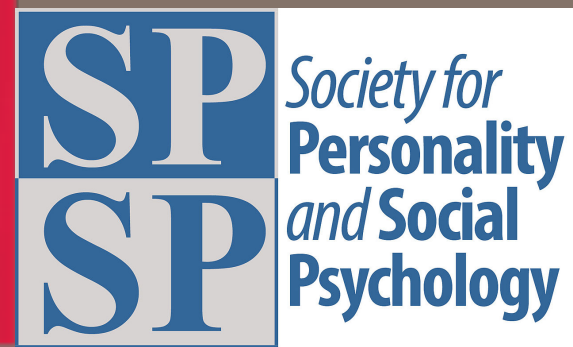


Self-Resources Color the Processing and Categorization of Racially Ambiguous Faces

Alexandra K. Margevich & Luis M. Rivera
Rutgers University—Newark

RUTGERS



RUTGERS

INTRODUCTION

Although past research has demonstrated that people who are highly motivated to control prejudice avoid hypodescent (i.e., Black categorization bias) of multiracial 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 multiracial Black-White 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

PARTICIPANTS

Exp. 1: N = 43 White-Americans (18 female, M_{age} = 22.26 years)

Exp. 2: N = 53 non-White, non-Black Americans (31 female, M_{age} = 19.36 years)

DESIGN

2 (Performance feedback: threat vs. no threat) X Continuous variable (motivation to control prejudice)

METHOD CONTINUED

MANIPULATED VARIABLE

• **Self-threat:** We adopted a negative performance feedback procedure to manipulate self-image threat. Participants were told they were taking 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.

All participants completed the intelligence test, but only self-threat participants' intelligence was impugned.

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.

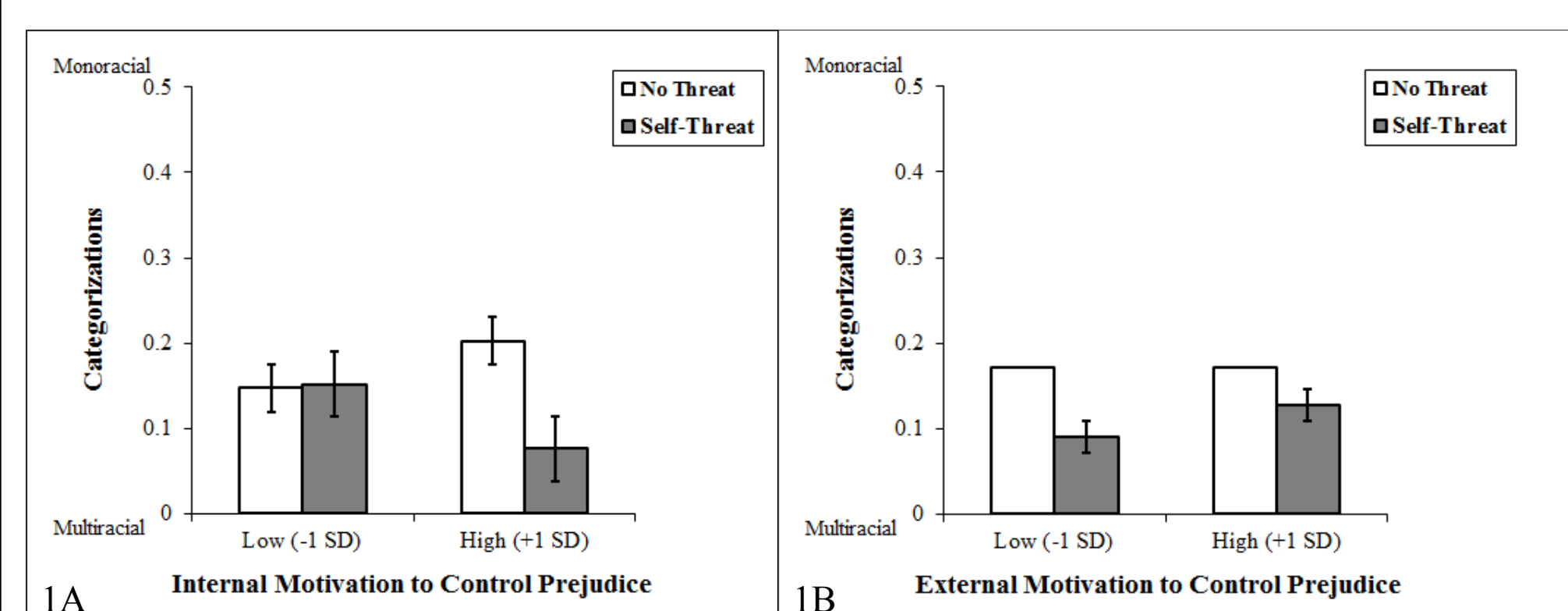
PROCEDURE

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

EXPERIMENT 1 – WHITE PARTICIPANTS



Figures 1A-B. Exp. 1 – White participants: Effect of self-threat and IMS and EMS on categorizations of racially ambiguous faces.

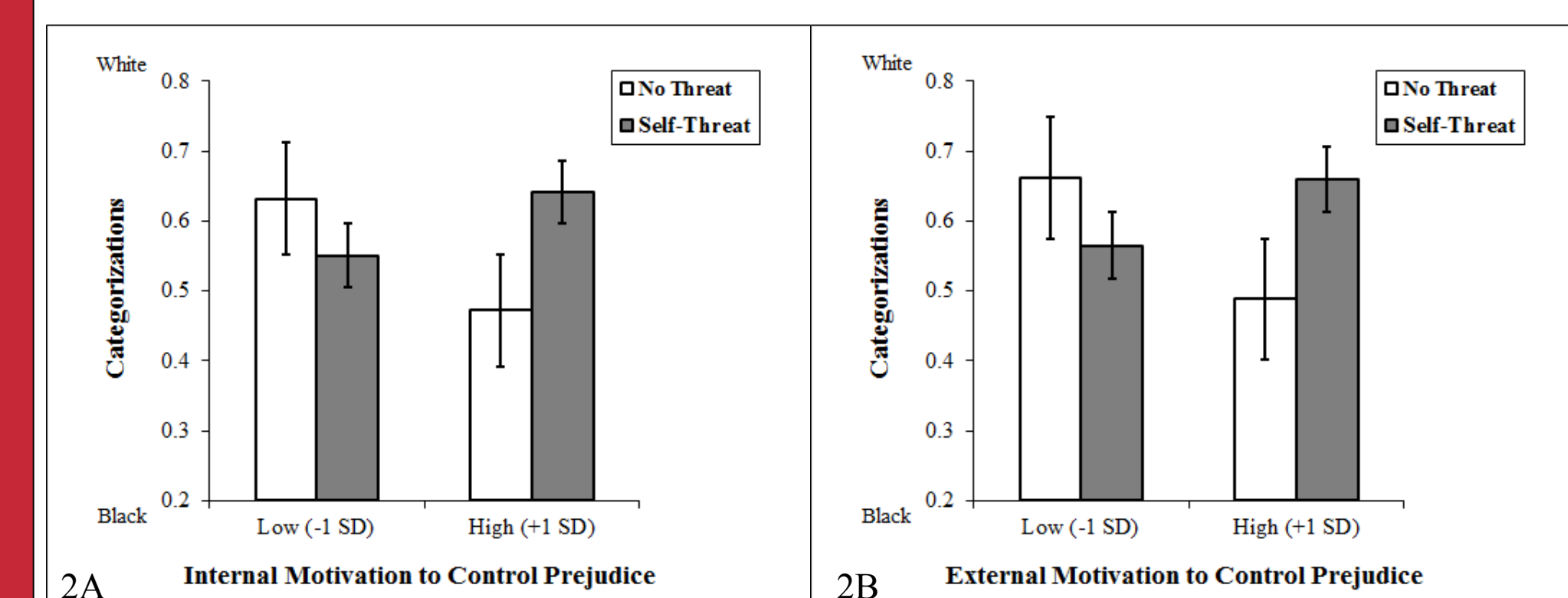
RESULTS CONTINUED

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, $\Delta F(1, 39) = 2.72, p = .10, R^2 = .12, \beta = .40$ (see Figure 1A). Among high IMS participants, self-threat led to more multiracial categorizations of racially ambiguous faces ($M_{estimated} = .08$) compared to not receiving a threat ($M_{estimated} = .20$), $\beta = -.49, p < .03$ (P1). However, among low IMS participants, categorizations did not vary as a function of self-threat, $\beta = .02, ns$ (P3). No other relations were statistically significant.

EMS. The EMS X Feedback condition interaction was not significant, $\Delta F(1, 39) = .19, ns, R^2 = .07, \beta = .10$ (see Figure 1B).

EXPERIMENT 2 – NON-WHITE, NON-BLACK PARTICIPANTS



Figures 2A-B. Exp. 2 – non-White, non-Black participants: Effect of self-threat and IMS and EMS on categorizations of racially ambiguous faces.

Categorization Scores. We averaged the sum of Black (coded 0) and White (coded 1) categorizations. A score above the midpoint (.5) indicates a White categorization bias while a score below the midpoint indicates a Black categorization bias.

IMS. A significant IMS X Feedback condition interaction emerged, $\Delta F(1, 49) = 5.59, p < .05, R^2 = .14, \beta = .40$ (see Figure 2A). Among high IMS participants, a self-threat led to a high proportion of White categorizations of racially ambiguous faces ($M_{estimated} = .64$) when compared to not receiving a self-threat ($M_{estimated} = .48$), $\beta = .45, p < .05$ (P2). Among low IMS participants, categorizations did not vary as a function of self-threat, $\beta = .21, ns$ (P3). Among non-threatened participants, higher IMS predicted non-biased categorizations of racially ambiguous faces, $\beta = -.39, p < .05$. No other relations with IMS were statistically significant.

RESULTS CONTINUED

EMS. A significant EMS X Feedback condition interaction emerged, $\Delta F(1, 49) = 5.59, p < .01, R^2 = .15, \beta = .54$, similar to the patterns among high IMS participants (see Figure 2B). Self-threatened high EMS participants made White categorizations of racially ambiguous faces ($M_{estimated} = .66$) when compared to non-threatened high EMS participants ($M_{estimated} = .49$), $\beta = .47, p < .05$. This was not the case among low EMS participants, $\beta = -.27, ns$. Additionally, among non-threatened participants, higher EMS, $\beta = -.38, p < .05$, 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

- Chen, J. M., Moons, W. G., Gaiher, S. E., Hamilton, D. L., & Sherman, J. W. (2014). Motivation to control prejudice predicts categorization of multiracials. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 40*(5), 590-603.
- Fein, S., & Spencer, S. J. (1997). Prejudice as self-image maintenance: Affirming the self through derogating others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73*(1), 31-44.
- Pauker, K., Weisbuch, M., Ambady, N., Sommers, S. R., Adams, R. B. Jr., & Iyengar, Z. (2009). Not so black and white: Memory for ambiguous group members. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96*(4), 795-810.
- Plant, E. A., & Devine, P. G. (1998). Internal and external motivation to respond without prejudice. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75*(3), 811-832.
- Sherman, D. K., & Cohen, G. L. (2006). The psychology of self-defense: Self-affirmation theory. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 38, pp. 183-242). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Alexandra K. Margevich, amargevich@psychology.rutgers.edu, 973-353-3929

Luis M. Rivera, luis@psychology.rutgers.edu, 973-353-5995