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Social Cognition, Ethnic Identity, and Ethnic Specific Strategies for Coping with Threat due to Prejudice and Discrimination

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Psychology has been generally remiss in explaining the relationship between ethnic minority and majority groups and even more so in propounding models for explaining the psychology of ethnic minority identity. (Hutnik, 1991, p. 37)

The way we perceive others will influence indirectly how we act towards them. (Turner, 1982, p. 29)

Diversity is a much used term in the United States. Diversity means the existence of peoples from different cultures, who speak different languages, hold different religious beliefs, rituals and practices, celebrate different holidays, take pleasure in different forms of entertainment, interact with family and friends in different ways, and enjoy different types of food and food preparation. Diversity also implies that people, because of the color of their skin color and physical appearance, are easily identifiable as different from the majority group. Although, historians note that diversity is not new in America, something has changed the discourse of diversity (Takaki, 1993). At least three macrochanges are in part responsible for how we view diversity today. These changes include the Civil Rights movement that began in the 1960s, the large increase in Hispanic and Asian populations due to changes in immigration policy beginning in 1965, and economic and political upheavals in developing countries that have resulted in large-scale migration to America. Collectively, these forces have changed the racial and ethnic landscape of this country.

While we hear frequent accolades to the value of diversity, there is at the same time much acrimony about diversity. Diversity has stirred up much resentment on issues such as affirmative action, racial profiling, bilingual education, and immigration policy. While this chapter is not about diversity per se, it does address how one large and heterogeneous ethnic group finds itself in the center of the conversation about diversity on a daily basis. I am referring specifically to Latinos, and while I will not engage in an overview of this groups' demographic representation in the United States, it is important to make three points to properly contextualize Latinos in the United States. First, Latinos are a diverse group consisting of peoples from Mexico, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Members of this group may be of any race, they come from Spanish speaking countries, and they share

many cultural similarities. Second, Latinos number more than 39 million people and constitute 13% of the US population, making them the largest ethnic minority group in the United States. Further, whereas Latinos once lived in specific geographic areas – Mexican Americans in the West and Southwest, Puerto Ricans in the Northeast, and Cubans in the Southeast, Latinos are increasingly evident in every geographic region. Finally, historically Latinos are not newcomers to this country. Their roots run deep and their history predates the Mayflower, the American Revolution, and the rush to California in search of gold (Takaki, 1993). At the same time, immigrants from various countries in Latin America are still arriving daily with the same dream that brought all peoples to this country; that is, the dream of a better future.

My purpose in this chapter is to offer a theoretical framework for understanding how prejudice, discrimination, and racism affect how Latinos perceive intergroup relationships. The goal too is to explain why Latinos are more tenacious in maintaining their ethnicity than some other ethnic groups. I will first frame my analysis within the main tenets of social cognition and social identity theory (SIT). Then I will offer a theory for ethnic threat that incorporates features from SIT, reactions to stigmatization and perceived discrimination, and motivation factors that contribute to maintenance of cultural uniqueness despite pressures to assimilate. Another important feature of my analysis is that it is framed from the perspective of the recipients of discrimination and racism, not from a majority White group perspective that seeks to examine why and how Whites are racist (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986). In addition, often in the social psychology of racism the discourse is on White–Black relationships, with the focus on lessening White racism. The objective in this chapter is to understand how racism affects Latinos and how they respond to the threat that racism poses to their ethnic identity.

Social Psychology of Minority Group Identification

Social Cognition

Social cognition is a meta-theoretical approach to the study of social behavior. Its focus is on the psychological processes that guide social interactions between people. Fiske and Taylor (1991) define social cognition as “how ordinary people think about people and how they think they think about people.” (p. 1) In this chapter on ethnic identity, I will follow the tradition of pragmatism in social cognition research (Fiske, 1993) that emphasizes the motivational and intentional bases of perception and cognition (e.g., Heider, 1958; James, 1890).

According to social cognition researchers, cognitive processes stem from people’s pragmatic goals, which derive from multiple sources, including person-level variables, situational constraints, societal structure, and evolutionary mechanisms (e.g., Fiske, 1993; James, 1890). Simply put, “thinking is for doing,” a message from James (1890) positing that cognition follows from people’s goals. These goals vary according to the social situation.

Because of my interest in the acculturation process of immigrants (Padilla, 1980, 1986; Padilla & Perez, 2003), I am interested in merging social cognition theory with issues involved in the immigration-adjustment process. Individuals who transition from one culture to another, due to migration, experience new cultural-societal standards of behavior that they must adjust to in order to be successful. They are obliged to make sense of their new social environment and decide how and/or to what extent they are going to integrate into the host culture. How do they develop situated behavior patterns that are adaptive within the larger societal-cultural context (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Markus, Kitayama, & Heiman, 1996)? Pragmatism and cultural competence play critical roles in how we theorize about individual and group acculturation. Today, social cognition researchers have used the metaphor “motivated tactician” (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) to describe social perceivers. According to this theoretical view, people choose among a wide range of pragmatic cognitive tactics based on their goals, motives, and needs, as determined by the power of the situation and, as a result, most significant cognitive activity results from motivation. Put plainly, people think for the purpose of satisfying their pragmatic motives, and they tend to think with less effort when their goals are satisfied (Fiske, 1993). This is equally true for people transported to a new culture, who are typically highly motivated to be successful in the new country.

To utilize a social cognition model to its fullest, we need to understand what it means to be culturally competent in one or more cultural contexts. Most simply, cultural competence refers to the learned ability to function in a culture in a manner that is congruent with the values, beliefs, customs, mannerisms, and language of the majority of members of the culture. When members of the culture come to view the person as an “insider,” then we can say that the person has attained complete competence in the new culture. However, acceptance as an “insider” is not a prerequisite for cultural competence *per se*. The important consideration is for the person to behave within a rather narrow cultural band of normative behavior that conforms to the host culture. When a newcomer’s behavior is outside the acceptable range of behavior, he is likely to encounter sanctions by members of the dominant group. In sum, social cognition guides newcomers in their adaptation to their new environment and at the same time determine how they will be perceived and received by members of the host group.

Social Categorization

It is a fundamental adaptive process of human existence to want to organize our world. In fact, the cognitive process that enables us to categorize our experiences brings order to our daily existence. In other words, the cognitive process of categorization simplifies our perceptions and renders our world less chaotic (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Over time people have developed highly elaborate classification systems for every living and inanimate object. These systems serve as one of the foundations on which modern science is built. Categorization serves to accentuate the similarities within and between categories. The categorization of people-by-people is no

exception. For example, we have seen throughout history how racial and ethnic categories have been used to determine the innate value of other human beings. Any social or physical trait that is meaningful to a person and/or group can be the basis for social categorization, and in turn, the categorization can serve as the foundation for social identity. Importantly, in self-categorization the in-group is motivated to highlight positive attributes to their membership and use these to differentiate themselves from others who do not share in these “positive” attributes. Individuals, in other words, are vested in wanting to be associated with positive categories because these confer positive self-evaluation and create feelings of self-esteem.

Two important psychological processes are embedded in social categorization. The first is that we use social categorization to make decisions about how we see ourselves and how we wish others to see us. Once an individual assumes a particular social category, the person sees the self and others in terms of that category membership. The second process is that social categorization and the striving for positive self-esteem at both the individual and group levels results in intergroup relations marked by ethnocentrism and competition (Tajfel, 1978). This is followed by in-group favoritism and intergroup discrimination. In essence, social categorization is the process whereby the individual finds meaning in the group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) and distinctiveness between their social group and others.

Social Comparison

Social comparison goes hand-in-hand with social categorization. In social comparison, individuals evaluate who they are in relationship to others in their environment and self-evaluate themselves as smarter, richer, more attractive, a better athlete, etc. We use social comparisons to organize our social world and to process information about other individuals or groups. When we do this, we also accentuate intergroup distinctiveness as much as possible and on as many dimensions as possible (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Social comparisons are overwhelmingly evaluative in nature. Thus, people viewed as smarter, richer, or more attractive are evaluated positively and are imbued with positive characteristics whereas those evaluated as less smart, poor, and not as attractive are more likely to be stigmatized negatively. An important outcome of social comparisons and heightened intergroup distinctiveness is elevated self-esteem and the determination of status hierarchies that result in power and prestige to those individuals imbued with more positive social, intellectual, or physical characteristics. The converse is the fate of those individuals who lack the “positive” characteristics.

Social Dominance

Sidanius (1993) and Sidanius and Pratto (1999) posit that throughout history all societies and cultures have evolved some form of social hierarchy with one or a

small number of groups at the top and one or a small number of groups at the bottom. This structure lends itself to an analysis of dominant and subordinate social groups. According to social dominance theory (SDT), dominant groups enjoy a disproportionate share of political authority, power, wealth, prestige, and all the benefits that come with high social status. On the other hand, subordinate groups have disproportionately little political authority, power, and wealth. Members of subordinate groups are also subject to a larger array of negative life outcomes as seen in lower education levels, higher rates of unemployment, more crime, and disproportionate rates of prison and death sentences.

Generally societies determine social dominance based on age, gender, and an arbitrary set of characteristics. Older members of society generally enjoy greater social dominance than children and young adults. Men more often enjoy greater power and status than women. The final way in which dominance is established is more dependent on socially constructed differentiations between groups based on such things as ethnicity, race, social class, religious sect, regional group, immigration status, and social caste. Invariably, one or several groups are politically and/or materially superior to the other groups.

According to SDT, all forms of intergroup conflict and oppression, such as ethnocentrism and racism, are manifestations of basic human predispositions to form group-based social hierarchies. In essence, SDT explains all forms of prejudice, stereotypes, and categorizing of groups as superior or inferior. Finally, as societies evolve there is always a tension between producing hierarchal systems that foster social inequality and forces that counteract strict hierarchy setting and which permit greater social mobility and equality between groups. Legitimizing myths (LMs) provide the moral and intellectual justification for the social practices that distribute social value within a society (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). According to Sidanius and Pratto, LMs include, but are not limited to, such beliefs as the superiority of some races over others (i.e., racism), meritocracy, individualism, belief in manifest destiny, and the Protestant work ethic. There are also LMs that serve the purpose of moving a group in the direction of greater social equality. These LMs may include religious beliefs of equality, the Civil Rights movement and its resulting legislation, and beliefs in the value of multiculturalism.

In addition, there are also certain personal and group traits that are associated with social dominance. A social domination orientation (SDO) describes individuals who support a group-based hierarchy that sponsors domination of "inferior" groups by "superior" groups. Not surprisingly, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) report that Whites, men, and heterosexuals score higher on measures of SDO. In addition, education, gender, and a religious orientation serve to moderate SDO. In keeping with this, individuals with greater education, women, and deeply religious people score lower on SDO and are more willing to engage in equality balancing behaviors.

A final aspect of social dominance that is important for this analysis has to do with hierarchical consensuality. This simply means that there is generally a high degree of consensus among both dominant and subordinate group members of who belongs to which group and why. Importantly, the subordinates are especially knowledgeable of their place in the social hierarchy.

Unlike most other social identity theories that focus on situational explanations of intergroup relations, the theory here rests on individual differences in social dominance. Individual orientations toward social dominance are pragmatic insofar as hierarchies are functional for the collective unit. Social hierarchies are validated through cultural ideologies that sustain the legitimacy and centrality of a hierarchy within the larger society. This theory accounts for large-scale examples of intergroup dominance that occur in the absence of overt conflict, such as ethnic, religious, or gender oppression. SDT differs in form from the cognitive and motivational analysis of self-categorization and optimal distinctiveness theories (Brewer, 1991), stressing both the inevitability and functionality of consensual hierarchies, such as legitimized social class distinctions and gender roles, as a function of individual differences in social dominance.

The socially derived constructs (i.e., social cognition, social categorization, social comparison, and social dominance) are critical to the theory that I will advance in this chapter to explain the processes involved in ethnic identity. I maintain that acculturation and adjustment are more difficult for Latinos who are more distinct (e.g., by skin color, physical features, and language) from the dominant in-group, White majority. Consequently, they are more likely to be compelled by situational factors and the pressures emanating from social comparisons and social dominance to maintain their identity with their ethnic group. In order to complete this analysis, we need to address the question of social stigma in understanding ethnic identification. This is because persons who are more identifiable as outsiders are more likely to be targets of prejudice, discrimination, and racism by the socially dominant and powerful in-group. Accordingly, outsiders who hold little social power may endure more physical and psychological hardships that call into question their motives for wanting to adapt to the ways of the dominant host group. Outsiders may experience fewer opportunities for contact with “insiders” thereby limiting their chances for successful adaptation. Finally, outsiders may be prohibited either implicitly or explicitly from entry into groups and/or institutions that offer privileges to their members (McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1997). In other words, how we perceive others will influence, indirectly, how we act towards them (Turner, 1982). I will now turn to a discussion of how individuals form their social identity.

Social Identity

SIT (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1986) stresses that an individual's behavior reflects the individual's larger societal unit. This means that overarching societal structures such as groups, organizations, cultures, and most importantly the individual's identification, and the value and emotional significance attached to that membership, is what guides cognitive structures and processes (Tajfel, 1982).

Cultural competence lies at the heart of this SIT, since collective group membership influences and frequently determines an individual's thoughts and behaviors (Markus et al., 1996). Accordingly, an individual is not a self-contained

unit of psychological analysis. There is the social milieu that always plays a role in social interactions. Thus, people think, feel, and act as members of collective groups, institutions, and cultures. SIT reinforces the idea that an individual's social cognitions are socially construed, depending on their group or collective frame of reference. For instance, a Latino who perceives himself as negatively stigmatized because of his darker skin color or accented English speech may be less willing to acculturate because of his belief that he is judged not by his cultural competence as an American, but as an outsider of lower social status, merely because of his skin color or speech.

As originally formulated, SIT explains intergroup relations in general and social conflict in particular. The theory incorporated three main points: (1) people are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept; (2) the self-concept derives largely from group identification; and (3) people establish positive social identities by favorably comparing their in-group against an out-group (Operario & Fiske, 1999). As such, social identity theorists assume that internal social comparison processes drive intergroup conflict, even in the absence of explicit rivalry or competition between groups. Structural variables, such as power, hierarchy, and resource scarcity increase the individual's natural tendency to perceive the in-group more favorably than the out-group.

An influential component of social identity has to do with how an individual uses self-categorization to frame their identity. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987) argue that social contexts create meaningful group boundaries, and social identities are socially construed categories that shift depending on situational pragmatics. In this way, an individual can have somewhat different identities depending on the social context. The salience of social categories provides the raw material necessary for organizing out-groups and in-groups. The consequence is that situational factors guide cognitive processes and as such, self-categorization theory suggests that these pragmatic cognitive processes form the basis for ensuing intergroup interaction including prejudice and intergroup conflict.

Related to self-categorization is the work of Brewer (1991) on optimal distinctiveness. According to Brewer, a person's social identity is guided by two core human motives: the need to be unique and the need to belong. Having a social identity (e.g., ethnic, religious, or national) satisfies an individual's simultaneous needs for inclusion and differentiation. In other words, we need simultaneously to fill the need to belong to a social group (e.g., Latino, Catholic, and Spanish/English bilingual) while also maintaining our distinctiveness from another group (e.g., Euro-American, Protestant, and English monolingual). In this way, we are motivated to identify with social groups that we feel an emotional kinship with and to separate from groups that we do not feel a part of, and we strive to remain detached through a manifestation of distinctiveness. Importantly, according to optimal distinctiveness theory animosity toward the out-group occurs only when dimensions that are particularly relevant to the in-group's collective self-worth are challenged. For instance, in recent years we have seen considerable conflict between some Latino groups (e.g., National Association for Bilingual Education) and majority group organizations and leaders on issues of Spanish use in school and in the

workplace. This conflict has been organized by large nativist groups through national efforts, such as English-only, or has been generated by legislative actions at the state level with laws banning bilingual education in public education.

Collectively through the processes of social cognition, social categorization, social dominance, and social identity, individuals who hold membership in consensually dominant and powerful social groups are not negatively evaluated because of stigma. In fact, Tajfel (1981) stated that because dominant group members do not suffer any stigma, their social identities are so natural as to be almost invisible or “privileged” (McIntosh, 1988). However, what about individuals who are stigmatized and categorized into the out-group?

Social Stigma

Goffman (1963) in an early work on stigma argued that because of certain stigmas an individual’s identity is “spoiled.” By this Goffman meant that if a person possesses what others perceive to be a stigma, that person is disqualified from full social acceptance. Accordingly, if other people’s reactions influence our behavior and identity, then we try to control the reactions of others by manipulating what we reveal about ourselves. Goffman further stated that in their interactions with others, people often expose or hide certain beliefs, ideas, or behaviors in order to manipulate the perceptions that others hold of them. This is why, historically, when homosexuals decided to reveal their sexual orientation publicly, they called such an announcement “coming out of the closet.” By “coming out,” homosexuals risk their social status even if they are members of the privileged dominant social group. In the past, such stigmatized people often displayed traits of victimization – low self-esteem, defensiveness, passivity, in-group hostility, and identification with the oppressor (Allport, 1954). Today the affects of negative stigmatization are often challenged by social movements that call attention with pride to membership in gay and lesbian groups or to ethnic organizations that sponsor community and social activism.

Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) maintained that it is not unexpected to envision a person possessing a social stigma to be negatively evaluated in one context, but not in another. Thus, stigmatization is not inextricably linked to something essential to the stigmatized attribute, or the person who possesses that attribute. The essential distinction is in the unfortunate circumstance of possessing an attribute that, in a given social context, leads to devaluation. In other words, a stigma will be negatively evaluated as determined by the situational context.

Ascribed and actual characteristics that are frequently associated with negative stigmatization include skin color, other physical features (e.g., indigenous vs. European physiognomy), recognizable accent when speaking in the nonnative language, certain religious apparel, obesity, homosexuality, homelessness, physical disabilities, mental illness, etc. The attributes that result in negative stigmatization are generally associated with minority groups, low social status, and powerlessness. An important consideration here is that people who use stigmas to stereotype come

to believe that the stigmatized group really deserves their misfortune (e.g., poverty, homelessness, poor health) because they are lazy, lack intelligence, or are morally corrupt. By explaining others misfortune in this way, without examining the effects of prejudice and discrimination, dominant group members are able to rationalize their elevated social status without feeling guilt or remorse.

In addition, high social standing and power is associated with decreased vulnerability to being negatively stigmatized (Fiske, 1993). It is important to recognize though that “high social standing and power” is relative and may vary from one society or culture to another. For example, a low status minority person of color may be devalued because of his employment as a maintenance worker during the day in an office building where the majority of workers are White professionals. At the same time, that minority individual in another context may be a respected member of his community and enjoy high social status through his community volunteerism as a youth soccer coach or because of his ministry on weekends at a local church. Fiske (1993) has suggested that when stigmatized individuals who are devalued in one or more contexts are able to enjoy situational contexts where they are valued for their positive attributes, the psychological consequences of being negatively stigmatized are mitigated.

A dimension of social stigma of critical importance in understanding the subjective experience of stigmatized individuals is *salience* or *visibility*. Salient stigmas such as race, ethnicity, certain physical handicaps, accented speech, obesity, or severe malnourishment due to poverty cannot be hidden easily from others. For people with a visible attribute, the stigma can provide the primary schema through which others believe that they know everything about the person (Goffman, 1963; Jones et al., 1984) and how they then set about to label the person who possesses the stigma. Thus, the stigma comes to stand for, or signify, the person. For example, a friend of mine related how she frequently finds herself stigmatized when she hears herself being referred to as the African American German language teacher. To make her point she related an experience where she overheard someone saying, “You know the African American woman who teaches German.” Upon hearing this, she wondered whether the person who made the remark meant:

Aren't you surprised that an African American teaches German?

She's a teacher and she's African American!

How good do you suppose her German is, after all she is African American?

My friend noted that if a teacher were White the issue of race would not even be embedded in the statement “You know the woman who teaches German” or simply “The German teacher.” Further, my friend went on to say that when she hears things like this her racial antennae go up and she finds herself feeling uncomfortable because of her heightened sense of “ethnic threat.” The point is that often socially dominant individuals are not even aware of how their use of language to label ethnic group members reflects their negative evaluation of the person. Further, to be stigmatized often results in feelings of dehumanization or depersonalization by the target. The person with stigma becomes an object, and a devalued one at that. The situation is made worse when the depersonalizing statement is followed by other discriminatory behaviors.

The importance of this for the stigmatized person is that possessing awareness that others may be judging her because of her visibility may influence her thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Visibly stigmatized individuals cannot use concealment of the stigma to cope with stereotypes and prejudice that their stigma may trigger. For example, a person with dark skin and American indigenous features may be a second or third generation American, yet in the eyes of nonracially stigmatized Americans, he may be perceived as a Mexican foreign national and discriminated against. Takaki (1993) captures the feeling experienced by many ethnic Americans in the following opening excerpt from his book:

The rearview mirror reflected a White man in his forties. "How long have you been in this country?" he asked. "All my life," I replied wincing. "I was born in the United States." With a strong southern drawl, he remarked: "I was wondering because your English is excellent!" Then, as I had many times before, I explained: "My grandfather came here from Japan in the 1880s. My family has been here, in America, for over a hundred years." He glanced at me in the mirror. Somehow I did not look "American" to him; my eyes and complexion looked foreign. (p. 1)

People with nonvisible stigmas, such as members of certain ethnic groups, religious groups, or gay/lesbians have different concerns. Because their stigma is not visible, they can interact with others without their negative social identity filtering how everything about them is understood. Nevertheless, they are aware that they could be stigmatized if their devaluing attribute is discovered – they know that they are “discreditable” (Goffman, 1963). Thus, some individuals may carefully monitor the way they speak, dress and behave in order to maximize their chances of “passing” with the dominant group (Breakwell, 1986). Other individuals may actually make a conscious decision to display their stigma by wearing signs or symbols that convey their stigmatized identities, or engage in collective manifestations that demonstrate their identity with a stigmatized group (e.g., taking part in a gay pride parade or a United Farm Workers march).

In general, stigmatized individuals are aware of the negative connotations of their social identity in the eyes of members of the dominant group. For example, Casas, Ponterotto, and Sweeney (1987) reported that Mexican Americans believe that many non-Hispanic Whites hold negative views of their group. The age at which this awareness develops is not always clear, but it is likely to be well established by early adolescence (Quintana, Castaneda-English, & Ybarra, 1999). Although having a negative social identity may threaten both collective and personal self-esteem, it does not have to result in low personal or collective self-esteem (Crocker & Major, 1989). For example, Crocker, Luhtanen, Blaine, and Broadnax (1994) found that both Asian and especially Black college students believed their racial groups were evaluated negatively by members of the majority group; nonetheless, both Asian and Black students were as likely to evaluate their respective groups as positively as White students. Thus, while having a devalued social identity may create a challenge, stigmatized individuals respond to this predicament in a variety of ways. For instance, some “stigmatized” individuals can effectively defend their self-esteem from external threat while

affirming their social identity with the group, but other individuals seek strategies to minimize their stigma.

In sum, Tajfel's theory of intergroup relations has served the purpose of generating considerable research on social identification among ethnic minority individuals. In addition, social cognition theory has provided powerful tools for understanding how different social groups interact with one another; aspects of this theoretical framework will guide the remainder of this chapter. In order to understand some of the complexity that surrounds ethnic identity and why it persists and where SIT fits, I will turn to a more detailed discussion of some critical elements that help explain how perceived discrimination plays a crucial role in the ethnic identity formation and maintenance that Latinos assume.

Effects of Social Stigma on the Individual

Stigmatized individuals are sensitive to information in their environment that affects the likelihood that negative reactions or evaluations from others are due to prejudice and discrimination (Crocker, Voekl, Testa, & Majors, 1991). In addition, attributions to discrimination may be very costly to interpersonal and working relationships (Crosby, 1982), such as the process that immigrants undergo to acquire competence in a new culture. Immigrants may be less motivated to engage in behaviors that will lead to acculturation if they have experienced discrimination directly or know other members of their group who were discriminated against by members of the dominant social group. When an immigrant becomes resistant to accommodation because of discrimination, unfortunately they lessen their opportunities for social mobility in the new culture.

One factor that may influence the willingness of stigmatized individuals to attribute negative outcomes to prejudice and discrimination is the perceived controllability of the stigma itself. Crocker and Major (1994) argued that individuals who believe that their stigmatization condition is under their control, or is their own fault, are less likely to blame negative outcomes associated with stigma on prejudice and discrimination because they feel they deserve those outcomes. Crocker et al. (1998) suggest that ideologies related to personal responsibility may predict which stigmatized individuals and groups are unwilling to blame negative outcomes on prejudice and discrimination. For example, Majors, Gramzow, McCoy, Levin, & Schmader (2002) found that the more Black, Latino, and Asian students believed that the American system is just (i.e., believed in individual social mobility, that hard work pays off, and that group differences in social status are fair), the less likely they were to perceive both themselves personally, and members of their ethnic group, as experiencing discrimination due to their ethnicity.

Salience of the stigmatized group identity, and the degree to which stigmatized individuals are highly identified with their group, also affect the extent to which they perceive themselves as targets of discrimination based on their group

membership Majors et al. (2002). Stigmatized individuals who are highly identified with their group are more likely to make intergroup comparisons, notice intergroup inequalities, and label them as unjust. Consistent with this observation, Majors et al. (2002) also found that the more highly identified students were with their ethnic group, the more they said that they personally, and members of their group, experienced discrimination based on their ethnicity. However, it is important to recognize that their consciousness of discrimination may have contributed significantly to their enhanced social identity as a member of a stigmatized ethnic group. Thus, feelings of perceived discrimination may be the fuel that triggers the search for greater affinity to a heritage culture among later generation ethnics. This mechanism then may explain the adherence to a Mexican heritage identity found even among third and fourth generation Mexican Americans (Keefe & Padilla, 1987).

One way in which members of stigmatized groups may protect their personal self-esteem from the potentially painful consequences of upward social comparisons with advantaged out-group members is by restricting their comparisons to others who share their stigmatized status. By coping in this way, the person is more likely to compare with others whose outcomes are also likely to be relatively poor (Crocker & Major, 1989; Gibbons, 1986; Jones et al., 1984; Major, 1987, 1994; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, there is substantial evidence that women who work are more likely to compare their personal outcomes (e.g., lower wages) with those of other women, rather than with those of men (Major, 1994; Zanna, Crosby, & Lowenstein, 1986). Importantly, this has the effect of reducing perceptions of wage discrimination between males and females and preserving some semblance of self-esteem for women.

One reason people tend to make interpersonal comparisons with in-group rather than out-group members is simple proximity – people who are similar to us tend to be more readily available in our environments and hence more salient for social comparison purposes (Runciman, 1966; Singer, 1981). The greater prevalence of similarly stigmatized individuals in the immediate environment occurs both because of forced segregation due to discrimination (e.g., in housing, schooling, or employment), and because of preferences to affiliate with similar others (Schacter, 1959). Affiliation with others who are similarly stigmatized not only furnishes a potentially less threatening comparison environment, but also provides the stigmatized with opportunities to be “off duty” from the attribution ambiguity, stereotype threat, anxiety, and mindfulness that are likely to accompany interactions with the nonstigmatized, socially dominant group.

The opportunity to be “off duty” while also meeting a variety of social needs is probably one of the underlying reasons for why Latinos and other ethnic groups gather in neighborhoods (e.g., Latino barrios, China towns, or little Saigons) where there is proximity to people of the same group. University administrators understand this well and make accommodations under the name of multiculturalism for the ever popular ethnically oriented theme houses and social clubs that are no doubt due, in part, to the benefits accrued by ethnic students of affiliating with others who share a stigmatizing attribute. Tatum (1997) shows that same

group affiliation allows individuals to relax from the stress of having to be vigilant about their behavior because of being on display as members of a minority group.

In an investigation of the contextual nature of social stigma and its effects, Brown (1998) assessed self-esteem and "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986) of students of color (Latino and African-American) and White students. Brown reported (Study 1) that the students of color had higher self-esteem and envisioned more positive future selves than did White students. However, in a follow-up study (Study 2) Brown asked students to imagine that they would be in a semester-long course with a White student or a student of color as the teaching assistant (TA). In this condition, students of color indicated more positive possible selves when they imagined having a TA who was ethnically similar than dissimilar to them. White students did not show a similar pattern when the hypothetical TA was also White, or when the expected interaction was of more limited duration (a single class).

Brown's study suggests that the effects of stigma on self-concept may be much more dependent on the particular features of the social context, resulting in temporary changes in the aspects of the self-concept that are activated. This may help explain why some stigmatized individuals make greater efforts to identify with their ethnic group if they experience long-term positive encounters with same ethnic group role models (e.g., teachers, counselors, physicians) and mentors.

The stigmatized person may also experience attribution ambiguity on occasion. That is, the stigmatized individual may be uncertain whether friendly or unfriendly behavior directed at them by a majority group member is a response to his or her social identity, or to personal, individual qualities (Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker et al., 1991; Major & Crocker, 1993). In addition to these negative effects of attribution ambiguity, ambiguity about the causes of positive and negative outcomes may contribute to the motive to be reserved or to cope, by holding back in interpersonal interactions until the causes of the other person's positive or negative signals are known. Often individuals who are cautious about revealing or displaying their social identity remain "in the closet" in a manner of speaking. In other contexts (e.g., classroom) teachers have mistakenly labeled such individuals as shy and/or possessing a poor self-concept when the only thing operating was the student trying to determine how "safe" the teacher or the environment was for being ethnic. The likelihood of this mislabeling occurring is even more probable when students and teachers of the dominant social group surround the minority student who then feels overwhelmed and "unsafe."

Thus, negative stigma represents a potential threat to a person's sense of safety. Coping strategies such as in-group social comparisons, attributions to prejudice, and disengagement from the source of discrimination may enable stigmatized individuals to maintain a sense of self-worth in the face of devaluation. Stigma also denotes how we construe our social world. The construction of social identities, and the meanings associated with them, is a cognitive, sense-making process. The stereotypes that drive impressions, judgments, and behaviors toward stigmatized individuals are mental representations that make order of one's social world. Many

of the predicaments of being stigmatized involve a self-consciousness of how one is thought of by others, and construal of the meaning and causes of others' behavior. Likewise, many of the strategies that the stigmatized use to cope with their predicaments emerge from interpretations of social contexts and social events.

I turn now to a social analysis of how Latinos experience their minority status and how they cope with stigma, prejudice, and discrimination. I will use the social cognition and identity framework summarized here. The goal is to present a fuller analysis of the social barriers faced by many Latinos as they strive to take their place as Americans along side other Americans who makeup the multicultural fabric that is America today.

Social Status of Latinos in the United States

Padilla (1980) and Keefe and Padilla (1987) in a study of acculturation of Mexican Americans described a model of acculturation characterized by two major constructs: *cultural awareness* (CA) and *ethnic loyalty* (EL). In the model, CA is the cognitive knowledge dimension that indicates what a person knows about his culture. This construct was made up of questions that assessed a respondents knowledge of history, art, and music of both Mexico and the United States; knowledge of current events that shape culture; and self-rated proficiency in Spanish and English. Differing from the awareness component is EL, which is the behavioral component of the acculturation model. This construct was measured with questions assessing a respondent's preferences for using Spanish and English, language preference when listening to radio and television, Mexican oriented vs. American oriented leisure activities, food preferences, ethnicity of friends, and preferred ethnicity in mate selection. The rationale was that the emotional affect that a person expresses toward a social group dictates the preferences a person holds toward activities and members of the ethnic group.

Based on data collected from a community sample of Mexican Americans spanning four generations, Keefe and I tracked CA and EL across generations. This was important at the time because most work on acculturation had concentrated on only immigrants or their immediate offspring. Using our cross-sectional generational design, we found that CA decreased markedly between the first and second generation and continued to decrease so that by the fourth generation our respondents possessed little knowledge of the culture of their great grandparents. However, we found that although there was a small decrease in EL between the first and second generation, there was almost no decrease in loyalty through the fourth generation. Interestingly, with the loss of specific cultural knowledge including a language shift to English, parents and grandparents had little heritage culture to transmit to their children and grandchildren. Thus, our later generation respondents compensated by transmitting more messages about EL and ethnic identification and less about actual cultural content. Arbona, Flores, and Novy (1995) and Montgomery (1992) replicated these findings with a college student population of Mexican American respondents in South Texas.

A major question of theoretical significance is why EL persists across generations in the face of decreasing or near total loss of Mexican oriented cultural knowledge. In our work, Keefe and I created typologies based on our respondents' scores on *CA* and *EL*. This enabled us to describe how respondents of different generations change in *CA* and how these individuals, nevertheless, manifest EL to a social group that they have been removed from physically in some cases by as much as 75–100 years when their great grandparents immigrated to the United States. Using cluster analysis, we identified five subgroups based on their scores on *CA* and *EL*. We called these five groups, respectively, La Raza, Changing Ethnic, Cultural Blends, Emerging Americans, and New Americans.

Extensive interviews carried out with the two groups that we designated as Cultural Blends and Emerging Americans revealed that these respondents held generally positive attitudes toward both Mexican and American culture and saw benefits in being active members of both cultures. These individuals reported varying degrees of proficiency in Spanish, but were mostly dominant English speakers. They spoke about the benefits of knowing two languages and some wished that they were more proficient in Spanish. They also spoke about the richness of their biculturalism in being able to celebrate American holidays such as July 4th, as well as Mexican holidays such as *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead). Our informants also shared how they actively transmitted information about their dual cultural membership to their own children. These informants discussed how they encouraged their children to be bilingual and how they modeled pride in their biculturalism. In the homes of these informants, we noted many Mexican cultural artifacts (e.g., statues of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patroness saint of Mexico) along with displays of the American flag.

More importantly for purposes of our discussion here, informants spoke about experiences where they felt discriminated against by non-Hispanic Whites. Our respondents related experiences where they or close acquaintances had been the objects of negative stereotypes and prejudice. In support of our interview data, the quantitative analysis revealed that the higher our respondents scored on a measure of *perceived discrimination*, which was one of several subscales making up the *EL* dimension, the higher the respondents scored on *EL*. Our study also revealed that regardless of how seemingly bicultural and/or Americanized our respondents appeared, they were still relatively insulated within their ethnic group. For example, few had intimate friendships outside their ethnic group and most had only limited social contacts with non-Hispanics. This was true even though the more acculturated or bicultural an informant was the more likely he was to have coworkers from other ethnic groups. Therefore, while acculturation served to move our informants in the direction of American culture and to distance them from family and friends who were less acculturated, acculturation did not serve the purpose of enabling our respondents to become incorporated into a broader social network of nonethnics.

In order to explain why EL persists across generations, I propose a theory of ethnic identity based on social cognition, categorization, comparison, and dominance. This theory is an extension of a model William Perez and I proposed to explain how social cognition theory and stigma contribute to differential

acculturation rates of Latinos (Padilla and Perez, 2003). Central to the theory is the role played by social stigma and perceived discrimination that give rise to a feeling of ethnic threat experienced by stigmatized peoples. The theory holds that the consequence of perceived discrimination is ethnic threat that motivates one person to identify as a member of an ethnic group and which leads another person to seek membership in the dominant group. In order to understand how perceived discrimination and ethnic threat operate in the theory some comments about stigma and the consequences of negative stigmatization are in order.

Stigma – skin color and phenotype. Unfortunately, in our acculturation research Keefe and I did not collect data on the skin color or phenotype of our respondents. We have no way to confirm our general impression that respondents who were more “Mexican” in their physical appearance also scored higher on our measure of perceived discrimination. However, such data do exist in a similar study of Mexican American ethnicity. In this study, Arce, Murguia, and Frisbie (1987) hypothesized that Mexican Americans with a European physical appearance (phenotype) would have more enhanced life opportunities as measured by socioeconomic status than Mexican Americans with an indigenous Native American phenotype. To test their hypothesis, Arce and colleagues gathered skin color and phenotype information as part of a national survey of nearly one thousand respondents of Mexican heritage. In this face-to-face survey, the interviewer rated the interviewee’s skin color on a 5-point scale from “Very Light” to “Very Dark.” Interviewee’s phenotype was judged as “Very European,” “European,” “Medium,” “Indian,” and “Very Indian.” The findings supported the hypothesis that respondents classified as light skinned and European in phenotype reported more total years of education, higher income, and a lower perception of past discrimination than respondents classified as dark skinned and Indian in phenotype. Arce et al. noted that the darker and more Indian the phenotype of the respondents, the more likely they were to report incidents of discrimination from the majority group against them directly or toward other Mexican Americans. Importantly, these individuals also reported that they were more aligned socially and politically with their Mexican heritage, regardless of their generation. Analysis of these same data revealed that among US born Latino males, those with dark skin and a more Indian phenotype reported higher depression even after controlling for education, family income, and proficiency in English (Codina & Montalvo, 1994).

In another study, Vazquez, Vazquez, Bauman, and Sierra (1997) examined the effects of skin color on acculturation. The participants in their study were 102 Mexican American undergraduate students at a southwestern university. Results indicated that students with the darkest skin (as *self-reported*) had significantly lower levels of acculturation (on the heritage-culture/mainstream culture continuum) than those with lighter skin. Vasquez et al. hold that if a Mexican American experiences discrimination, the incentives to master English and the opportunities to interact with non-Hispanics may be limited. Interestingly, among the Mexican-oriented students, those with the darker skin were more interested in the Latino community, while the darker skinned Anglo-oriented Mexican students showed the least interest in the Latino community. Vazquez et al. interpreted these findings to

mean that individuals who identify with the mainstream group and whose physical appearance is dissimilar from the mainstream group may adopt a strategy to ensure their assimilation into the dominant social group by exhibiting few other traits (such as adherence to the Latino culture) that could mark them as outsiders.

Gómez (2000) analyzed data from the Boston Social Survey Data of Urban Inequality, conducted in 1993 and 1994. Of the total 1,820 respondents in the study, 353 were Latinos. As in the Arce et al. (1987) study, interviewers rated the skin color of their interviewees. Gómez found that lighter skinned Latinos had more education, were more likely to own their homes, were more likely to be married, and used Spanish more often as a language for communication than their darker skinned counterparts. This last finding is similar to Vasquez et al., if a dark skinned Latino wants to “fit into the dominant group” it is best to minimize stigmatizing conditions. Since little can be done about skin color, it is possible to use more English to not draw attention to oneself. However, the only statistically significant variable was hourly wage. This difference was still significant after controlling for education. Thus, the results from the Gómez study affirm that skin color matters in the life chances of Latinos in the United States, with darker skin color negatively influencing earnings.

Two studies (Espino & Franz, 2002; Mason, 2004) used data from the Latino National Political Survey (LNPS) to report on the occupational status and income differentials of Latinos of different phenotype and skin coloration. The LNPS is a probability sample of the three largest Latino groups and consisted of 1,546 Mexicans, 589 Puerto Ricans, and 682 Cubans interviewed in 1989–1990. In this study, respondents agreed to a face-to-face interview that explored a number of social and political issues. At the conclusion of the study the interviewer also recorded the skin color of the respondent using a 1–5 scale: one being “very dark” and five being “very light.”

Espino and Franz (2002) reported that Mexican and Cuban individuals who are lighter skinned had higher occupational prestige jobs than their darker skinned counterparts. Although a similar finding was found for Puerto Ricans the difference was not statistically significant. Using the same LNPS survey, Mason (2004) analyzed for differences in earnings among the three Latino groups using skin color, acculturation, and language as predictor variables. Mason reported that light skin Mexican Americans on an annual basis earned \$4,065 more than medium-skin-color Mexican Americans, while dark skinned persons earned \$2,285 less than medium-skin colored persons. Similar statistically significant earning differentials were found for Cuban Americans, but not for Puerto Ricans. Mason also found that there was a significant earnings incentive for Mexican and Cuban Americans favoring acculturation (adopting English as the preferred language) and adopting a non-Hispanic White racial identity. However, the incentive for abandoning Spanish and a specific Hispanic racial self-identity was not sufficient to overcome the penalties associated with having a dark complexion and non-European phenotype.

Tafoya (2004) reported on an analysis of 2,000 census data and a national study of Hispanics conducted in 2002 by the Pew Foundation. The census counted 35 million Hispanics and asked them to identify along racial lines: White, Black, Asian, American Indian, or some other race. Approximately, 48% or 17 million

people indicated that they were White, and 42% or nearly 15 million individuals indicated that they were of “some other race.” Importantly, among US born Latinos, those individuals who indicated their race was “White” on the census had higher social status, higher levels of civic participation, and a stronger sense of acceptance. On the other hand, those individuals who replied “some other race” typically had lower socioeconomic status than self-reported White Hispanics. For instance, among respondents 25 years and older, 54% of the “some other race” group had less than a high school education, compared with 44% of “White” Latinos. Further, Latinos who chose “some other race” were more likely than White Hispanics to be in poverty (24% vs. 20%). According to the Pew national survey data, 23% of White Hispanics reported that they only spoke English, compared with 16% of “some other race” Hispanics. The survey also found that more White Hispanics (81%) than “some other race” Hispanics (66%) had ever voted.

Whether a person was born in the United States or immigrated was important in knowing if a person identified as White or some other race – 46% of foreign-born Latinos identified as “some other race” compared to 40% for US born Latinos. Interesting too was the fact that the Pew national survey data revealed that US born children of immigrants more often identified as White than their foreign born parents, and the percent who indicate White for race was higher still among the grandchild of immigrants.

To summarize, the available research on the impact of skin color on the life chances of Latinos indicates that, even after controlling for background variables such as education, age, and English proficiency, darker skinned and more Indian-looking Latinos had lower educational and economic attainment than lighter skinned Latinos. This may also explain why Twenge and Crocker (2002) in a meta-analysis of race and self-esteem found that Black and Hispanic self-esteem was higher in groups with high socioeconomic status.

The findings here support the contention made by Portes and Rumbaut (2001) that newcomers pay a penalty for being immigrants or later generation ethnics, especially if they differ in phenotype from the host society, and even a greater penalty for being darker and more Indian-looking (or Asian or African) in phenotype. The cost is both *psychological* and *economic*. The psychological cost involves stigmatization and the ensuing perception of discrimination. The economic cost means that because of greater stigma the lower the human capital that the person is able to acquire that is necessary for social mobility in the American context of structural assimilation. Tafoya (2004) sums up her findings in this way:

For Latinos the concept of race appears to extend beyond biology, ancestral origins or a history of grievance in this country. The differences in characteristics and attitudes between those Hispanics who call themselves White and those who identify as some other race, suggests they experience racial identity as a measure of belonging: Feeling White seems to be a reflection of success and a sense of inclusion. The fact that changeable characteristics such as income help determine racial identification among Latinos, versus permanent markers such as skin color does not necessarily mean that color lines in American society are fading. On the contrary, these findings show that color has a broader meaning. The Latino experience demonstrates that Whiteness remains an important measure of belonging, stature and acceptance. And, Hispanic views of race also show that half of this ever larger segment of the U.S. population is feeling left out (p. 3)

This leads naturally to a discussion of perceived discrimination. Were the informants in the Keefe and Padilla (1987) study justified in reporting discrimination in their environment? In addition, how do individuals assess perceived discrimination and cope with instances of discrimination directed at them or other members of their ethnic community?

Perceived Discrimination and Ethnic Threat

When a stigmatized person becomes aware of his/her stigma and how it is used by others to evaluate him/her or other members of the group negatively, this has adverse psychological affects on the individual. If the stigmatized person assesses the discriminatory act as negative and hurtful, the person may experience a range of emotions such as feelings of depersonalization, lack of belonging, anger, frustration, and depression. In addition, if the person experiences negative evaluations because of the stigma associated with their ethnic group from multiple sources – peers, teachers, mass media – the person may also experience an increased arousal level in similar social contexts in which they have felt threatened on other occasions. Thus, highly stigmatized individuals may experience generalized threat in many social contexts.

Because stereotyping is associated with self-identity and group membership through the common underlying process of social categorization and comparison, social identity must inevitably be influenced by motivational factors involved in self-conceptualization and identity construction. Thus, it is clear why in-group stereotypes tend to be favorable and out-group ones derogatory and unfavorable: self-categorization imbues the self with all the attributes of the group, and so it is important that such attributes are ones that reflect well on the self. Thus, people (and social groups) are highly motivated to achieve wide social acceptance and to emphasize those dimensions which reflect well on the in-group and which differentiate them from the out-group.

The effects of perceived discrimination and ethnic threat may increase if friends and acquaintances who are members of the dominant group do not validate the stigmatized person's perceptions. It is not uncommon for the stigmatized person who is conscious of how his/her stigma is used to categorize and/or compare him/her unfavorably to hear disclaimers about his feelings of perceived discrimination by friends who do not share their stigma. Beschloss (2002) relates a good example of this in his account of Eleanor Roosevelt's interaction with her Jewish friend Elinor Morgenthau, the wife of Henry Morgenthau, Jr. The Morgenthau were friends and neighbors of the Roosevelts, and Mr. Morgenthau was Secretary of the Treasury under President Roosevelt. Although the women were good friends, Beschloss writes:

Having shed the genteel anti-Semitism of her class, Mrs. Roosevelt took care to shield her Jewish friend from social slights. She once wrote to another friend, who was Protestant, "You are worse than Elinor Morgenthau and haven't the reason!" When Mrs. Morgenthau was blackballed from membership in the elite Colony Club of New York, Mrs. Roosevelt

resigned in protest. ... Still, Mrs. Roosevelt was exasperated that Elinor felt social discrimination that the First Lady considered to be only in her head. "I have always felt you were hurt often by imaginary things and have wanted to protect you." She once wrote her. "But if one is to have a healthy relationship ... it must be on some kind of equal basis. You simply cannot be so easily hurt. Life is too short to cope with it." (p. 47-48)

Thus, while Mrs. Roosevelt was trying to be helpful on the one hand, she also offered up the suggestion that much of what Mrs. Morgenthau believed was mere "imaginary." The idea that anti-Semitism and other racist behaviors never occurred or were taken out of context is a common occurrence and often offered by very well intentioned individuals. Denials of the existence of discrimination directed at a person directly or to members of one's ethnic group can heighten the person's anxiety because it is easily possible to believe that perhaps one is being too sensitive and that friends and acquaintances are correct that one is just imagining discrimination where none exists. Also operating is the matter of self-evaluation and the need to evaluate one's self in positive terms against the conflicting feelings of discrimination and the messages that the stigmatized person is just imagining racism where none exists.

According to the theory proposed here the continuation of perceived discrimination creates a condition of ethnic threat. Ethnic Threat comes about when the person has a heightened awareness of the salience of his or her "stigma" and how members of the dominant group use stigma to make negative evaluations of self, other members of a person's ethnic group, and the ethnic group itself. Ethnic threat occurs because the discriminatory acts challenge the integrity of a person's self-esteem and their relationship to their ethnic group. The threat challenges the self-worth of the person and their group.

Importantly, perceived discrimination and feelings of ethnic threat do not come about merely through overt or explicit acts of discrimination against the self or members of one's group. Some ethnic individuals state that they sometimes "just know that another person" is evaluating them negatively because of their stigma. This heightened awareness of discrimination is often downplayed as mentioned earlier in the case of Mrs. Roosevelt. It is one thing to be able to point to explicit or overt acts of discrimination, but what about the more subtle messages that members of minority groups sometimes claim that they sense in their interactions with nonminority individuals. Is there any basis for such claims?

Explicit and Implicit Bias

Although acts of blatant discrimination are less common today, discriminatory practices are still prevalent. Evidence of racism abounds in the stereotypical images of people of color in the media, housing discrimination, documented racial bias in lending practices, and racial tracking in schools. Research has found that the majority of African Americans report experiencing discrimination in the last year and most reported negotiating daily discrimination (Feagin, 1991; Feagin & Sikes, 1994;

Landrine & Klonoff, 1996; Swim, Cohen, & Hyers, 1998). Sellers and Shelton (2003) report that for the majority of people of color racial discrimination is still pervasive.

Though private beliefs about race have improved (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, & Krysan, 1997), people still associate African Americans with low intelligence, hostility, aggression, and violence (Devine & Elliot, 1995) and describe Latinos as unintelligent, antisocial, and lacking ambition (Cowan, Martinez, & Mendiola 1997; Neimann, Pollack, Rogers, & O'Connor, 1998). Kao (2000), through her conversations with African American, Asian, White, and Latino high school students received similar reports of stereotypic group images from adolescents. These youth described African Americans as poor in academics and Latinos as manual laborers with little academic ambition, yet described Whites and Asians as educated and ambitious. These youth tended to categorize Whites and Asians together while combining Blacks and Latinos in their thinking about group stereotypes. These recent studies provide clear evidence that racial stereotypes persist. Today political correctness likely masks how people really feel about members of different ethnic and racial groups. Often people do not want to appear biased when they actually are, or they might not realize the extent of their own biases.

Studies are beginning to show that in today's climate of political correctness a person's self-presentational concerns may inhibit them from revealing prejudicial feelings and stereotyped thoughts on self-report measures that are straightforward and transparent (Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). So rather than relying on explicit measures of bias (e.g., social distance), more accurate assessments of prejudice and stereotyping can be obtained from measures that are less influenced by the conscious control of test takers. These more indirect, or implicit, measures include techniques that involve cognitive priming and, the implicit association test (IAT) (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The IAT involves making quick judgments about stimuli-flashed on a computer screen. On some critical trials, the judgments made are congruent with a hypothesized bias, such as prejudicial feelings toward, or stereotyped beliefs about, members of an ethnic group. For example, in one version of the test respondents press one key if a word that appears on the computer screen is either unpleasant (e.g., assault) or a typical first name of a Hispanic male (e.g., Miguel). They press another key if the word is either pleasant (e.g., peace) or a common first name of a White male (e.g., John). On other critical trials, the judgments to be made are incongruent with the hypothesized bias. For example, the respondents are to press one key if the word on the screen is either unpleasant or a name commonly given to a person who is White and to press another key if the word is either pleasant or a name commonly given to Latino. The assumption underlying the test is that if a respondent is biased then he or she should take less time to make judgments that are congruent with their bias than to make judgments that are incongruent with the bias. For example, providing evidence for prejudice against Blacks, White college students were quicker to respond on judgments congruent with prejudicial feelings than they were on judgments incongruent with such feelings (Greenwald et al.).

In a recent study, Weyant (2005) employing non-Hispanic White college students adapted the IAT to test for belief in a stereotype that Hispanics are, compared to Whites, relatively unintelligent. Respondents were exposed to words that are either indicative of intelligence (e.g., brainy) or lack of intelligence (e.g., dull) and to first names that are commonly given to Hispanics or to non-Hispanic Whites. In the study, respondents also received an explicit measure of social distance when they completed a modified version of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale that asked about the respondent's willingness to associate with Hispanics through marriage, dating, close friendships, as neighbors, or as coworkers. The findings revealed that the IAT successfully detected stereotypic beliefs that Hispanics were less intelligent than Whites were and high scores on the IAT were also associated with greater preferred distance from Hispanics.

In a review of implicit measures in social cognition research, Fazio and Olson (2003) discuss microbehaviors that have been found to be associated with various implicit procedures used to assess racial attitudes. Some of the microbehaviors that have been detected when more biased Whites are observed with Blacks include: less touching, greater sitting distance from target, less eye contact, less smiling, less extemporaneous social comments, more speech errors, more speech hesitations, and greater body tension. In one such study Vanman, Paul, Ito, and Miller (1997) showed that by using an explicit and an implicit technique for assessing racial bias they produced contradictory findings. When Vanman et al. asked White participants to rate photos of Whites and Blacks for friendliness there was an apparent bias in favor of Blacks. With the photos of Blacks rated as friendlier than photos of White. However, when an implicit measure of bias was carried out by recording facial electromyography (EMG) which measures activity of muscles used in facial expressions at the same time as the respondents completed an explicit rating task on the photos a different finding revealed racial bias. In this case, facial EMG activity showed a contradictory finding indicating a bias in favor of the White photographs. Thus, White participants in this study were saying one thing overtly, but possibly unconsciously signaling a different message through their facial expressions. In a followup study, Vanman, Saltz, Nathan, and Warren (2004) followed a similar procedure, but in addition asked their White respondents to decide on who should be awarded a teaching fellowship. In this experimental study, vignettes containing similar qualifications for the fellowship were prepared for White and black "applicants." In addition, photos of White and black applicants were included with the bogus application files. The findings showed that White participants who exhibited higher levels of EMG activity in the facial cheek region (i.e., White bias) when they viewed pictures of White rather than black fellowship applicants were more likely to choose the White "applicant" for the teaching fellowship. Interestingly, this finding was obtained with White students who exhibited little apparent prejudice against African Americans on an explicit measure of bias.

In a recently published study, Wheeler and Fiske (2005) used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to compare brain activity in the amygdala region of the brain with White participants during presentation of black and White

faces. During the presentation of the facial stimuli subjects were asked to perform three different types of tasks: social neutral visual search (find a dot on the face), social categorization (judge whether the person is over age 21), and social individuation (decide whether the person likes a particular type of vegetable). In a second experiment words were used to prime racial stereotypes (African American positive and negative stereotypes: musical, athletic, loud, and lazy). Wheeler and Fiske found that when subjects processed the photos as simple visual stimuli or for the individuation task, the response of the amygdala was essentially the same for the White and black photos. However, when subjects viewed White and black photos and were required to make social categorization judgments a different pattern of amygdala activity emerged with different parts of the amygdala “turning on” to the different photos. The relevance is that the amygdala is involved in sensing, relaying, and learning about potential danger represented by stimuli, regardless of whether the learning occurs through direct experience with the aversive stimulus or indirectly by expressed fear or anger through others’ facial expressions. This type of amygdala activation, however, occurs only when deep cognitive processing is required as seen in the social categorization task (Wheeler & Fiske).

The importance of distinguishing here between explicit and implicit measures of racial attitudes and microbehaviors is that it is common knowledge that ethnic people are often aware of these more subtle indices of intergroup relations. Although they may not be able readily to describe what cues they are attending to when they sense threat, the person who says that they perceive discrimination is likely reporting accurately. Clearly, it is important to find an empirical methodology for studying what cues ethnic individuals are attending to when they report discomfort due to subtle forms of discrimination. The challenge too is to understand how well intentioned people who may quite truthfully report that they are not biased still manage to communicate their subconscious feelings of in-group and out-group bias. Further, when including this fact in the context of perceived discrimination and ethnic threat, these microbehaviors are what the ethnic person is detecting when they believe Whites evaluate them negatively. There is still no empirical basis for this assertion, but there is anecdotal evidence for this in the life experiences of minority individuals.

In today’s climate of political correctness, it is these much more subtle microbehaviors that give a person’s true racial attitudes away. However, it also places a much more difficult burden on the ethnic person to “prove” that they are justified in feeling that they are being discriminated against. These feelings of being the target of negative evaluations are also more likely to be present in the experiences of individuals who carry more stigmas attached to their ethnicity and/or race. Simultaneously, stigmatized individuals are more likely to have their feelings that Whites are judging them negatively denied by both less stigmatized and more assimilated coethnics and by sympathetic Whites. However, this is an area of future research that remains to be investigated. There is some suggestion in the ethnic socialization literature that parents enable children to detect both explicit and implicit forms of racial bias.

Socialization Around Race and Prejudice

African American parents transmit information about racism to their children that they received from their own parents (e.g., Hughes & Johnson, 2001; Spencer, 1983; Thornton, 1997). Moreover, if parents have experienced overt racism and if they also felt that their children had been treated unfairly because of their race, they were significantly more likely to engage in cultural transmissions about race group history and heritage, while also teaching about prejudice and discrimination – a form of socialization for racism (Hughes & Jackson).

In a similar fashion, Phinney and Chavira (1995) report that Mexican American, African American, and Japanese American parents stated that in their ethnic socialization of children they felt compelled to instill pride in their heritage while also having conversations with them about ethnic discrimination that they might confront in the future. Also Knight et al. (1993), in a study of 45 dyads of Mexican American English speaking mothers and their 6–10-year-old children, reported that mothers discussed issues of ethnic discrimination and prejudice with their children. However, the way in which these cultural and discrimination focused messages occurred was not straightforward, but was very much connected to a bundle of variables associated with the mothers' cultural and familial circumstance. Specifically, mothers who were more comfortable with their Mexican cultural background and less comfortable with the majority culture and whose husbands' families had resided in the United States for fewer generations were more likely to instill Mexican culture in their children while also transmitting more messages about ethnic pride and discrimination in their young children. As for the children in these dyads, Knight et al. found that children whose mothers were comfortable with their Mexican background used more ethnic labels to describe themselves and importantly knew more about their culture, reported engaging in ethnic behaviors, and were more likely to prefer ethnic foods, friends, and social activities.

In a study that used a similar methodology to that of Knight et al. (1993) and Quintana and Vera (1999) found that their 7–11-year-old children had a sophisticated understanding of the ethnic prejudice they faced. This in turn was associated with higher levels of ethnic knowledge and ethnic identification. Parental ethnic socialization was not predictive of understanding prejudice in this study, but it did relate significantly with ethnic knowledge. Thus, the developmental process suggests that children learn about their cultural heritage from their parents. Further, as they mature cognitively, they are increasingly able to understand the meaning of prejudice and how their ethnic group may be the target of discrimination. The result of this process is that young persons emerge with a sharpened sense of their ethnic identity that takes form through ethnic-related socializing experiences with parents, family members, and peers.

In a related study that examined the role of ethnic and social perspective taking abilities and parental ethnic socialization, Quintana et al. (1999) found that parental ethnic socialization was positively correlated with ethnic identity achievement among a population of mostly third and later generation Mexican American

adolescents. However, the ability to take a different perspective was linked developmentally to cognitive processes, and not to ethnic socialization. Quintana et al. speculate that higher levels of ethnic perspective taking reflect higher cognitive processing and that these are related to self-protective properties found among stigmatized groups. Specifically, adolescents with a high level of ethnic perspective taking understand that negative feedback about their ethnicity or ethnic group is likely due to ethnic prejudice on the part of members of the dominant social group. It is still not well understood how an adolescent's higher cognitive processing, and not ethnic socialization, comes to offer this self-protective function. In addition, research on ethnic identity among children and adolescents has not included skin color and other measures of observable stigma as variables to determine their relationship to ethnic identity. At least one tenable hypothesis is that more stigmatized Latino parents will engage in more socializing of children on themes of race, ethnicity, and discrimination and this in turn will culminate in children who are more astute in recognizing the explicit and implicit prejudicial types of behaviors.

Coping Strategies to Minimize Ethnic Threat

A person's social identity is threatened if he believes he has been or will be evaluated negatively because of his racial and/or ethnic group. This is the most frequent outcome of perceived discrimination. Breakwell (1986) describes intrapsychic and intergroup coping strategies that a person engages in when her identity is threatened. According to Breakwell intrapsychic coping strategies include deflection (e.g., denial, adoption of an unreal self, fantasy), acceptance (e.g., anticipatory restructuring of identity, compartmentalism, compromise), and reevaluation (e.g., reevaluate the content of identity, change the criteria for judging identity characteristics, challenge the right of other people to make judgments about one's identity). In this last strategy, the stigmatized individual takes the position that negative social cognitions and evaluations of his/her group would be different if the persons holding the negative evaluation possessed the stigma themselves. This is akin to the saying "don't criticize me unless you intend to walk in my shoes." Here, the member of a stigmatized ethnic group may be involved in activities aimed at recasting the image of the ethnic group held by the majority group.

Perspectives that rely on intrapsychic coping strategies are not new. For many years, Stonequist's (1937) theory of the marginal person, based on an examination of intrapsychic coping strategies he observed among Jews, Blacks, and immigrants, was widely cited. According to Stonequist, the person who experienced threat to his social identity because of stigma and/or lower social status was prone to psychological instability if she/he could not easily assimilate into the high status group. Historically, this analysis is important because it varies to a considerable extent from the contemporary analysis of the motivation, context, and outcome of ethnic identity discussed here. The "marginal" person model advanced by Stonequist was the generally accepted view for more than half a century. Despite

repeated criticisms about the lack of scientific evidence for marginality and the vagueness of the concept (e.g., Green, 1947; Mann, 1973); the ideas emanating from the concept of marginality are still present in some current models of acculturation (Berry, 2003). However, Del Pilar and Udasco (2004) in a critique of the concept of marginality conclude:

Marginality has endured because it seems logical and reasonable and makes common sense. This may explain the resistance in the field to contrary evidence about marginality's validity. We found whole lines of investigation that are anchored by slender threads of theory. Being caught between cultures frequently does result in difficulties and adjustment problems. The marginality investigators failed to note that these difficulties and adjustment problems can take as many negative forms as are discussed in the voluminous diagnostic manual of psychiatric problems or as many positive forms as are reflected in the biographies of successful immigrants. Despite the wishes of the marginality researchers, one concept cannot hope to cover all these variables. (p. 11)

Thus, it is important to recognize intrapsychic coping strategies when examining individual and collective efforts to minimize ethnic threat; however, to pathologize these coping strategies by labeling the person or group as "marginal" is to overly simplify a complex process of intergroup interactions between dominant and subordinate individuals.

It is important to place our understanding of intrapsychic strategies for coping with ethnic threat in the broader context of intergroup relations between Latinos and majority group members. The theory of ethnic threat presented here argues that Latinos generally show one of three strategies in coping with discrimination and racism: social activism, assimilation (passing), and multiple group memberships/biculturalism. Importantly, these coping strategies do not exist in a zero-sum manner and their associated social identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, the theory maintains that person characteristics such as skin color and physical features (i.e., stigma) may predispose the person toward one strategy more than another. This is because individuals who are darker and more indigenous looking experience greater explicit and implicit forms of discrimination and have fewer options available to them in terms of social identity (Arce et al., 1987; Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Tafoya, 2004).

Ethnic Identity With and Without Social Activism

One strategy for coping with prejudice and discrimination that challenge a person's self-esteem or the integrity of the social group to which a person belongs is to assert one's ethnic identity. In addition to this, the person can also decide whether to confront those individuals or groups that are discriminating against them. Confrontation can move from the level of individual action against the aggressor to a group or collective social movement. Social movements occur when a large number of people who are bound together by a common purpose or "essence," like ethnicity and race, join together to solve a collective problem such as unequal treatment, discriminatory practices and policies, and racism. The goal of a social movement is

to bring about social change. We can point to the Civil Rights Movement generally and in the context of people of Mexican heritage to the Chicano Movement for examples of this behavior.

Social activism is energized because ethnic threat is aversive, especially if the ethnic group's core values are attacked. Further, social activists are likely to become more secure in their ethnic identity and activism if three conditions are met: (1) the person experiences racism directly, (2) there is a supportive group of coethnics who gather for mutual social support, and (3) the activism results in some measurable positive social change. Importantly, persons who choose social activism as their primary strategy for confronting injustice and discrimination against them or their ethnic group may also prefer to associate with other members of their ethnic group. It is a mistake, however, to label such ethnics as possessing a "separatist" orientation (e.g., Berry, 2003).

A coping strategy involving social activism and an orientation of exclusivity for the ethnic group to which one belongs can be explained in two ways. First, as mentioned earlier, individuals who are easily categorized because of skin color and physiognomy experience more instances of real or perceived discrimination and understandably feel more comfortable with members of their own ethnic group where they do not have to be on guard for attacks on their group (Tatum, 1997). Thus, just because the ethnic person expresses a preference to be with members of her own group does not mean that the person completely endorses an exclusive separatist orientation. In this same fashion, a White person whose primary social support group consists of other Whites is not espousing a racist philosophy because of their same racial group friendships (Tatum, 1997).

Another perspective on social activism as a coping strategy is that the label "social activist" can be the basis for another way of categorizing people negatively. Ironically, the US Constitution guarantees justice and equality for all, but often when minority individuals seek social change to remedy injustices they are labeled radicals, leftist, communist, or separatists. We do not have to look very hard to see how some members of the dominant social group denigrated the social activism of Martin Luther King, Jr. or Cesar Chavez. According to Brewer (1993) and optimal distinctiveness theory, minority group members who embrace their minority identity in response to feeling overly distinctive risk losing whatever positive evaluation was being accorded them by the majority group. In sum, the person who meets ethnic threat via social activism is likely to experience even greater discrimination and threat because of their actions. This is why social support from like-minded individuals becomes so important for maintaining self-esteem and ethnic pride.

There are individuals who because of ethnic threat identify strongly with their ethnic group, but who either do not engage in social activism or do so only sporadically. There are several interpretations for their behavior. First, these individuals may not enjoy a support group that reinforces the idea of activism, and therefore, they may feel greater reluctance to protest discrimination in fear of even greater reprisal because of their ethnicity. Second, such individuals may not have the human capital in the form of education and knowledge of the legal and political system to know how to assert their civil rights. However, once they are taught their civil rights

and how to obtain support from others they are likely to increase their orientation toward greater social activism. Finally, there are likely personality traits related to whether or not a person has the capacity to confront prejudice and discrimination. Research is lacking on personality variables associated with social activism.

In sum, there is still much that we must learn about social activism as a coping strategy for dealing with ethnic threat. Although there is a long history of social activism among Latinos to social injustices directed at them, there is a scarcity of research on the psychology of threat and coping. We will now turn to another form of coping that is the opposite of social activism.

Assimilation and Efforts to “Pass”

A second coping strategy for overcoming ethnic threat is to seek ways to integrate into the dominant social group. There is a long history, for example, of people using “passing” as one strategy for coping (Winter & DeBose, 2003). According to Breakwell (1986), passing “refers to the process of gaining access to a group or social category ... by camouflaging one’s group origins.” (p. 116) How successfully a person is able to camouflage his/her group origin depends obviously on the stigma s/he manifests (e.g., skin color and physical features). Thus, very light skinned, mixed race individuals have the best chance of “passing,” if they chose to do, so because their stigma is less visible than other members of their group (Goffman, 1963). Passing can be a suitable strategy for some individuals; however, it also entails risks if the person’s “true identity” is discovered. Thus, the potential for fear of discovery that is engendered by “passing” as a coping response may be as harmful, psychologically, to the person as enduring the negative social evaluations that occur in a race conscious society.

Another strategy in this same domain is for the person to assimilate culturally and socially into the dominant group. There are two forms of assimilation. In the first, a person passes into the group by “blending in” and not calling attention to their ethnic heritage. This may include not speaking the heritage language, changing one’s name, and acquiring all the behaviors of the dominant group. In the second, the person does not deny their racial/ethnic heritage, but rather seeks to set it aside in order to acquire the dominant culture; thereby, attempting to gather social acceptance and inclusion from the dominant group. This conformity to the dominant group is a predicted outcome of optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer, 1991, 1993; Tatarodi, Kang, & Milne, 2002) where the self-perceived physical distinctiveness induces in the minority person the need for belonging to the dominant group. In this situation, acculturation to the dominant group represents a form of conformity to the high status group.

Immigrants predominantly from Europe (Feagin & Feagin, 2003) used this strategy of conforming to the dominant group successfully during the early part of the twentieth century. The question often heard today is why immigrants from Asia and Latin America have not adopted this strategy. According to the theory of ethnic

threat posited here assimilation works well when the stigma of skin color and physiognomy deviate very little from the majority group. The greater the disparity in color and physical features between the minority and majority group, the more difficult complete assimilation is, even when the person has conformed completely to the values, behaviors, and life style of the majority culture (Tafarodi et al., 2002). Remember the conversation between Ron Takaki and his taxi cab driver (refer to p. 16) where because of the shape of his eyes and complexion, the taxi cab driver asked Takaki how long he had been in the United States. Obviously, Takaki, who is an American citizen by birth, did not look “American” enough for the cab driver.

In a discussion of assimilation, Schaefer (2004) notes that assimilation is difficult for the minority individual because while it is encouraged by the dominant group it comes with a conflicting message. As Schaefer states:

In the United States, dominant White society encourages assimilation. The assimilation perspective tends to devalue alien culture and to treasure the dominant. For example, assimilation assumes that whatever is admirable among Blacks was adapted from Whites and that whatever is bad is inherently Black. The assimilation solution to Black-White conflict is the development of a consensus around White American values. (p. 25)

Thus, while not impossible to assimilate, some ethnic minority individuals are able to overcome the odds and assimilate, but the majority group often views them as the exception. Interestingly, these “exceptions” often internalize the negative stereotypes attributed to their group and are as likely to discriminate against members of their own group, as are members of the majority group. Schaefer points out that “Members of the subordinate group who choose not to assimilate look on those who do as deserters.” (p. 26) There is some justification in this labeling as shown by Vazquez et al. (1997) who reported that highly acculturated dark-skinned Mexican American students had little ethnic community involvement, suggesting that the more salient a person’s physical features, the more they have to overcompensate by disregarding most, if not all vestiges of the culture of origin. In sum, assimilation is not easy, as Schaefer states. Assimilation involves having to gain acceptance from the majority group while at times enduring disparaging comments about one’s origins. At the same time, it also may engender distrust from members of the ethnic group, especially if the person attempting assimilation is at the same time deliberating placing social distance between himself and his ethnic heritage community.

Multiple Group Membership and Biculturalism

The third intergroup coping strategy is what Breakwell (1986) terms multiple group membership. Because most people are members of different social groups simultaneously, the belief is that with a carefully balanced mix of social group memberships, a person can be protected from the threat that may occur because of the stigma attached to any one of the groups. Biculturalism builds on the idea of multiple group membership. Many ethnic individuals, especially second and later generation individuals, find that biculturalism is an appropriate strategy for

coping with discriminatory practices directed at one's ethnic group. Biculturalism is a more adaptable strategy for confronting ethnic threat than is assimilation because it allows the person the flexibility to be both a member of their ethnic heritage culture while also having the cultural competence to profit from their knowledge of the dominant social group (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Padilla, 1994).

Biculturalism is not as easy a road to travel as it might seem. The bicultural person must keep a mental calculus of different social groups and their members (e.g., family, peer groups, clubs, coworkers, etc.) and operate within the acceptable cultural style of behavior of each. Biculturalism too is easier when the boundaries between cultural groups are more permeable and when conflict between groups is minimal. In fact, the truly bicultural person is often capable of bringing members of different racial and/or ethnic groups' together and minimizing conflict because the bicultural person understands the value and behavioral systems of each group and knows how to transverse the sensitive intersects between the various groups. The personal effectiveness is even greater when these cultural brokers are trusted members of both the dominant and subordinate social groups. Thus, the bicultural person is often able to make the social boundaries between distinct groups more permeable by bringing different people together to talk and learn about each other without categorizing and engaging in negative social evaluations.

Hong, Morris, Chiu, and Benet-Martinez (2000) in a study with Chinese-American biculturals showed how cultural meaning systems guide sociocognitive processes that allow biculturals to switch between their different cultural orientations. In addition, Haritatos and Benet-Martinez (2002) have expanded this view of biculturalism by identifying two forms of bicultural integration. Bicultural individuals high on integration envision their two cultural orientations in nonconflictual terms and move with fluidity between both worlds with ease. On the other hand, biculturals who are low in integration see their two cultural orientations in opposition to each other and although they are competent in both cultures, they are less confident in the role of cultural broker.

According to Padilla (1994; 2006) motives for biculturalism are different depending on generational status. For first-generation individuals, acculturation to the dominant "American" culture is a necessity for success in the United States. The newcomer must learn English and culturally appropriate behaviors. Generally, it is more difficult for adult immigrants, especially if they do not possess much education (i.e., human capital) to acculturate to the level where they are competent enough in the language and culture of the dominant group to be completely bicultural. For the children of immigrants (i.e., second generation) or immigrant children, on the other hand, biculturalism often occurs because of the demand to serve as a bridge between the culture of the parents and that of the majority group at school and in the community (Morales & Hanson, 2005). These individuals often become competent biculturals because they have more opportunities to move between the language and culture of the home and that of the mainstream group. Importantly, the motivation for third and later generation individuals to develop

bicultural skills may be due to their higher awareness to social inequities and astuteness in recognizing more subtle forms of discrimination directed at them personally or at other members of their ethnic group. No studies have yet been conducted to assess how stigmas such as accents, skin color, and physiognomy interact with a person's perceptions of ethnic threat to determine to what extent he or she will engage in multiple group memberships.

Conclusion

The theory of ethnic identity advanced here is based on earlier theories of social cognition and social identity. The theory explains why Latinos, who have become the largest ethnic group in the United States, manifest different orientations toward their ethnic identity. The core of the theory suggests that the processes of social categorization, social comparison, and social dominance are driven in large measure by skin color in determining social status. Skin color represents a primary stigma that influences intergroup interactions between the majority group and Latinos. Thus, a central construct in the theory is social stigma.

Latinos are a heterogeneous ethnic group comprised of different races and mixtures of race, and vary from light-skinned European in their features to very dark and indigenous in their physiognomy. Evidence is accumulating to indicate that lighter skinned, more European-looking Latinos fare better socioeconomically than their darker skinned Latino counterparts. The dynamics that seem to advantage fairer skinned Latinos suggest the maintenance of race-based preferences despite Civil Rights legislation and efforts toward social equity in education and employment.

The theory of Latino ethnic identity posits that when individuals experience overt or implicit threats to their ethnic group, they are motivated by the social context to act upon such threats by employing one of several different coping strategies that will mitigate the threat. The coping strategy employed is determined by several considerations. These considerations include: (a) the extent of actual and perceived personal and social group discrimination a person experiences; (b) the social cognitions the person forms about their ethnic group including the self-evaluations they hold about themselves and their group; and (c) the ethnic socialization a person receives from parents and other family members. Individuals who are socially categorized as possessing more of the stigma experience more negative social evaluations and consequently have fewer options in the coping responses available to them.

The three major intergroup coping strategies for dealing with ethnic threat are social activism, assimilation, and multiple group membership/biculturalism. Each of these strategies is in turn associated with particular social identities that enable the person to meet ethnic threat while also safe guarding personal and ethnic group self-esteem. However, because social identities are malleable, the identities can change because of two properties – identities are largely social constructions, and they are

not zero-sum and consequently, the existence of one identity at one point in time or in one situational context does not negate the existence of another identity at another time or in another context.

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