

Effects of Multiple Social Identities: Race and Gender in an Interracial Context

An honors thesis for the Department of Psychology

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Author Note

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Abstract

Interracial interactions can be tense: When concerned about confirming the stereotype that they are prejudiced, Whites display more anxious and unfriendly behavior. However, stereotypes of women contrast those of Whites: Women are seen as warmer and socially skillful. The present study addressed the question: Can priming a woman's gender or racial identity lead to different expectations about an interracial interaction with a Black woman? Thus, the present study focused on White women and activated a participant's gender or racial identity prior to an expected interaction with a Black woman. It was hypothesized that, when primed with their female identity, White women would respond more positively than when primed with their racial identity as a White person or with no identity (control). Results indicated that White women in the gender-activated condition looked forward to the interaction more and reported less discomfort than their counterparts in the race-activated condition, suggesting that gender may have a moderating effect in interracial interactions.

Keywords: interracial interactions, racial stereotypes, gender, race, identity

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The extensive social psychological literature on interracial interactions makes it clear that such interactions can be tense. In fact, interracial interactions between White and Black individuals can be notably plagued with misperceptions, misunderstandings, and apprehension; Whites are often afraid of appearing prejudiced in any way, while Blacks fear that Whites will actually be prejudiced (Littleford, Wright, & Sayoc-Parial, 2005). Furthermore, while Whites and Blacks report a desire for more intergroup interaction, fears of rejection by outgroup members hamper more interaction (Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Thus, interracial contact is often encumbered by discomfort, especially those interactions between White and Black individuals in the United States. However, the moderating effect of gender in interracial interactions has not been fully investigated, and research indicates that women may appraise and approach such interactions differently than men (Taylor, Klein, Lewis, Gruenewald, Gurung, & Updegraff, 2000). After all, while extant literature suggests that Whites are cold and removed during interracial contact, women are stereotypically warmer and more engaged in social interaction (Littleford et al., 2005); thus, these two conflicting notions provide for the possibility that White women may appraise interracial contact in a distinct manner from what research has thus far indicated. The present research is designed to examine the role of gender in such interactions, with a specific focus on identity and stereotype-relevant behavioral activation.

Interracial Contact

According to a revised version of Allport's (1954) intergroup contact hypothesis, positive interracial interaction requires equal group status in the situation, common goals, cooperation, support of authorities, law or custom, and one more factor: the potential for friendship (Pettigrew, 1998). Unless these conditions are satisfied, interracial contact will not operate optimally and past negative views or prejudices may be reinforced. When Whites and Blacks

hold misconceptions of outgroup members and their motivations and do not perceive commonalities in the situation, these conditions are unlikely to be satisfied, thus perpetuating previous anxieties and leading to increasingly tense or awkward interracial interactions.

While Whites and Blacks often find themselves avoiding interracial contact, research by Shelton and Richeson (2005) indicated that these individuals may have more in common than they think but hold mutual misconceptions about outgroup members. While individuals of different racial groups “are concerned with how they will be viewed and treated as members of their racial groups during interracial interactions,” Whites and Blacks both reported that they would like to have more contact with members of the outgroup (Shelton & Richeson, 2005, p. 91). Additionally, individuals of both racial groups assumed that outgroup members did not want contact with them, thus leading to limited contact overall. Unfortunately, while Whites and Blacks each “perceive a gulf” between their two racial groups, both groups make the mistake of assuming that outgroup members are not interested in interaction (Shelton & Richeson, 2005, p. 104). Furthermore, Shelton and Richeson (2005) indicated that both White and Black individuals were preoccupied by being rejected by outgroup members, but assumed that outgroup members were comparatively less concerned about rejection and simply avoided interaction out of a lack of interest. While interracial contact is often limited, Shelton and Richeson (2005) demonstrated that White and Black individuals often make the same faulty assumptions about the outgroup members and in fact share a similar interest in interracial contact. However, members of different racial groups are too often inhibited by misunderstanding and incorrect beliefs about why interracial contact remains limited and potentially tense.

The anxiety associated with interracial interactions is well documented and also deters individuals from more interracial contact. When it comes to such interactions, the individuals

involved tend to experience high levels of anxiety that lead to stranger, more off-putting displays of behavior (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Individuals are often quite preoccupied with outgroup members' impressions and evaluations of them such that subsequent behavior is perceived to be less friendly or social (Vorauer, 2006). Due to increased anxiety, individuals are substantially more self-aware, leading to higher cognitive load, impaired cognitive processing, and more sudden emotional reactions, thus leading to more extreme views of outgroup members (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). In fact, White female participants who were told to actively avoid prejudice or were given no instructions at all demonstrated worse executive function on the Stroop color-naming task after an interracial interaction (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006).

Furthermore, Whites tend to report greater discomfort during interracial interactions with outgroup members compared to interacting with other Whites (Littleford et al., 2005). Littleford et al. (2005) examined interracial dyads of Whites, Blacks, and Asians and used subjective self-report data and cardiovascular measurements to measure general discomfort during such interactions. Results indicated that Whites were the most uncomfortable when interacting with outgroup partners in general, and particularly with Blacks. Furthermore, observers reported that Whites increased their friendliness toward outgroup partners as they became more uncomfortable and, according to self-report data, Whites appeared to restrict themselves to more positive feelings with their outgroup partners. Thus, it appears that during interactions with outgroup members, self-report and physiological data indicated that not only were Whites less comfortable, but they were also more anxious about expressing this discomfort, instead choosing to restrict themselves to more positive emotions (Littleford et al., 2005).

This anxiety and discomfort during interracial contact may actually stem from the idea that such interracial interactions can be appraised as threatening, stressful situations. According

to Trawalter, Richeson, and Shelton (2009), Whites and racial minorities both appraise interracial interactions as a threat that leads to the experience of stress; thus, a coping strategy is essential to steering around the threat, and “their behavior seems to reflect their stress and efforts to cope” (Trawalter et al., 2009, p. 259). Moreover, Trawalter et al. (2009) identified four coping strategies for individuals in a stressful interracial interaction: engagement, antagonism, avoidance, and freezing. Particularly for Whites, some research has indicated that intergroup anxiety may be coped with by engaging through increased positive behavior and friendliness out of desire to defuse as much tension as possible during a potentially tense interaction. While less common, antagonism can manifest as a coping strategy, particularly when Whites are criticized by an outgroup member and feel the need to attack the source of the stress they feel. Avoidance can be a useful coping strategy for individuals who fear negative consequences of interracial interaction and prefer to simply withdraw socially from their outgroup interaction partners. Lastly, freezing is a more passive coping strategy that seems to be born from an inability to cope at all; individuals who “freeze” during interracial interactions are unable to summon positive behavior, antagonize the source of the stress, or actively withdraw from the social setting as a means of dealing with a stressor (Trawalter et al., 2009). Vorauer (2006) found that such “freezing” behavior could stem from evaluative concerns, leading to less control over mental resources and decreased ability to appraise the interaction accurately.

Interestingly, according to Trawalter et al. (2009), Whites who are either high in racial bias or who actively want to avoid the appearance of prejudice are more likely to perceive interracial interactions as threatening or demanding. Overall, White individuals are often less experienced with interracial contact than members of racial minority groups, thus leading to a stressful appraisal of interracial interaction (Trawalter et al., 2009). Racial minorities—especially

when the conversation turns to tense, race-related topics—have more experience navigating the cumbersome waters of interracial contact and may actually have “the status (the resources) to set the course and tenor of the interaction” (Trawalter et al., 2009, p. 250). This is not meant to suggest that interracial contact isn’t stressful for racial minorities—on the contrary, racial minorities are often quite preoccupied with being the target of racism or prejudice during an interracial interaction, which leads to different effects on behavior. While Whites may actively screen their own behavior in order to avoid any appearance of racial prejudice, they direct their attention inward and may take a negative toll on their own social behavior. Meanwhile, racial minorities often respond to stressful interracial contact by carefully analyzing the behavior of their interaction partners, leading to what may seem like scrutinizing behavior toward their partners (Trawalter et al., 2009).

In such situations, Whites are often less focused on a proactively friendly interaction, instead gearing into more of a damage-control orientation: the possibility of negative evaluation leads Whites to restrict their social behavior toward outgroup members. Unfortunately, this attempt to minimize negative consequences often exacerbates them, leading outgroup members to perceive such behavior as antisocial or uninterested and to activate meta-stereotypes about the individual (Vorauer, 2006). Anxiety during interracial interactions can lead well-intentioned Whites into social paralysis because they expend too much cognitive load on avoiding negative outcomes. Their outgroup interaction partners mistake this inhibited behavior for prejudice or lack of interest, thus leading to a negative experience overall for both members of the interaction (Vorauer, 2006).

Fear of negative evaluation and subsequent inhibited social behavior is especially common among Whites in interracial interactions, who fear of coming across as prejudiced or

close-minded to outgroup individuals (Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000). According to the study, “dominant group members readily frame ambiguous intergroup interaction in terms of how they themselves are evaluated,” and this mindset can be activated with “only the potential for evaluation” (Vorauer et al., 2000, p. 704). Such interactions led individuals to think about common stereotypes that outgroup members might hold about them and to interpret an outgroup individual’s actions as a reflection on them rather than out of personality or dispositional factors. Indeed, individuals high in public self-consciousness who also place much importance on racial attitudes were especially susceptible to a pervasive fear of evaluation by outgroup members. Such fears of an outgroup member’s evaluation of them led to a decreased focus on one’s own social behavior so that limiting negative outcomes could be the principal focus of the interaction for Whites (Vorauer et al., 2000).

Indeed, while avoiding race-related topics or controversial behavior has become a common approach by Whites during interracial interactions, it comes at a cost. Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton (2008b) assessed the role of “strategic colorblindness”—the avoidance of race-related topics in order to reduce the appearance of racial prejudice—in same-race and interracial dyads. Results indicated that, especially when White participants interacted with Black partners, remarks on race or racial differences were minimal or nonexistent once a norm of colorblindness had been established. Furthermore, it turned out that Whites generally followed the lead of their Black partners when talking about race, similar to the suggestion by Trawalter et al. (2009) that racial minorities may have an advantage in navigating race-related discussions (Apfelbaum et al., 2008b). Consistent with aforementioned research, Apfelbaum et al. (2008b) also found that while Whites with motivation to avoid prejudice felt that a colorblind approach actually demonstrated less racial prejudice, their Black interaction partners did not perceive such

behavior as favorably; instead, Black participants saw this inhibited, colorblind behavior as more prejudiced and less genuine (Littleford et al., 2009; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer et al., 2000). Black observers of the interaction dyads found that only when race was not relevant in the interaction that the colorblind strategy was effective in reducing any appearance of prejudice (Apfelbaum et al., 2008b). Overall, it turns out that in most scenarios, the colorblind approach does not actually lead to an improved social interaction. Additional research indicated that, as children grow older and begin to utilize common racial norms such as colorblindness, they demonstrate inferior ability in social categorization tasks (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Ambady, Sommers, & Norton, 2008a). Thus, colorblindness certainly has its detriments as an approach to interracial interaction, despite the fact that Whites perceive the strategy positively.

In another quantitative demonstration of the effect of Whites' attempts to avoid the appearance of prejudice, Goff, Steele, and Davies (2008) used a word-stem completion task to activate the stereotype threat of the racist White person to White study participants before interacting with Black partners. Results indicated that when White participants were primed with the White racist stereotype and expected to discuss racially sensitive topics with Black partners, they physically distanced themselves from their partners in imagined and real interactions (Goff et al., 2008). Fearing the threat of the White racist stereotype, White participants actively distanced themselves from their Black partners when discussing race-related topics, and this behavior was unrelated to the White participants' degree of racial prejudice (Goff et al., 2008). Despite the good intentions, such behavior can backfire and can be perceived much more negatively and more prejudiced than intended.

Existing research on interracial interactions has demonstrated that not only do members of different racial groups make inaccurate assumptions about outgroup members, but also that

interactions between racial groups are often plagued with anxiety and fear of evaluation.

Unfortunately, Word, Zanna, and Cooper (1974) found that when White interviewers spoke with Black job applicants, the interviewers' lack of interest negatively impacted the performance of the Black applicants. Thus, in the context of everyday interracial interaction, it is possible that anxious, inhibitory behavior on one end of the interaction can negatively influence the behavior of the other individual. Additionally, a study of same-race and interracial college roommates found that the interactional anxiety of one roommate could contagiously influence the anxiety level of the other roommate. This type of behavior was foreboding, since one's roommate's feelings of anxiety were negatively correlated with one's interest in future contact with outgroups (West, Shelton, & Trail, 2009).

Unfortunately, an abundance of research indicates that interracial contact can get stuck in a vicious cycle that perpetuates false assumptions about outgroup members and anxious behavior toward them. Individuals approach interactions with outgroup members with apprehension, and outgroup members perceive this anxiety and often cannot see through to the conscientious intentions beneath. However, there are indicators in existing literature that, under the right circumstances, women may appraise interracial contact differently. Instead of coping with potential threats by minimizing negative consequences, it is possible that women may approach interracial contact in a more socially engaged way that reduces intergroup anxiety and friction.

Women and Interracial Contact

While extensive psychological research has been conducted on interracial interactions, few efforts have been devoted to understanding how gender roles affect such interactions. Women are stereotypically more socially engaged, warmer, and more understanding than men; thus, the effect of gender on typically tense or awkward interracial interactions could be quite

significant. Existing research has noted gender differences along the way, and these variations in actions according to gender can potentially lead to a whole new framework for understanding the role of gender in interracial settings. For example, in a study of interracial contact and interracial closeness, Tropp (2007) found that White—both male and female—respondents demonstrated a slightly stronger link between interracial contact and closeness than Black respondents, but also that White women reported higher interracial closeness than their male counterparts.

Furthermore, Johnson and Marini (1998) conducted a study of racial attitudes of American high school students to find that women—particularly White women—held more favorable racial attitudes than males. This difference was observed after ruling out the effects of interracial friendship, religiosity, and political beliefs, and these female racial attitudes were consistent across social classes, geography, and time. Therefore, the authors concluded, “Females’ stronger orientation toward interpersonal connection and their greater concern for others’ well-being foster more favorable racial attitudes” (Johnson & Marini, 1998, p. 255).

Women may also be superior at taking another’s perspective during an interracial interaction, which research suggests leads to more positive interactions in general. According to a series of studies by Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, and Galinsky (2011), White participants who adopted the perspective of a Black individual and wrote an essay about a day in that individual’s life exhibited less racial bias and more positive evaluation. Perspective-taking also led to increased approach behavior during interactions with Black males and more positive ratings from Black experimenters who observed the interactions (Todd et al., 2011). Additionally, the Black experimenter-observers viewed White female participants who engaged in perspective-taking to be even more positive than their White male counterparts during an interracial interaction with a Black male (Todd et al., 2011). Combined with an increased regard for others

and more tolerant racial attitudes, perhaps women are more able than men to adopt another's perspective—especially that of an outgroup member—and thus engage in more positive interracial behavior.

There are further differences between men and women that have been well documented in psychological literature, some of which could be useful in understanding how women might approach interracial contact differently. In a study of how individuals view themselves within the larger cultures that they are a part of, American women are sometimes seen as a break from the individualistic view of the self so common in Western countries. Instead, women may have a more collectivist approach through “an awareness of and sensitivity to others” that is recognized “as one of the most significant features of the psychology of women” (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 247). Furthermore, the authors note, “A willingness and an ability to care are standards of self-evaluation for many women,” leading to a view of the self that is functionally interdependent within society and falling between dependence and isolating individualism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 247). It seems that women in the United States embrace a more collectivist view of themselves within society, which could absolutely lead to a warmer and more engaged style during interracial interactions.

Additionally, women may find comfort in the presence of others more naturally, especially in the company of other women. A study of the effects of crowding among rats also indicated that women might have an inherently more social nature (Brown & Grunberg, 1995). Echoing results found in humans, Brown and Grunberg (1995) found that while female rats exhibited more signs of stress when isolated, males showed the most stress when they were in crowded, dense areas (Baum & Koman, 1976). Thus, the female rats thrived in the company of others and languished when left alone. Between findings that women tend to be more

interdependent than men and seem to be more content in group settings than alone, perhaps women are more likely to react positively to an interracial interaction with another woman.

As it turns out, women may also appraise stressful situations in an entirely distinct manner from men; since interracial interactions have been shown to be potentially stressful, a different approach by women could indicate unique results. According to a meta-analysis of coping behavior by Tamres, Janicki, and Helgeson (2002), women are much more likely than men to utilize almost any given coping strategy in the face of a stressful situation, while men are more likely to use avoidance, distraction, or withdrawal in response to stress. Additionally, women were found to be more likely to look for emotional support or engage in positive self-talk in response to stress. While it was suggested that women are also more likely to perceive stressors as more severe than men, gender roles have evolved such that women are socialized to seek emotional support; by contrast, men tend to be discouraged from seeking emotional support for problems and often choose to look inward for solutions (Tamres et al., 2002).

However, according to Taylor (2006), stress response research has focused more on men and has left out alternative explanations for female stress responses. “Fight-or-flight” has been the prevailing view on human stress response for quite some time and has aggressive implications that better describe males (Eagly & Steffen, 1986); however, it does not fully capture the behavioral tendencies of women in stressful situations. Taylor (2006) proposed that women have historically faced stressful threats that required protecting the self and offspring. Therefore, women developed an evolutionary tendency for social affiliation in response to a threat, while men’s decisions required quickness in fighting or fleeing (Taylor, 2006). In the theory, tending refers to the protection and nurturing of offspring while befriending refers to

affiliation with others in social networks—particularly with other women—to reduce vulnerability and ensure support (Taylor et al., 2000).

At the center of the “tend-and-befriend” stress response is the hormone oxytocin, which, according to the hypothesis, is released in response to stressors to increase affiliative behavior. Oxytocin has been linked a variety of social and affiliative tendencies and is related to relaxation and decreased cortisol responses to stress (Taylor, 2006). In a study of the effects of oxytocin, male participants who received a combination of social support and oxytocin showed decreased salivary cortisol levels and cardiovascular activity during exposure to stress (Heinrichs, Baumgartner, Kirschbaum, & Ehlert, 2003). While this study was limited to males, the effects of oxytocin were consistent with Taylor (2006) and Taylor et al. (2000), showing that the release of oxytocin had an overall calming effect on males in the face of stress.

According to Taylor et al. (2000), women have an even stronger response to oxytocin because estrogen enhances the effects of oxytocin. Because women have evolved to respond to stress with affiliative behavior more than males, the effects of oxytocin that prompt affiliative tendencies are even more pronounced in women (Taylor, 2006). In the aforementioned study of White, Asian, and Black dyadic interactions by Littleford et al. (2005), women tended to increase their friendliness to outgroup members as their comfort decreased, while men were more likely to decrease their friendliness in such scenarios. These results indicate that women not only have greater interpersonal skills than men, but that they also make more concerted efforts to express friendliness in stressful situations (Littleford et al., 2005). Furthermore, the increased friendliness from women to outgroup members may be indicative of the tendency to seek relief from stress through affiliation, especially with other women. In this case, women might have coped with the

stress of an interracial interaction by reducing vulnerability through affiliating with the source of the stress itself: the outgroup member in the interaction.

The present research is driven by the question of whether certain conditions can lead women to exhibit behavior typical of Whites in interracial contact—that is, less friendly and more inhibited—or typical of women, which would result in more affiliative and sociable behavior. Existing literature indicates that separate identities can be activated within one individual, often with distinct outcomes. Thus, perhaps an interracial interaction between two women can achieve greater success when both they are focused more on their identities as women instead of their racial differences.

Stereotypes and Identity Activation

While it is evident that women can appraise potentially stressful interracial interactions differently and that women may have more favorable racial attitudes than men, it is not quite clear which behavior will shine through: the behavior associated with their identity as a White individual or the behavior more typical of a woman. Thus, research into stereotype threat and activation of “master” identities (gender) and “emergent” identities (race) can indicate how and why an individual might respond to a given situation (Warner, 2008, p. 454).

In a classic example of the effects of stereotype threat—which is known as the risk of characterizing a stereotype about one’s group—Steele and Aronson (1995) gave a difficult verbal section of a standardized test to Black participants. Before taking the test, the researchers told the Black participants that the test was either diagnostic of ability or not; in the diagnostic condition, the objective was to activate the stereotype threat of Blacks underperforming on a test of intellectual ability. Results indicated that when Black participants were told that the test was diagnostic of ability, they performed worse than Whites but showed no difference in the non-

diagnostic condition (Steele & Aronson, 1995). In a similar vein, another study examined the effect of stereotype threat on women who took math tests. When told that the test produced gender differences, the female participants performed worse than men on the math test, consistent with stereotypes about women having inferior math skills. However, in the no-gender-difference condition, there were no significant variations in test scores between men and women (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1998).

Stereotype threat also works with positive stereotypes, not just negative ones. In a study involving Asian-American female participants, researchers primed the participants with their racial, gender, or individual identity, with the assumption that their ethnic identity (Asian) came with positive stereotypes about academic performance. Additionally, the ethnic identity prime not only reminded participants of their Asian ethnicity, but also of the expectation of high academic performance among the other members of their ethnic group. However, priming the positive stereotype “created difficulties in concentration that translated into significantly impaired performance” due to the “fear of failing to confirm a positive stereotype,” which was compounded by the pressure of high group expectations (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). Thus, positive or negative stereotypes can both induce pressure to fulfill or avoid fulfilling a stereotype about one’s group; furthermore, invoking positive stereotypes can lead to negative outcomes when such group pressure rests on the individual’s shoulders.

Stereotype activation can also change an individual’s behavior, even when stereotype threat is not applicable. Bargh, Chen, and Burrows (1996) used subtle primes that led participants into self-fulfilling prophecies of social behavior. With a scrambled-sentence task, the experimenters primed participants with concepts of rudeness or politeness; participants primed with rudeness interrupted the experimenter more often than those primed with politeness. When

participants were primed with concepts of old age, they walked down the hallway after the study more slowly than participants who received no prime. And when participants were shown photographs of African-American male faces, they treated an annoying request by the experimenter with more hostility than did control participants (Bargh et al., 1996). Thus, this study demonstrated that subtle activations of a stereotype or trait led to behavior consistent with those traits in socially applicable situations (Bargh et al., 1996).

Lastly, a study by Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) successfully demonstrated the activation of multiple identities within Asian-American women. In the study, questionnaires given to participants before a math test were used to activate a participant's racial identity, gender identity, or no identity at all; notably, the racial identity prime in this study did not invoke high expectations within the ethnic group, which distinguishes it from the results of Cheryan and Bodenhausen (2000). Consistent with the stereotype that Asians have superior math abilities, Asian-American female participants scored highest on the math test when primed with their ethnic identity, showing that positive stereotypes can indeed lead to positive outcomes. However, a conflicting stereotype says that women have inferior math abilities in comparison to men; when primed with their gender identity, Asian-American women scored the lowest on the math test, with participants in the control group falling in the middle (Shih et al., 1999). Thus, Shih et al. (1999) were successful in activating singular stereotyped identities within individuals who fit into multiple groups with salient stereotypes. The participants in Shih et al. (1999) succumbed to both positive and negative stereotype threats through subtle activation, demonstrated that one aspect of a multi-dimensional identity can be activated with significantly different results.

Overview: The Present Study

The present study sought to address the question: Can priming a woman's gender or racial identity lead to different expectations about an interracial interaction with a Black woman? Within this central question, there are two conflicting stereotypes at work. First, Whites tend to exhibit especially tense, withdrawn, and inhibited behavior during interactions with outgroup members out of fear of appearing racially biased, being rejected, or being evaluated negatively (Apfelbaum et al., 2008b; Goff et al., 2008; Littleford et al., 2005; Shelton & Richeson, 2005; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Trawalter et al., 2009; Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer et al., 2000). However, while they may not be aware of such tendencies, White women in particular have indicated more tolerant racial attitudes, friendlier and more engaged behavior during stressful interracial interactions, and a greater propensity to display behavior consistent with the "tend-and-befriend" coping response through affiliation with other women (Johnson & Marini, 1998; Tamres et al., 2002; Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2000). Additionally, studies on stereotype threat and identity activation within multi-dimensional individuals have demonstrated that stereotype and trait salience can translate into behavior in socially applicable situations (Bargh et al., 1996; Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000; Spencer et al., 1998; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Shih et al., 1999).

Thus, the present study sought to activate singular identities within participants with multi-dimensional identities prior to an expected interracial interaction. In particular, the present study focused on White women and activated a participant's gender identity, racial, or no identity (control) prior to an expected interracial interaction with a Black woman. Using an identity salience method similar to that of Shih et al. (1999), White female participants were led to believe that they would be interacting with a Black woman of roughly the same age; however, before the expected interaction, participants answered one of three questionnaires designed to

prime their gender or racial identity, or no identity at all. These identity primes depended not only on the participants' lack of awareness of the primes themselves, but also on a lack of knowledge about gender differences in interracial interactions. It was hypothesized that, when primed with gender, White women would respond more positively to an expected interracial interaction than when primed with race. Additionally, the hypothesis stated that participants in the control condition (no identity prime) would exhibit expectations more similar to those participants in the race-primed condition—that is, less positive about the upcoming interaction—than those in the gender-primed condition.

Method

Participants

For the present study, the sample population was comprised of 52 female undergraduates from Tufts University between the ages of 17 and 22. (Permission from parents or guardians was sought for participants under the age of 18.) The female students in the study sample were enrolled in one of two psychology courses at Tufts: Introduction to Psychology or Statistics for Behavioral Sciences, both of which require enrollees to participate in a certain number of hours in psychological studies in order to pass the course. Participants enrolled in the present study voluntarily through an online study registration web site that listed all of the studies operating in the Tufts Psychology Department. Participants were required to complete a pre-screening questionnaire to determine eligibility for the available studies; in certain cases, participants were ineligible for certain studies based on answers in the pre-screening questionnaire or due to enrollment in another study with a similar focus. The present study was visible to participants as “Reindeer” in order to reveal as little as possible about the study and prevent participants from exhibiting bias in their selection of studies. The participants in the present study were not

acquainted with the experimental team, and upon arrival, the experimenters only asked for the participants' SONA identification numbers, not their actual names. The present study was conducted between September 2010 and February 2011.

The present study was available to female students of all racial and ethnic groups, though only participants who identified as "White" were included in the final sample because the study was only designed to examine White women's attitudes about an expected interracial interaction with a Black female interaction partner. Thus, participants of non-White racial or ethnic descent were run in the study normally but were not included in statistical analyses. Overall, there were 19 participants in the gender identity condition, 16 in the racial identity condition, and 17 in the control condition.

Research Design

The present study utilized an experimental manipulation and random assignment to sort participants between the three levels of the independent variable. The independent variable was the specific identity that was primed within each participant, and there were three conditions of identity primes: racial identity, gender identity, and no identity (control). The study was conducted using a between-subjects design, as each participant was only exposed to one of the three conditions of the independent variable.

Measures

Prior to participation in the present study, participants completed a pre-screening questionnaire via SONA Systems that measured three sets of characteristics pertinent to the present study, along with other measures submitted by researchers using the same participant pool: femininity, prior interracial contact, and public self-consciousness. To measure femininity, participants viewed six traits stereotypical of femininity from the Bem Sex-Role Inventory

(BSRI)—“affectionate,” “warm,” “compassionate,” “sympathetic,” “sensitive to needs of others,” and “understanding”—and were asked to rate each item based on how well it described them on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*never or almost never true*) to 7 (*always or almost always true*) (Bem, 1974, p. 156). In order to measure prior interracial contact, participants answered six questions pertaining to the presence of Black people in their neighborhood and high school, as well as their prior experiences and friendships with Black people; these answers ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) (Plant & Devine, 2003). Lastly, each participant answered three questions examining public self-consciousness and used a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) to rate how true each statement was about her (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975).

Upon arriving at the study, participants completed a consent form notifying them that they were partaking in a study of interpersonal interactions between strangers. For the expected interaction, participants were given one of two Polaroid photos that were cropped at the shoulders, each depicting a different Black woman of college age (about 18-22 years of age). Both women were visibly similar in age, race, gender, and emotional expression (both were smiling). Over the course of the present study, half of the participants received one photo as their “partner,” while the other half of the participants received the second photo. In addition, the experimenter used a Polaroid camera to take a picture of the participant, purportedly for the other participant to see before the interaction; since no other participant existed, these Polaroid photos were subsequently disposed of.

Before their expected interaction, participants filled out a short questionnaire that served as the experimental manipulation in the study. There were three versions of this questionnaire: the first, which served to prime the participant’s gender identity, asked six questions about the

participant's co-ed or single-sex living arrangement; the second, which was meant to prime one's racial identity, asked six questions about languages spoken at home and at Tufts; and the third, which was designed to be the control with no identity prime, asked six questions about eating options on campus at Tufts (Shih et al., 1999). Refer to Appendices A, B, and C, respectively, for the manipulation questionnaires used in the present study.

Following the experimental manipulation questionnaire, participants completed a larger, 56-item questionnaire to measure the main dependent variable: the degree of positivity a participant feels toward interacting with their partner, a Black woman. The larger questionnaire was broken into smaller subsections, which were a mixture of statements about expectations and behavior during the upcoming interaction, affective state of the participant, and how the participant thought her interaction partner would perceive her (Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Plant & Devine, 2003; Plant, Devine, & Peruche, 2010; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Trawalter et al., 2009). Participants were supposed to rate the extent to which each statement or affective state was true for them, and all items were answered using a seven-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Participants next completed the Implicit Association Test (IAT) on a desktop computer in the same room, specifically the version that examines pro-White versus pro-Black implicit biases (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). At the end of the study, the experimenter asked the participant six questions orally for a suspicion check and recorded her answers by hand. The suspicion check was designed to test if the participant had discerned the true nature of the study; questions addressed the participant's thoughts about the purpose of the study and their feelings about each phase of the study. In addition, the suspicion check also asked participants to recall the race and gender of their fictional partners in order to be sure that they had recognized these

characteristics of their partners. Lastly, participants were given a debriefing sheet that explained the aims of the study in greater detail.

Procedure

The research team for the present study was comprised of two White experimenters—one man and one woman—who were responsible for the entirety of the data collection phase of the study. The study was administered to one participant at a time, and only one experimenter was present for each participant. Data collection took place on weekdays during normal business hours between September 2010 and February 2011. Data collection took place in one of two adjacent rooms in the Psychology Building at Tufts University.

Upon arrival, each participant was greeted by a single experimenter, who led her into one of the two study rooms, which were similar and only differed in terms of time availability. The experimenter asked each participant for her SONA identification number to verify that the correct participant had arrived. Each participant was then asked to sign a consent form with the experimenter present to answer any questions.

The experimenter then explained that the present study sought to examine each participant's first impressions of others prior to having an interaction with them. Participants were also told that they would be completing some questionnaires and interacting with another participant later on in the study. Next, the experimenter asked the participant if she was comfortable with having a Polaroid photo taken of her, explaining that the photo was used for both participants to develop first impressions of each other; in addition, the experimenter assured each participant that the photos were only used for study purposes and would be destroyed afterward. Upon the participant's consent—no participants refused the photo—the experimenter took a Polaroid photo of the participant and then left the room, saying that the same photo

needed to be retrieved from the other partner, who was allegedly “down the hall” in another study room. The experimenter took both the Polaroid camera and the photo of the participant with him or her upon leaving.

After leaving the room for one to two minutes, the experimenter returned with one of the two prepared Polaroid photos of a college-age Black woman. The experimenter handed the photo to the participant and asked her to take a couple of minutes to form some first impressions of her partner; the experimenter left the room during this time. After about two minutes, the experimenter returned, took back the photo of the nonexistent participant, and told the participant that she would be completing a few questionnaires prior to meeting her partner.

First, the participant completed the short manipulation questionnaire, in which each participant was randomly sorted into one of the three identity conditions; the experimenter introduced this questionnaire by saying that another researcher was gathering information on participants’ background information and that it was unrelated to the present study. Next, each participant completed the longer questionnaire with items designed to measure the participant’s expectations about interacting with their partner, which addressed the dependent variable. Before answering the questions on this dependent variable questionnaire, the experimenter asked the participant to think back to the photo of her partner, the first impressions she made about her partner, and her feelings about the upcoming interaction. Finally, each participant spent about five minutes on the computer to complete the IAT, which measured pro-White or pro-Black implicit bias. For each of these measures, the experimenter left the room and waited in the hallway until the participant opened the door to notify the experimenter that she was finished with the task. The experimenter leaving the room intermittently served two purposes: first, the participant was allowed some privacy to complete potentially sensitive measures; and second, to

preserve the illusion that the experimenter was also working with the participant's partner, who was allegedly in another room down the hall.

Lastly, the experimenter told the participant that she would need to answer a few questions about her impressions of the study thus far before meeting her partner. The experimenter then orally administered the suspicion check with the participant to identify any suspicion that would make the participant ineligible for consideration in data analysis; the experimenter recorded the participant's answers by hand and was trained to not exhibit any behavior to affirm or deny the participant's answers. After these questions were answered, the experimenter told the participant that the study was actually over and that no interaction would be taking place. The experimenter explained that the photo of the fictional partner had been prepared in advance and that the aim of the study was to determine how the materials the participant completed influenced her expectations for the interaction; additionally, since the study was focused on expectations, any actual interaction was not necessary. The experimenter then handed a debriefing sheet to the participant, offered to answer any questions, and showed the participant whom to contact with any further questions about the study. After the participant left the study room, the experimenter noted any concerns of suspicion in the study log, along with the participant's SONA identification number, identity condition, IAT condition, which fictional partner Polaroid was used, and the date and time.

Results

All data for the present study were obtained between September 2010 and February 2011. In the first phase of data collection, only data for the two experimental manipulation conditions (gender identity and racial identity) were obtained, spanning from September 2010 to December 2010. After this phase was completed, a control condition was added to the study (no identity

prime), and data collection for this condition took place between December 2010 and February 2011, when the data collection phase of the study ended. There were 52 human participants—all White, female, and between the ages of 17 and 22—across the three experimental conditions: 19 participants were primed with their gender identity, 16 were primed with their racial identity, and 17 were in the control group with no identity prime. Of the original 86 participants in the present study, 24 (28%) were omitted from data analysis because they did not identify as White, while 10 (12%) were omitted based on their suspicion about the true nature of the study.

Results suggest evidence to refute the null hypothesis, indicating that White female participants who were primed with their gender identity exhibited more positive expectations about interacting with a Black female partner. As predicted in the primary hypothesis, participants who were primed with their female identity exhibited more positivity and less avoidant behavior in anticipation of an expected interracial interaction, according to the self-report data. However, limited results supported the secondary hypothesis that the participants in the control and racial identity conditions would exhibit similar responses to the expected interaction. A 95% confidence interval was used for all statistical analyses.

In the 56-item questionnaire designed to measure expectations for the upcoming interracial interaction, affective state, their partners' perceptions of them, and their intended behavior during the interaction, participants answered the question: "I am not looking forward to the interaction." Using a one-way between subjects Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), a significant effect of identity condition on the level of agreement with the aforementioned statement was found, $F(2, 49) = 3.588, p = .035, \eta^2 = .128$. LSD post-hoc tests revealed that participants in the racial identity condition reported significantly higher levels of agreement with this statement ($M = 3.63, SD = 1.75$) than the participants in the gender identity condition ($M = 2.21, SD = 1.44$), p

= .011, indicating greater negativity ahead of the expected interaction in response to this question. However, the control condition ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.53$), $p = .099$, did not differ significantly from either manipulation condition. Thus, these results support the primary hypothesis by showing that participants in the racial identity condition were less likely to report positive feelings ahead of the expected interaction. However, the secondary hypothesis posited that results for the participants in the control condition would be similar to those of the racial identity condition, but results for the control condition actually fell in between those of the two manipulation conditions. Refer to Figure 1 for graphical representation of mean response values by identity condition.

Also consistent with the hypothesis, a one-way between subjects ANOVA revealed a significant effect of identity condition on the level of agreement with the statement, “I will try to avoid mentioning race,” indicating that ahead of an expected interaction, participants primed with their gender identity would display less avoidant behavior in an interracial interaction, $F(2, 48) = 3.044$, $p = .057$, $\eta^2 = .113$. LSD post-hoc tests showed that participants who were primed with their gender identity found this statement to be significantly less true for them ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.56$) than participants in the racial identity condition ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 2.03$), $p = .035$, and those in the control condition ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.76$), $p = .048$. However, there were no significant differences between the participants in the race and control conditions. Refer to Figure 2 for mean response values by identity condition.

In order to measure affective state, a self-consciousness subscale (3 items; $\alpha = .79$) was constructed. A one-way between subjects ANOVA indicated a significant effect of identity condition on answering how well each of the three affective states described them, $F(2, 49) = 2.034$, $p = .142$, $\eta^2 = .077$. LSD post-hoc tests revealed that participants in the gender condition

reported significantly lower composite scores ($M = 2.51, SD = 1.12$) in comparison to those in the race condition ($M = 3.31, SD = 1.13$), $p = .049$. However, the control condition ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.27$), $p = .321$, did not differ significantly from either manipulation condition. Refer to Figure 3 for mean response values by identity condition.

Interestingly, a one-way between subjects ANOVA indicated a significant effect of identity condition on the level of agreement with the statement, “I will actively avoid any behavior that could come across as prejudiced,” $F(2, 49) = 2.454, p = .096, \eta^2 = .091$. Further LSD post-hoc tests revealed that participants in the gender identity condition reported significantly higher levels of agreement with the statement ($M = 4.84, SD = 1.83$) than those in the racial identity condition ($M = 3.50, SD = 2.0$), $p = .033$. However, the control condition ($M = 4.06, SD = 1.56$), $p = .199$, again fell in between the two manipulation conditions and did not differ significantly from the other conditions. Refer to Figure 4 for mean response values by identity condition. Relatedly, participants in the racial identity condition reported lower levels of agreement with the statement, “I will try to take my partner’s perspective,” though not to a statistically significant degree, $F(2, 49) = 1.802, p = .176, \eta^2 = .069$. Based on LSD post-hoc tests, participants primed with racial identity agreed with the statement ($M = 4.56, SD = 1.09$) less than those primed with gender identity ($M = 5.26, SD = 1.48$), $p = .106$, and those in the control condition ($M = 5.29, SD = 1.10$), $p = .101$.

With regard to the IAT, a one-way between subjects ANOVA did not indicate any significant effects of identity condition on IAT scores; specifically, participants’ White-pleasant scores did not differ significantly across conditions, $F(2, 49) = 1.852, p = .168, \eta^2 = .07$. However, though not statistically significant, a pattern did emerge that may contradict the hypothesis that participants in the gender condition would exhibit more positive expectations

about interacting with their Black female partner. As it turned out, participants in the gender identity condition exhibited the highest White-pleasant scores ($M = .61$, $SD = .33$), while those primed with their racial identity ($M = .39$, $SD = .43$), $p = .1$, and those in the control condition ($M = .40$, $SD = .38$), $p = .113$, scored lower on this measure and were quite close to each other. Positive mean values indicate a pro-white bias resulting from quicker associations between White faces and pleasant words during the IAT (Greenwald et al., 1998). Refer to Figure 5 for mean bias scores by identity condition.

Four other subscales were constructed in order to measure affective state and behavioral intentions on the part of the White female participants: negative affect (10 items; $\alpha = .82$); positive affect (4 items; $\alpha = .76$); avoidance behavior (6 items; $\alpha = .89$); and approach behavior (7 items; $\alpha = .79$). According to a series of one-way between subjects ANOVA tests, none of these four subscales varied significantly with identity condition.

The manipulation check indicated that 100 percent of participants successfully recalled the race and gender of their hypothetical partners. The suspicion check indicated that roughly 12 percent of all participants were suspicious of the true nature of the study and believed that the study was actually measuring expectations about interacting with someone of another racial group; these participants were not included in data analysis. Lastly, the three sets of pre-screening items—previous interracial contact, public self-consciousness, and femininity—neither helped to predict certain responses as a result of the identity manipulation.

Discussion

The goal of the present study was to determine whether priming a White woman with her gender or racial identity could lead to differential responses to an interracial interaction with a Black woman. The present study provided support for the primary hypothesis, and to a lesser extent, the secondary hypothesis as well. Various results support the primary hypothesis that

White female participants who were primed with their gender identity prior to an expected interaction with a Black female partner would exhibit more positive and more approach-oriented responses to their partners than their peers in the racial identity and control conditions.

Furthermore, the secondary hypothesis was supported by a small number of findings but nullified by other results, leading to mixed conclusions about participants in the racial identity and control conditions would generally exhibit similar responses to an expected interaction with a Black female partner.

Responses to some dependent variable questions after administering the experimental manipulation questionnaire did produce results to support the primary hypothesis. Consistent with extant literature, White female participants in the gender identity condition reported less negativity and avoidance than the participants in the racial identity and control conditions (Johnson & Marini, 1998; Tamres et al., 2002; Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2000). These results may be the embodiment of what research has indicated is a more “female” way of appraising potentially stressful situations; that is, a more engaged, warmer, friendlier, and affiliative way of interacting with others, especially other women (Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2000). On the contrary, participants in the racial identity condition—who reported more negative and avoidant responses ahead of an expected interracial interaction—were more indicative of what research has found to be a style more typical of Whites in interracial interactions, particularly when interacting with Blacks (Apfelbaum et al., 2008b; Goff et al., 2008; Littleford et al., 2005; Shelton & Richeson, 2005; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Trawalter et al., 2009; Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer et al., 2000).

In response to two statements—“I am not looking forward to the interaction” and “I will try to avoid mentioning race”—women who were primed with their racial identity were

significantly more likely to report a higher level of agreement than women in the gender identity condition. The two aforementioned statements about expectations and anticipated behavior for the interracial interaction were both negatively oriented and quite straightforward; since the status quo of interracial interactions between Whites and Blacks seems to be inherently uncomfortable and emphasizes differences more than similarities, perhaps negative statements were more resonant than positive ones (Littleford et al., 2005). Thus, women who were primed with their racial identity were likely more geared toward differences, particularly racial differences. Racial differences in the United States are historically more negatively connoted, and once reminded of them, it is possible that women in the racial identity condition were prepared for an interracial interaction that would be dominated more by the differences between them and their Black partners (Shelton & Richeson, 2005).

In contrast to other, more positively oriented statements about interaction expectations—including, “I think the interaction will go well”—the negative statements generally yielded larger discrepancies between the two manipulation conditions, even when not statistically significant. However, though women primed with their racial identity showed more agreement with negatively oriented statements about the expected interaction, this does not necessarily indicate the existence of racial bias; to the contrary, pre-screening questions about prior interracial contact did not vary significantly with either identity condition. Instead, such responses are more likely a reflection of the discomfort and anxiety common among Whites prior to an interracial interaction, especially when the topic of race has become more salient (Apfelbaum et al., 2008b; Goff et al., 2008; Littleford et al., 2005; Pettigrew, 1998; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Trawalter et al., 2009; Vorauer, 2006). The results of the self-consciousness composite reflected this discomfort, since women in the racial identity condition reported higher levels of agreement with

these affective descriptors than women in the gender identity condition. Due to the discomfort associated with race, avoiding the topic of race may have also been more on the mind (Littleford et al., 2005).

Furthermore, a significant difference between the gender identity condition and the other two conditions emerged in response to the statement, “I will try to avoid mentioning race.” These results were also consistent with the secondary hypothesis, which predicted that women in the control and racial identity groups would exhibit similar responses to an expected interracial interaction. Participants primed with their gender identity reported the lowest level of agreement with this statement, while those in the control and racial identity conditions reported similarly higher levels of agreement. These results are consistent with previous research, which has indicated that Whites can withdraw emotionally and behaviorally out of the fear of appearing racially biased during an interracial interaction; in many cases, this involves avoiding race-related topics altogether (Apfelbaum et al., 2008a; Apfelbaum et al., 2008b; Goff et al., 2008; Littleford et al., 2005; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Trawalter et al., 2009; Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer et al., 2000). These results also indicate that the gender identity prime made the significant difference in this case. Since participants from both the control and racial identity conditions reported high levels of agreement with the statement, “I will try to avoid mentioning race,” it appears that avoiding race as a topic was more of a baseline. Priming participants with gender identity eased the anxiety associated with race and made race-related topics less salient, thus reducing those participants’ motivations to avoid the topic of race entirely.

One of the most interesting findings emerged from the responses to the statement, “I will actively avoid any behavior that could come across as prejudiced.” Women in the gender identity condition reported significantly higher levels of agreement with this statement in comparison to

those in the racial identity condition, which may still be consistent with the primary hypothesis. While this statement also seems to be negatively oriented and avoidant, the phrasing of the statement involves perspective-taking, which Todd et al. (2011) found to be beneficial in interracial interactions. In that study, White participants who engaged in perspective-taking of their Black interaction partners were more positively evaluated by outside observers and exhibited less racial bias; these effects were even more pronounced for women (Todd et al., 2011). Furthermore, research has shown that, in comparison to men, women tend to demonstrate higher interracial closeness, more favorable racial attitudes, and a greater “awareness and sensitivity to others” (Johnson & Marini, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 247; Tropp, 2007). The fact that women in the gender identity condition reported higher levels of agreement than those in the control or racial identity conditions is likely reflective of the salience of the gender identity to induce more typically female behavior.

In addition, women in the gender identity and control conditions reported higher levels of agreement with the statement, “I will try to take my partner’s perspective” over those in the racial identity condition, though not quite to a statistically significant degree. Thus, while women in the gender identity and control conditions were better able to understand how their Black partner might perceive such behavior, the racial identity prime may have reduced that ability for those in the racial identity condition. These results may demonstrate greater empathy and a desire for a positive interaction on the part of the White female participants, showing traces of the “tend-and-befriend” coping response for women, which emphasizes mutual reduction of vulnerability and affiliative behavior (Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2000).

Interestingly, while women in the gender identity condition reported less discomfort and possibly better perspective-taking in the present study, results from the IAT indicated that those

in the gender identity condition scored the highest of the three conditions in pro-White bias. While this result was not quite statistically significant, it was not very far from significance either, indicating an intriguing inconsistency with prior research and the primary hypothesis of the present study. Aforementioned research has found women to report more favorable racial attitudes, greater willingness to have outgroup friends, and a stronger orientation towards affiliation with others in general (Johnson & Marini, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Tropp, 2007). Therefore, greater pro-White bias on the IAT from the women in the gender identity condition is unexpected and runs contrary to extant literature. While the reason for this result is unclear, perhaps participants primed with racial identity were more aware of race-related thoughts at the time and were therefore more deliberate when taking the IAT. Instead of women in the gender identity condition displaying lower pro-White bias, perhaps their lack of focus on racial differences allowed their own implicit racial biases to manifest more readily than women in the racial identity and control conditions. Additionally, this IAT was administered with all male faces, which is typical for this particular test; however, given the fact that the present study only involved women and that White women may appraise interracial interactions with men differently than with women, these results may have been different if female faces had been used in the IAT.

While some findings of the present study were consistent with hypotheses, there are a few reasons that wider confirmation of hypotheses was not attained. Much of the previous interaction research found results after observing actual interactions between White and Black individuals, rather than the expected but ultimately hypothetical interaction in the present study (Apfelbaum et al., 2008b; Goff et al., 2008; Littleford et al., 2005; Todd et al., 2011; Trawalter & Richeson, 2006). Furthermore, the present study did not present the expected interaction in the

framework of race or put participants in any position of being evaluated by their partner, which research has indicated can lead to greater anxiety during such interactions (Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer et al., 2000). The experimenters made no mention of race during the present study except for the suspicion check at the very end, and the context of the interaction was not stated to the participant; even the questionnaire designed to make racial identity salient did not use the term “race” at all. Perhaps the present study did not make race a salient enough issue to lead to more significant results overall, and more significant effects may have emerged through the observation of participants in an actual interracial interaction. For example, the present study could have utilized a racial identity questionnaire that made race more explicit or told participants that the expected interaction would involve a race-related topic.

Previous research has also indicated that Whites in particular may appraise interracial interactions as a stressful threat; however, there is little evidence from the present study that participants regarded the expected interaction as stressful, which may have reduced differences between the three identity conditions. Due to the ambiguous nature of the upcoming interaction and the lack of expectations about discussing any race-related topics with their Black partners, perhaps participants in the present study did not appraise the interaction to be very stressful, as suggested by Trawalter et al. (2009), among others. While previous research has put forth the “tend-and-befriend” stress coping response for women, the present study did not directly measure stress in anticipation of the interaction (Taylor, 2006; Taylor et al., 2000). Thus, it is possible that in the case of greater anticipation of a stressful interracial interaction, there would be more results to support the primary hypothesis that women in the gender identity condition would exhibit more positive responses to an interracial interaction.

Overall, the present study had some results that were consistent with the primary hypothesis, indicating that women in the gender identity condition did respond more positively and with less discomfort to an expected interaction with a Black female partner. Also as predicted, participants in the racial identity condition reported not looking forward to the expected interaction and avoiding the mention of race more than those in the gender identity condition; furthermore, women primed with racial identity also reported higher levels of self-consciousness, uneasiness, and discomfort. While there are findings from the present study to confirm this primary hypothesis, IAT data provided conflicting results, showing that participants in the gender identity condition reported the highest pro-White bias of all three conditions. In addition, a variety of subscales measuring negative and positive affect as well as avoidance or approach behaviors resulted in negligible differences between the racial and gender identity conditions. Thus, a small number of findings provided reason to believe that priming women with their gender identity can lead to more positive interracial interaction expectations. However, these results are limited and merit further study.

The secondary hypothesis received very little support from present study results and paints a more complicated picture of the baseline attitudes, tendencies, and behaviors that women bring into an interracial interaction. One significant finding confirmed the secondary hypothesis that participants in the control and racial identity conditions would exhibit similar responses; in this case, women in both conditions reported similarly high levels of agreement about trying not to mention race during the interaction. This result indicates that, as White women, the participants may have benefited from the gender identity prime to get their minds away from racial differences and the anxiety that comes with addressing race-related topics. However, for most of the other significant results, participants in the control condition exhibited

responses in between those of the gender and racial identity conditions; this indicates that the two experimental conditions may have exacerbated certain baseline tendencies and attitudes in divergent directions.

Limitations of the Present Study

Despite several significant results in support of the primary hypothesis and only limited support for the secondary hypothesis, there are a variety of limitations on the findings of the present study, and there was not overwhelming evidence in favor of either hypothesis. There are many probable explanations for limited effects of the results, including the use of self-report data, the lack of an actual interaction, and lack of a stress appraisal.

The present study relied almost entirely upon self-report data to determine the effects of the independent variable of identity condition on the White female participants. Since there is no way to ensure honesty in self-report data, it is unclear how accurately the participants were reporting their true feelings and expectations about interacting with their fictional Black partners. In addition, topics related to race and race relations can be sensitive, and it is likely that dependent variable measures designed to assess participants' behavioral intentions with regards to race experienced floor effects; out of anxiety or discomfort, participants may have been less willing to admit how the potentially sensitive issues that could arise in an interracial interaction might influence their behavior. Reliance on self-report data is a significant constraint upon results and can be reduced by running an actual interaction in a study, rather than just a hypothetical one.

As with many studies conducted on college campuses, the sample size and population of the present study are also significant limitations. Each condition was comprised of less than 20 participants each, and the sample population was limited only to White female undergraduates—

mostly freshmen who were enrolled in Introduction to Psychology—at Tufts University. The population of Tufts is likely to be disproportionately more affluent, more politically liberal, and more educated population than the general population in the United States.

Lastly, data for the control condition of the present study were not collected at the same time as the two manipulation conditions. Data for the two manipulation conditions were collected between September and December 2010; the control condition was added at this point because there was more time than anticipated earlier in the year. Data for the control condition were collected between December 2010 and February 2011 and mostly utilized participants from a new semester of Introduction to Psychology, but because these participants were in the same condition, it is difficult to determine if there were fundamental differences between the two groups of student participants.

Future Directions for Research

While the results of the present study indicated that priming a White woman's gender identity prior to an expected interaction with a Black woman may lead to more positive and friendlier interaction behavior, it is difficult to conclude that gender made all of the difference. Because existing literature on gender in interracial interactions is limited while research on Whites in such interactions is more expansive, the present study's results are a small step in a relatively unexplored direction. There are a variety of factors that should also be investigated.

First, the present study did not utilize an actual interracial interaction due to limited resources and time constraints. However, for further investigation on the effect of gender in such contexts, observing White women during actual interactions with Black women is crucial to replicating the present study's results while gaining a more refined understanding of the effects of gender. Given the results of the present study, a future study could investigate whether a White

woman would show more inhibited behavior during an actual interaction with a Black woman after being primed with her racial identity; to the contrary, a White woman primed with her gender identity might exhibit noticeably friendlier and more positive behavior.

Next, while participants in the gender identity condition responded more favorably and with less discomfort to an expected interracial interaction than those primed with racial identity, this effect may not be limited to gender. Existing literature is clear on the idea that Whites are generally uncomfortable and prone to anxiety in interracial interactions; however, priming any other aspect of the self to distract one's mind from racial differences may be enough to reduce discomfort and produce more favorable responses to such an interaction. Priming White female participants with their gender identity served to not only distract them from potential thoughts on racial differences with their partners, but also to establish something in common and spur more affiliative behavior. In an alternative example, if a White female participant were told that she and her Black interaction partner were both volleyball players, could this elicit the same positive effects in the interaction that was hypothesized for gender in the present study? With the present results, it is unclear if gender itself made a significant difference or if merely common traits or interests could effectively reduce focus on racial differences and lead to greater interactional harmony. A future study could include another condition to prime a trait or interest that both partners might have in common; then, these results could be compared to those from a gender identity condition to assess the effect of gender. Indeed, research could also explore whether or not women need to be primed with a trait or interest that they have in common with an outgroup interaction partner. Instead, perhaps getting a woman to think about her interest in a certain sport, television show, or academic topic could be enough to allay the behavioral effects of perceived racial differences.

Lastly, while the majority of interracial interaction research has been devoted to studying men, they are integral for understanding the role of gender as well. A similar study to the present research—or one that includes actual interracial interactions—could examine the effect of male gender by applying the same techniques to men by priming the male gender identity.

Additionally, an interesting focus for future research could address whether priming men with more stereotypically feminine traits or concepts might lead to more positive and friendlier interracial behavior.

Since the current psychological research on gender as a moderating effect in interracial interactions remains limited, there is still much to be investigated. The present study and its handful of significant findings in favor of an effect of gender in such contexts is a small step toward uncovering the full complexities of multiple intersecting identities within an individual. However, most important is the goal of identifying attitudes and behaviors that not only ease existing racial tensions, but also can promote superior understanding in a wide variety of social contexts that are plagued by barriers of anxiety and miscommunication. Thus, studying interracial interactions and the roles of new factors can have important implications on societies around the globe.

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Figure 1. Mean response values to statement, “I am not looking forward to the interaction,” as a function of identity condition. Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Figure 2. Mean response values to statement, “I will try to avoid mentioning race,” as a function of identity condition. Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Figure 3. Mean response values to self-conscious composite subscale. Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Figure 4. Mean response values to statement, “I will actively avoid any behavior that could come across as prejudiced,” as a function of identity condition. Response options ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Figure 5. Mean bias score from Black-White, pleasant-unpleasant IAT as a function of identity condition. Positive scores indicate stronger White-pleasant bias.

Appendix A

Experimental Manipulation Questionnaire: Gender Identity Condition

Please read each of the following questions and answer honestly.

- 1) Do you currently live on or off campus at Tufts?
- 2) Do you currently have a roommate?
- 3) Is the floor you live on coed or single-sex?
- 4) Do you prefer coed or single-sex floors in your living arrangement?
- 5) Please list 3 reasons why you would prefer a coed floor in a dorm.
 - a.

- b.
- c.
- 6) Please list 3 reasons why you would prefer a single-sex floor in a dorm.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Appendix B

Experimental Manipulation Questionnaire: Racial Identity Condition

Please read each of the following questions and answer honestly.

- 1) Do your parents or grandparents speak any languages other than English?
- 2) What languages do you know how to speak?
- 3) What languages are spoken in your home?
- 4) What opportunities do you have to speak other languages at Tufts?
- 5) What percentage of these opportunities is in your dorm or apartment?
- 6) For how many generations has your family lived in the United States?

Appendix C

Experimental Manipulation Questionnaire: Control Condition

Please read each of the following questions and answer honestly.

- 1) Do you live on or off campus?
- 2) Are you on a Tufts meal plan?
- 3) About how many meals per week do you eat off campus?
- 4) What is your favorite on-campus dining location, and why?
- 5) What do you think about the variety of food choices offered on campus?
- 6) How could Tufts dining services be improved?