Social Norms Regarding Protected Status and Threat Reactions to the Stigmatized

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This research examines whether social norms regarding a stigma’s protection from prejudice differentially affect explicit and implicit threat reactions to the stigmatized, and the degree to which such differences can be accounted for by socially desirable responding, internalized egalitarian values, and dual attitudes about stigmatized individuals. Participants (N = 78) completed a traditional self-report measure to assess explicit reports of threat toward targets from stigmatized social groups and the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) to assess implicit reports of threat toward the targets’ stigmas. Results indicated that social norms regarding a stigma’s protection from prejudice influenced threat reactions on the explicit measure, but not on the implicit measure. Dual attitudes toward the stigmatized best accounted for this pattern.

Prostitutes, the elderly, drug addicts, the poor, ethnic and racial minorities, gays and lesbians: What do all of these groups have in common? According to Goffman (1963), they are all characterized by stigmas or deeply discrediting attributes.

Stigma is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of seemingly dissimilar social groups. However, what is common to all of these social groups is that many regard them as flawed. Attitudes toward the stigmatized are generally negative, and stigmatized individuals are disliked more than are nonstigmatized individuals (e.g., Crandall & Martinez, 1996; Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998; Jones et al., 1984). Stigmatized individuals are also the targets of prejudice and discrimination, and suffer more unwarranted negative interpersonal and economic outcomes in life than do the nonstigmatized (Ainlay, Becker, & Coleman, 1986; Crocker & Major, 1989; Jones et al., 1984). However, studies that utilize self-report measures to assess people’s attitudes toward stigmatized social groups

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frequently find that the stigmatized are viewed more favorably than would be expected from the preceding evidence (e.g., Devine & Elliot, 1995; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Gilbert, 1951; Karlins, Coffman, & Walters, 1969; Madon et al., 2001).

In an attempt to understand this paradox, researchers have increasingly compared self-report data to indirect assessments of bias. More often than not, researchers find that the explicit responses acquired from self-report measures do not correspond to the implicit responses acquired from indirect measures (e.g., Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, & Williams, 1995; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). Recently, several researchers have proposed that social norms regarding a stigma’s protection from prejudice may be an important factor contributing to the dissociation between explicit and implicit reactions to the stigmatized (Crandall, Eshleman, & O’Brien, 2002; Crocker et al., 1998; Maass, Castelli, & Arcuri, 2000; Stangor & Crandall, 2000). The current research tests this idea by examining whether a stigma’s protection from prejudice differentially influences explicit and implicit threat reactions to the stigmatized. In addition, this research investigates the extent to which such a difference can be accounted for by individual differences in socially desirable responding and internalized egalitarian values, or by dual attitudes toward the stigmatized.

Threat and Prejudice

The current investigation focuses on threat reactions to the stigmatized for two reasons. First, a large body of theoretical and empirical work has indicated that stigmatized targets elicit threat from perceivers (e.g., Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Likkel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Goffman, 1963; Greenberg, Pyszczynski, & Solomon, 1986; Katz, 1981; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Lerner, 1980; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Phelps et al., 2000; Rokeach & Mezei, 1966; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993; Stangor & Crandall, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; for reviews, see Crocker et al., 1998; Jones et al., 1984). Second, there is widespread agreement that prejudice encompasses three attitudinal components: a cognitive component consisting of negatively valenced beliefs, a behavioral component consisting of behavioral tendencies, and an affective component consisting of negative feelings (e.g., Ashmore, 1970; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Zanna & Rempel, 1988).

Because threat reactions denote the experience of negative feelings, they may be considered one form of the affective component of prejudice against the stigmatized. This conceptualization suggests that the processes affecting the expression of prejudice in general also may be relevant to threat reactions in particular. Therefore, we next discuss the potential for social norms regarding a stigma’s protection from prejudice to influence threat reactions to the stigmatized by drawing on the broader literature pertaining to prejudice.
Social Norms Regarding Protected Status

Societies have norms that influence expressions of prejudice toward stigmatized individuals. These norms may discourage prejudice toward some stigmatized groups more strongly than others (Crandall et al., 2002; Pettigrew, 1959). For example, within American culture, it is more acceptable to express prejudice against child abusers than against African Americans (Crandall et al., 2002). Thus, social norms may confer a protected status on some stigmatized groups.

Because adjusting one’s prejudice is typically conceptualized as a conscious process (e.g., Devine, 1989; Petty & Wegener, 1999), there is reason to expect that social norms regarding a stigma’s protected status would influence perceivers’ reactions to the stigmatized more strongly on explicit measures than on implicit measures. Specifically, during the completion of explicit measures, perceivers are aware that they are evaluating a person or group, and typically have sufficient cognitive resources to allow the conscious processing of information to influence their responses. By contrast, during the completion of implicit measures, perceivers are either unaware that their responses are linked to evaluations of a person or group, or their cognitive resources are so depleted that their responses originate from automatic cognitive processes that operate outside of their control.

Underlying Processes

Given the expectation that a stigma’s protected status will exert differential effects on responses to explicit and implicit measures, the question arises as to what processes are capable of producing this difference. In this research, we consider the extent to which the processes of socially desirable responding, internalized egalitarian values, and dual attitudes can account for any differential effects of protected status on explicit and implicit threat reactions to the stigmatized. As discussed earlier, because threat reactions to the stigmatized can be conceptualized as one form of the affective component of prejudice (e.g., Ashmore, 1970; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Zanna & Rempel, 1988), we next discuss these processes by drawing on theory and research pertaining to stigma and prejudice.

Socially Desirable Responding

People intentionally may report less prejudice toward stigmatized individuals who are protected from prejudice in order to appear consistent with social norms (Crandall et al., 2002; Crocker et al., 1998; Maass et al., 2000; Stangor & Crandall, 2000). When people are motivated by social desirability, they are aware that they harbor prejudice against stigmatized individuals, but intentionally
inhibit overt expressions of that prejudice to appear unbiased to others (e.g., Fazio et al., 1995; Greenwald et al., 1998; Sigall & Page, 1971). As a result, explicit measures can be susceptible to social desirability effects. Implicit measures, by contrast, generally are thought to be less susceptible to such effects because misrepresenting one’s reactions on implicit measures is more difficult than misrepresenting one’s reactions on explicit measures (Greenwald et al., 1998; Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995). With respect to the current research, therefore, the motive to conceal one’s true feelings and beliefs regarding stigmatized individuals because of social desirability concerns is one reason that protected status might more strongly influence threat reactions to the stigmatized on explicit than on implicit measures.

Internalized Egalitarian Values

Internalized egalitarian values provide a second means whereby protected status could differentially influence explicit and implicit reports of prejudice (e.g., Devine, 1989; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Judd et al., 1995). Some people may inhibit the expression of overt prejudice against stigmatized individuals who are protected from prejudice because they have internalized the social sanctions that discourage such prejudice. Although people who have internalized social norms proscribing bias still harbor prejudice at an automatic level, they are not typically conscious of these attitudes. Thus, when asked to report their prejudice toward stigmatized individuals on traditional self-report measures, people who have internalized egalitarian values do not respond according to their prejudiced attitudes of which they are unaware, but rather adjust them to fit the egalitarian values that they have internalized and genuinely endorse (e.g., Devine, 1989).

Egalitarian values should not affect implicit reports of prejudice because when completing implicit measures, people either are typically not aware that their responses are associated with judgments about a target or their cognitive resources are depleted, thereby leading them to access more established and ingrained beliefs (e.g., cultural stereotypes) rather than more recently formed associations (e.g., internalized egalitarian values; Devine, 1989). Applying these ideas to the current study suggests that one reason protected status might influence threat reactions to the stigmatized more strongly on explicit measures than on implicit measures is because people report their internalized egalitarian values during controlled processing.

Dual Attitudes Toward the Stigmatized

A stigma’s protected status also may influence explicit and implicit reports of prejudice differentially because the cognitive resources that are available during controlled processing may enable perceivers to take additional, stigma-specific
characteristics into account. Such a process was hypothesized by Wilson, Lindsey, and Schooler (2000), who proposed that individuals simultaneously hold differing, dual attitudes: an implicit attitude and an explicit attitude.

Wilson et al. (2000) hypothesized that implicit attitudes are automatically accessed when processing demands are high, whereas explicit attitudes are spontaneously accessed when processing demands are low. In support of this process, Wilson et al. reported unpublished data (Schooler, 1990; Wilson & Lindsey, 1998) showing that people changed their attitudes on explicit measures when they had the cognitive resources with which to take additional information into account, such as justifications and explanations for their overtly expressed attitude. In contrast, when cognitive resources were depleted as a result of time pressure, people’s attitudes on explicit measures remained more stable because they lacked the cognitive resources necessary to access the additional information.

With respect to stigmas, people may rationalize and explain their prejudice by drawing on central dimensions along which stigmas are perceived to differ, such as perceptions about a stigma’s danger, an individual’s personal responsibility for possessing the stigmatizing condition, the extent to which a stigma speaks to an individual’s underlying character, and a stigma’s stability over time (Crocker et al., 1998; Jones et al., 1984; Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988). Extending the theory of dual attitudes to the current research suggests that social norms regarding protected status might influence threat reactions to the stigmatized more strongly on explicit measures than on implicit measures because people take their perceptions of a stigma’s characteristics into account during controlled processing.

**Overview of Research and Hypotheses**

The purpose of this research is twofold. First, this study will determine whether the protected status of stigmas tends to have a greater effect on perceivers’ threat reactions assessed with explicit measures as compared to those assessed with implicit measures. To this end, participants completed a traditional self-report questionnaire and the Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald et al., 1998). Both measures were constructed to assess the degree to which participants associated feelings of threat with stigmas that had either a protected or an unprotected status. Drawing on the research reviewed earlier, we predict that social norms regarding protected status will more strongly influence threat reactions to the stigmatized on the explicit measure than on the implicit measure.

Second, this research considers three processes that could potentially contribute to the predicted pattern of differential effects of protected status. Specifically, analyses test the degree to which the expected pattern can be accounted for by socially desirable responding, internalized egalitarian values, and dual attitudes toward the stigmatized.
Method

Participants

Students (N = 83) who were enrolled in undergraduate psychology courses at a large state university participated in this study for extra credit or to fulfill a course requirement. Following the procedures of Greenwald et al. (1998), data from 5 participants were discarded because their IAT error rates exceeded 25%. The remaining 78 participants (59 women, 19 men) included 6 African Americans, 21 Asians, 7 Latina/os, 41 Caucasians, and 3 participants who categorized their ethnicity as “Other.” The average age of participants was 22 years (Mdn = 20).

Experimental Design

This study employed a single-factor, between-subjects experimental design in which participants were assigned randomly to evaluate stigmas that were pre-tested to be either relatively protected from prejudice (n = 39) or relatively unprotected from prejudice (n = 39). Participants indicated how threatened they felt by either the protected or the unprotected stigmas on both an explicit measure and an implicit measure. A traditional self-report questionnaire served as the explicit measure of threat, whereas an IAT served as the implicit measure of threat.

Preliminary Study: Determination of Protected Status

We identified the protected and unprotected stigmas with a preliminary study that included 58 participants (28 female, 29 male, 1 gender not reported) who reported the percentage of Americans whom they believed would be willing to hold or express negative opinions about a variety of stigmatized groups. We selected for use in the current study four stigmas that were judged to be relatively protected from prejudice (depressed person, 39%; poor person, 50%; old person, 51%; and homeless person, 55%) and four stigmas that were judged to be relatively unprotected from prejudice (prostitute, 79%; thief, 76%; drug addict, 71%; and adulterer, 68%).

Procedure

Approximately 4 participants attended each session. After providing their informed consent, participants completed self-report questionnaires that assessed demographic information, individual differences in external and internal motivation to respond without prejudice, and perceptions of stigma characteristics. The questionnaires also included self-report items that assessed how threatened participants felt by four stigmatized targets whose stigmas were either all protected
or all unprotected from prejudice, depending on the experimental condition to which the participant had been assigned. To acquire implicit measures of threat, participants next moved to individual rooms to complete the IAT. The IAT always assessed threat toward the same stigmas that participants had evaluated on the explicit measure. Thus, participants remained in the same experimental condition (i.e., protected vs. unprotected stigmas) for the implicit measure as they had been for the explicit measure. Upon the participant’s completion of the IAT, the experimenter debriefed and excused the participant.

**Individual Difference Factors**

*External motivation to respond without prejudice.* We used a modified version of Plant and Devine’s (1998) five-item External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice subscale (EMS) to assess socially desirable responding. Although the EMS was designed originally to measure external motivation to respond without prejudice toward African Americans, we modified it to make it appropriate for stigmatized groups in general by replacing the label *Black people* with the phrase *people with stigmas*. In all other respects, our version was identical to the original. The modified version demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$). Greater scale values reflect a stronger external motivation to control prejudice toward stigmatized groups in general.

*Internal motivation to control prejudice.* We assessed internalized egalitarian values with a modified version of Plant and Devine’s (1998) five-item Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice (IMS) subscale. The modification was the same as described for the EMS; that is, the phrase *Black people* was replaced with the phrase *people with stigmas*. The modified scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .86$), with greater values reflecting a stronger internal motivation to control prejudice toward stigmatized groups in general.

**Stigma Characteristics: Danger, Responsibility, Character, and Stability**

Participants reported their perceptions of four stigma characteristics for each of the four stigmatized targets that they evaluated: (a) danger, “To what degree does a [stigma label] put you in danger?”; (b) responsibility, “To what extent is a person responsible for being a [stigma label]?”; (c) character, “When a person is a [stigma label], how much does this tell you about their character?”; and (d) stability, “If a person is a [stigma label], to what extent will they always be a [stigma label]?” We selected these dimensions of perceived stigma characteristics because of their theoretical importance to understanding the nature of stigmatization (e.g., Crocker et al., 1998; Jones et al., 1984; Weiner et al., 1988).

Participants responded to the questions on 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). Higher values reflect (a) the belief that the stigmatized targets pose more danger to the participant; (b) the judgment that the stigmatized
targets are more personally responsible for having acquired their stigmas; (c) the belief that the stigmas provide more information about the targets’ character; and (d) the belief that the targets’ stigmas will remain more stable over time.

Explicit Measure of Threat

Participants indicated their threat reactions to the stigmatized by responding to five semantic differentials for each of the four stigmatized targets that they evaluated. The semantic differentials assessed how comfortable versus threatened, calm versus tense, secure versus anxious, safe versus scared, and relaxed versus distressed each stigmatized target made them feel. The numeric response scales were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 to +3, which we subsequently recoded into a 1 to 7 scale. Participants’ responses to the 20 items (i.e., 5 items per stigma × 4 stigmas) were averaged to yield a single measure of threat per participant (α = .97). Higher values indicate greater threat reactions to the stigmatized targets on the explicit measure.

Manipulation Check of Protected Status

To assess the effectiveness of the protected-status manipulation, participants completed the following item: “For the groups you previously rated, please indicate the degree to which you personally feel it is okay to say or think negative things about these groups. Please be as open and honest as possible.” Participants responded to this item for each of the four stigmas that they had rated previously. Participants rated the responses on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Responses were averaged to yield a single value for each participant (α = .75). Higher values reflect greater comfort at holding or expressing negative evaluations about the stigmatized groups.

Implicit Measure of Threat: Implicit Association Test (IAT)

The IAT (Greenwald et al., 1998) was designed to assess implicit attitudes by examining the extent to which individuals associate attitude objects with evaluative attributes. The current study assesses the extent to which flawed and ideal groups (the attitude objects) are associated with feelings of threat versus comfort (the evaluative attributes). Though a detailed presentation of the IAT’s theoretical foundations and procedures is beyond the scope of the present article (Greenwald et al., 1998), we next describe the IAT procedures utilized in this investigation and how we quantified implicit threat reactions for the protected and unprotected stigmas.

IAT procedures. Each participant completed one IAT that consisted of five major tasks. First, participants learned to categorize stigmatized labels as flawed by responding with the left-hand index finger (LH), and to categorize
nonstigmatized labels as ideal by responding with the right-hand index finger (RH). The flawed stigmatized labels were depressed, poor, old, and homeless for participants in the protected condition; and were prostitute, thief, drug addict, and adulterer for participants in the unprotected condition. The nonstigmatized labels were angel, teacher, volunteer, and hero for all participants.

Second, participants learned to categorize the negative feelings of tense, anxious, scared, and distressed as threatened by responding with the LH; and to categorize the positive feelings of calm, secure, relaxed, and safe as comfortable by responding with the RH. These feelings correspond to the anchors from the semantic differentials used to assess threat reactions on the explicit measure.

Third, participants performed a combined task in which they made evaluatively compatible responses by responding to both flawed labels and threatened feelings with the LH (flawed + threatened), and to both ideal labels and comfortable feelings with the RH (ideal + comfortable). Fourth, participants engaged in a retraining task in which they learned to respond to the threatened feelings with the RH, and to respond to the comfortable feelings with the LH.

Finally, participants performed a combined task in which they made evaluatively incompatible responses by responding to both flawed labels and comfortable feelings with the LH (flawed + comfortable), and to both ideal labels and threatened feelings with the RH (ideal + threatened). Practice blocks, number of trials, and counterbalancing of the compatible and incompatible tasks followed standard procedures described by Greenwald et al. (1998).

IAT data reduction. Following Greenwald et al. (1998), we (a) included response latency data only from correct categorizations; (b) excluded data from 5 participants whose error rates exceeded 25%; (c) recoded response latencies less than 300 ms as 300 ms, and latencies longer than 3000 ms as 3000 ms; and (d) log-transformed the latencies. All response latencies presented in the text are log-transformed.

Next, we followed standard procedures (Greenwald et al., 1998) to quantify the strength of the automatic association by subtracting the average response latency for the compatible task from the average response latency for the incompatible task. Greater difference scores reflect stronger automatic associations between the stigmatized–ideal and threat–comfort dimensions. These difference scores served as the dependent variable in all analyses examining implicit threat reactions to the stigmatized.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Protected status. An independent-sample t test examined the effectiveness of the protected-status manipulation by comparing how comfortable participants in the protected and unprotected conditions felt holding or expressing negative
thoughts about individuals who had the stigmas with which they were presented. The protected-status manipulation had the anticipated effect. Participants in the protected condition reported feeling less comfortable holding or expressing negative thoughts about the stigmas with which they were presented ($M = 2.07$) than did participants in the unprotected condition ($M = 3.19$), $t(74) = 4.31, p < .01$ ($d = 0.99$).

Additional analyses examined whether the manipulation differentially affected women and men. These analyses reveal that the effect of the protected-status manipulation attained statistical significance in the subsample of women ($M$s = 2.08_protected vs. 3.33_unprotected), $t(57) = 4.50, p < .01$ ($d = 1.11$); but not in the subsample of men ($M$s = 2.04_protected vs. 2.78_unprotected), $t(15) = 1.11, p = .28$ ($d = 0.65$). Although for this reason we included participant gender as a factor in all of the main analyses, it is important to note that the magnitude of the manipulation’s effect among men was medium to large in terms of Cohen’s $d$ (Cohen, 1988). Thus, the failure to achieve statistical significance in the subsample of men resulted from low power of the statistical test as a result of the small number of men in the study, rather than from a failure of the manipulation.

**Overall IAT effect.** A paired-sample $t$ test examined the effectiveness of the IAT. Because stronger automatic associations facilitate responding (i.e., reduce response latencies), participants should have responded faster to the compatible task (i.e., flawed + threatened and ideal + comfortable) than to the incompatible task (i.e., flawed + comfortable and ideal + threatened). The results fit this pattern ($M_{	ext{compatible task}} = 6.55, M_{	ext{incompatible task}} = 7.04$), $t(77) = 17.82, p < .01$.

**Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents intercorrelations and descriptive statistics for the entire sample aggregated across conditions. Table 2 presents intercorrelations and descriptive statistics separately for participants in the protected- and unprotected-status conditions.

**Dissociation**

We examined the association between threat on the explicit and implicit measures in two ways. First, we examined the degree of association between explicit, self-reports of threat and implicit, IAT-based reports of threat aggregated across the collection of stigmas under investigation. The correlation from this analysis was small and not statistically significant, suggesting a dissociation of implicit and explicit responding ($r = -.09, p = .45$; Table 1). The correlations were also small in magnitude and statistically nonsignificant for both women ($r = -.09, p = .50$) and men ($r = -.00, p = .99$).

Second, we performed a more fine-grained analysis that examined the association between explicit, self-reports of threat and implicit, IAT-based reports of
threat separately for each of the stigmatized targets. For these analyses, the IAT effect was calculated in the usual fashion, with the exception that of the trials that presented a stigmatized label, we used only the reaction times from the trials that presented the particular stigma label being considered (e.g., reaction times for adulterer but not for drug addict, thief, or prostitute). This procedure resulted in four scores per participant, with each score providing some indication of a participant’s implicit threat reaction toward one of the stigmas.2

Although there is a precedent for deconstructing the IAT to calculate results for specific stimuli (e.g., Karpinski & Hilton, 2001), the IAT was not designed for such an analysis, and caution is advised in drawing firm conclusions from such exploratory analyses.
Explicit reports of threat also were calculated on a stigma-by-stigma basis by averaging responses to the semantic differentials separately for each stigmatized target. This procedure also resulted in four scores per participant, with each score reflecting a participant’s explicit threat reaction toward one of the stigmatized

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Explicit threat reactions</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td>.07</td>
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<td>2. Implicit threat reactions</td>
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<td>—</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.32*</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td>.23</td>
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<td>3. EMS scores</td>
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<td>.17</td>
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<td>-.26</td>
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<td>4. IMS scores</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>-.18</td>
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<td>-.11</td>
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<td>5. Danger</td>
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<td>.03</td>
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<td>.14</td>
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<td>-.02</td>
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<td>6. Responsibility</td>
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<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.17</td>
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<td>—</td>
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<td>.46**</td>
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<td>7. Character</td>
<td>.27</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>.20</td>
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<td>8. Stability</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.26</td>
<td>.39*</td>
<td>.15</td>
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Protected condition

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<tr>
<th>M (n = 39)</th>
<th>3.61</th>
<th>0.49</th>
<th>4.56</th>
<th>6.89</th>
<th>2.48</th>
<th>3.50</th>
<th>2.84</th>
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<tr>
<td>M_{men} (n = 9)</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>4.39</td>
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<tr>
<td>M_{women} (n = 30)</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>6.93</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.90</td>
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Unprotected condition

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>M (n = 39)</th>
<th>4.64</th>
<th>0.49</th>
<th>5.24</th>
<th>6.94</th>
<th>3.74</th>
<th>5.81</th>
<th>4.69</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M_{men} (n = 10)</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>4.90</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M_{women} (n = 29)</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>5.36</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>4.28</td>
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</table>

Note. EMS = External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice subscale, IMS = Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice subscale. Explicit threat reactions were assessed by self-report. Implicit threat reactions were assessed with the IAT (Greenwald et al., 1998). Implicit threat reactions are reported in log-transformed units of response latency differences, or $ln(\text{seconds})$. Danger, Responsibility, Character, and Stability refer to the stigma characteristics. Correlations among variables above the diagonal are from participants in the protected condition. Correlations among variables below the diagonal are from participants in the unprotected condition.

*p < .05. **p < .01.
targets. The stigma-specific correlations between responses to the explicit and implicit measures were all small and nonsignificant: depressed person = -.01; poor person = .24; old person = .06; homeless person = -.15; adulterer = -.17; drug addict = .06; thief = -.13; and prostitute = -.21 (all ps > .05).

Protected Status: Differential Effects on Implicit and Explicit Measures of Threat

Because the implicit and explicit measures assessed threat on different metrics, it was inappropriate to include both variables in a single repeated-measures ANOVA. Furthermore, the nonsignificant correlation between these different measures made it inappropriate to perform a multivariate ANOVA because real effects in one could be obscured by error variance in the other (Stevens, 1996). Therefore, we examined the differential effect that protected status had on explicit and implicit threat reactions with two separate univariate ANOVAs: one focusing on threat reactions that were assessed with the IAT, and the other focusing on threat reactions that were assessed by self-report.

Implicit measure of threat. To test whether a stigma’s protected status influenced threat reactions on the IAT, we performed a 2 × 2 (Status: Protected vs. Unprotected × Gender) ANOVA in which the dependent variable was IAT-based reports of threat. Results indicate that protected status did not influence IAT-based reports of threat (M<sub>protected</sub> = 0.49 vs. M<sub>unprotected</sub> = 0.49), F(1, 70) < 0.01, p = .93 (d = 0.04). There was, however, a main effect for participant gender, F(1, 70) = 8.81, p < .01 (d = 0.87), with men exhibiting a larger IAT effect (M = 0.60) than women (M = 0.46). No other variable attained significance, F<sub>s</sub>(1, 70) ≤ 2.28, ps ≥ .14.

Explicit measure of threat. To examine whether protected status influenced threat reactions on the explicit measure, we performed a 2 × 2 (Status: Protected vs. Unprotected × Participant Gender) ANOVA in which the dependent variable was threat reactions to the stigmatized targets as assessed by self-report. There was a significant main effect for protected status. As reported in the first column of Table 3, participants reported greater threat reactions toward targets with unprotected (M = 4.64) than protected (M = 3.61) stigmas, F(1, 74) = 10.82, p < .01 (d = 1.16). However, this effect was qualified by a Protected Status × Participant Gender interaction, F(1, 74) = 5.09, p < .05. Contrasts examining the nature of this interaction indicate that although both women and men reported less threat in response to the targets with protected than unprotected stigmas.

3The order in which the compatible and incompatible tasks were presented to participants during their completion of the IAT was also included as a factor in this analysis. However, because it did not produce a significant main effect, and was not involved in any significant interaction, all F<sub>s</sub>(1, 70) ≤ 2.39, ps > .13, we do not discuss it.
Table 3

Analysis of Explicit Reports of Threat Without and With Covariates: F Values and Significance Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Covariate</th>
<th>Main analysis, F(1, 74)</th>
<th>EMS scores</th>
<th>IMS scores</th>
<th>Danger</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Covariate</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>40.78**</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>9.17**</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected status</td>
<td>10.82**</td>
<td>9.57**</td>
<td>10.84**</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>11.09**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected Status × Gender</td>
<td>5.09*</td>
<td>4.88*</td>
<td>4.89*</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>5.17*</td>
<td>5.65*</td>
<td>4.00*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSE</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 78. EMS = External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice subscale, IMS = Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice subscale. Column 2 shows the effect that protected status had on explicit threat reactions. Danger, Responsibility, Character, and Stability refer to the stigma characteristics. Columns 3 through 8 show the effect that protected status had on explicit threat reactions when EMS scores, IMS scores, or the stigma characteristics (i.e., danger, responsibility, character, and stability) were individually included as covariates (df = 1, 73).

* p ≤ .05. ** p ≤ .01.

(Figure 1), this difference attained statistical significance among women (Ms = 3.53\textsuperscript{protected} vs. 4.83\textsuperscript{unprotected}), t(57) = 5.62, p < .01 (d = 1.46), but not among men (Ms = 3.87\textsuperscript{protected} vs. 4.12\textsuperscript{unprotected}), t(17) = 0.61, p = .55 (d = 0.28). The analysis reveals no main effect of participant gender, F(1, 74) = 0.60, p = .44 (d = 0.21).

Potential for Ideal Contrast to Produce Differential Effects of Protected Status

The pattern of results reported earlier supports the hypothesis that protected status would have a greater effect on the explicit measure of threat than on the implicit measure of threat. Thus, these findings are consistent with the idea that social norms regarding a stigma’s protected status have greater effects on reports based on conscious evaluations of targets than on reports based on automatic evaluations. However, there is one issue regarding the implicit and explicit measures that might be of concern. Whereas the implicit measure presented both stigmatized and ideal labels, the explicit measure presented only stigmatized
labels. It is conceivable, therefore, that the extremity of the stigmatized–ideal contrast might have overwhelmed any effects of protected status on the implicit measure, and that the absence of ideal exemplars might have allowed the effects of protected status to emerge on the explicit measure, thereby creating the predicted pattern of differential effects for protected status.

Because the use of the IAT as the implicit measure requires a contrast, we addressed this concern by administering a modified version of the explicit measure to a new sample of participants \((N = 35)\). The revised explicit measure assessed participants’ threat reactions to both targets with stigmas (either protected or unprotected) that were used as part of the explicit and implicit measures in the original study, and ideal exemplars (i.e., teacher, hero, angel, and volunteer) that were used as part of the implicit measure in the original study. In order to ensure that threat reactions to the stigmatized targets were always completed in the context of the ideal targets, an ideal target was always the first target presented on the explicit measure, and then stigmatized and ideal targets were presented in alternating order so that participants always evaluated a stigmatized target after having just evaluated an ideal target. Thus, participants completed an explicit measure that presented either the ideal targets and targets with unprotected stigmas, or the ideal targets and targets with protected stigmas.

Results show that threat reactions to the ideal targets were not influenced by whether the explicit measure also presented targets with unprotected stigmas.
(M = 2.65) or protected stigmas (M = 2.61), t(33) = 0.13, p = .89 (d = 0.04). More importantly, findings from these additional data are consistent with the results of the original analysis, showing that explicit threat reactions were again greater for targets with unprotected stigmas (M = 4.87) than for targets with protected stigmas (M = 3.68), t(33) = 4.59, p < .01 (d = 1.57). Thus, the ability of protected status to influence the explicit measure of threat reactions to the stigmatized remained stable even when participants evaluated the stigmatized targets in the context of the ideal exemplars. These additional data demonstrate that even if the effect of protected status on the implicit measure was overwhelmed by the extremity of the contrast between the stigmatized and ideal labels, the extremity of the same contrast was not able to overwhelm the effect of protected status on the explicit measure. Therefore, because these additional data accounted for the context in which evaluations were made, this pattern of results is consistent with the study hypothesis and provides further support for the idea that social norms regarding a stigma’s protected status have a greater effect on explicit measures of threat than on implicit measures of threat.

Protected Status: Underlying Processes

Having determined that protected status had a greater effect on the explicit measure of threat, subsequent analyses evaluated the degree to which this effect could be accounted for by each of the three hypothesized processes: socially desirable responding, internalized egalitarian values, and dual attitudes toward the stigmatized. These analyses entailed performing six separate 2 × 2 (Protected Status × Participant Gender) ANCOVAs in which the dependent variable was threat reactions to the stigmatized targets as assessed by self-report. Each of the six ANCOVAs controlled for a different covariate, including those pertaining to social desirability (i.e., EMS scores), internalized egalitarian values (i.e., IMS scores), and dual attitudes (i.e., the stigma characteristics of danger, responsibility, character, and stability).

Support for the occurrence of a particular process would be indicated if inclusion of the corresponding covariate reduced the effect of protected status on the explicit measure of threat to an appreciable degree. However, support for one process does not preclude support for another process. It is possible that a combination of processes could have contributed conjointly to the protected-status effect on the explicit measure of threat. For example, participants who are

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4Because protected status had almost no effect on the implicit measure, there is no variance associated with protected status for which any of the three hypothesized processes could account. Therefore, the differential effect of protected status on the implicit and explicit measures was entirely because of its effect on the explicit measure. For this reason, these analyses appropriately focus on the ability of the hypothesized processes to account for the relationship between protected status and explicit threat reactions.
especially motivated to control their reactions to the stigmatized because of external factors also may be more likely to have internalized egalitarian values about the stigmatized and be particularly likely to take additional information into account when evaluating stigmatized targets during controlled processing.

For brevity, we report in the text only those findings that are most relevant to understanding the process(es) that contributed to the protected-status effect on explicit threat reactions, although Table 3 presents the full set of results from the analyses. Results indicate that controlling for EMS and IMS scores did not reduce the effect of protected status to any meaningful degree for either women or men. The effect sizes after controlling for EMS ($d_{\text{women}} = 1.39$, $d_{\text{men}} = 0.25$) and IMS ($d_{\text{women}} = 1.46$, $d_{\text{men}} = 0.28$) scores were equal or nearly equal to the effect size from the analysis without either covariate ($d_{\text{women}} = 1.46$, $d_{\text{men}} = 0.28$). In contrast, controlling the stigma characteristics of danger and responsibility reduced the effect of protected status on explicit reports of threat among both women and men. Controlling for the stigma characteristic of danger reduced the effect of protected status by 55% among women (from $d = 1.46$ to 0.66), and by 93% among men (from $d = 0.28$ to 0.02). Controlling for the stigma characteristic of responsibility reduced the effect of protected status by 15% among women (from $d = 1.46$ to 1.24), and by 93% among men ($d = 0.28$ to 0.02). Controlling for the stigma characteristic of character reduced the effect of protected status among women by 38% (from $d = 1.46$ to 0.91), but had no effect on explicit reports of threat among men (from $d = 0.28$ to 0.28). Controlling for the stigma characteristic of stability did not change the effect of protected status on either women’s (from $d = 1.46$ to 1.46) or men’s (from $d = 0.28$ to 0.35) explicit reports of threat to any meaningful degree. It is also worthwhile to note that the stigma characteristic of danger was the only covariate to reduce the Protected Status × Participant Gender interaction to nonsignificance ($p = .09$).

**Threat Reactions and Traditional Indicators of Prejudice and Intergroup Attitudes**

The findings reported thus far specifically examined threat reactions to the stigmatized on both an implicit and an explicit measure. Although threat reactions likely represent one form of the affective component of prejudice, threat may not necessarily covary with other affective or prejudicial reactions that people have to the stigmatized. This point is particularly relevant to the current investigation because it raises the possibility that a stigma’s protected status may influence threat reactions to the stigmatized differently than it influences other affective reactions to the stigmatized. Although this study’s use of threat and comfort as the evaluative dimension in the IAT precluded investigation of this issue for other kinds of reactions to the stigmatized on the implicit measure (i.e., the evaluative attributes used in the IAT consisted only of words pertaining to the
feelings of threat and comfort), supplemental analyses were able to address this issue for reactions to the stigmatized on the explicit measure by drawing on additional data acquired by the self-report measure.

Specifically, in addition to reporting their threat reactions to the stigmatized targets on the explicit measure, participants also indicated how much they liked each of the stigmatized targets, and the extent to which each of the stigmatized targets elicited feelings of disgust, pity, guilt, and irritation. Participants’ responses to these items were averaged to yield two new variables per participant. One variable reflected the extent to which participants liked the stigmatized targets, on average, with greater values indicating more liking. The other variable, subsequently termed general negative affect, reflected the average degree of disgust, pity, guilt, and irritation that the stigmatized targets elicited in participants, with greater values indicating more negative affective reactions ($\alpha = .72$).

Three sets of supplemental analyses that included these additional explicit reactions were then performed. First, zero-order correlations indicate that the explicit measure of threat was both negatively correlated with liking ($r = -.37, p < .01$) and positively correlated with general negative affect ($r = .58, p < .01$). Because liking and negative affect reflect commonly used measures of prejudice and intergroup attitudes (e.g., Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Jussim, Nelson, Manis, & Soffin, 1995; Zanna, 1994), the pattern of these correlations provides some degree of convergent validity that the explicit measure of threat used in this research tapped the affective component of prejudice to some extent.

The second set of supplemental analyses included two separate 2 × 2 (Protected Status × Participant Gender) ANOVAs. The dependent variables for the two ANOVAs were liking for the stigmatized targets and general negative affect toward the stigmatized targets. With respect to liking, the first analysis yielded a significant main effect for protected status. Participants reported liking the targets with protected stigmas ($M = 4.16$) more than the targets with unprotected stigmas ($M = 3.07$), $F(1, 74) = 27.43, p < .01$ ($d = 1.40$). Neither the main effect of participant gender, nor the Protected Status × Participant Gender interaction was significant in predicting liking for the stigmatized targets, $Fs(1, 74) \leq 1.02, ps \geq .32$.

With regard to general negative affect felt toward the stigmatized targets, the second ANOVA also reveals a main effect for protected status, with participants reporting less negative affect toward the targets with protected ($M = 2.48$) than unprotected ($M = 3.35$) stigmas, $Fs(1, 74) = 14.51, p < .01$ ($d = 0.97$). A significant main effect for participant gender also emerged in this analysis with women reporting more negative affect ($M = 3.22$) than men ($M = 2.61$), $F(1, 74) = 7.37, p < .01$ ($d = 0.61$). The Protected Status × Participant Gender interaction was not significant, $F(1, 74) = 0.16, p = .69$.

The significant main effects for protected status on participant’s liking for and general negative affect toward the stigmatized targets is consistent with the
main effect for protected status on threat reactions that was obtained from the main analysis of the explicit measure. These similar findings further suggest that threat reactions may be an element of the affective component of prejudice. The fact that the protected status of the stigmas did not interact with participant gender for either liking or negative affect suggests that the differential effect that protected status had on women’s and men’s explicit threat reactions to the stigmatized most likely occurred because women perceived the unprotected targets as more dangerous than did men. This interpretation is consistent with the finding that controlling for the stigma characteristic of danger was the only variable to reduce the Protected Status × Participant Gender interaction to nonsignificance.

A third set of analyses examined the extent to which EMS scores, IMS scores, and the stigma characteristics of danger, responsibility, character, and stability could account for the effect of protected status on liking and general negative affect by including these variables as a covariate in 12 separate 2 × 2 (Protected Status × Participant Gender) ANCOVAs. With respect to liking, the results indicate that the effect of protected status (d = 1.40) did not change substantially after controlling for EMS (d = 1.41) or IMS (d = 1.38) scores.

In contrast, the effect of protected status on liking was reduced to an appreciable degree after controlling for the stigma characteristics of danger, responsibility, and character. Controlling for the stigma characteristic of danger reduced the protected-status effect by 14% (from d = 1.40 to 1.21). Controlling for the stigma characteristic of responsibility reduced the protected-status effect by 44% (from d = 1.40 to 0.79). Controlling for the stigma characteristic of character reduced the protected-status effect by 19% (from d = 1.40 to 1.13). Controlling for the stigma characteristic of stability did not result in a reduction in the protected-status effect (from d = 1.40 to 1.40). With respect to general negative affect, the results yield a similar pattern. The protected-status effect (d = 0.97) was not substantially changed after controlling for EMS (d = 0.91) and IMS (d = 0.99) scores, but was substantially reduced after controlling for the stigma characteristics of danger and character. Specifically, the protected-status effect was reduced 52% after controlling for the stigma characteristic of danger (from d = 0.97 to 0.47), and by 58% after controlling for the stigma characteristic of character (from d = 0.97 to 0.41). There was no appreciable reduction in the protected-status effect after controlling for the stigma characteristics of responsibility (from d = 0.97 to 0.88) or stability (from d = 0.97 to 0.97).

These findings are generally consistent with the results that emerged for threat reactions, showing that neither EMS nor IMS scores could account for the effect of protected status on explicit reports of liking or general negative affect to any meaningful degree, but that several of the stigma characteristics could. This

5We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this explanation.
pattern provides additional support for the conclusion that the differential effect that protected status had on the explicit and implicit measures of threat reflected participants’ tendency to take the stigma characteristics into account during controlled processing.

Discussion

This research examined whether social norms regarding a stigma’s protected status differentially affected explicit and implicit threat reactions to the stigmatized and the extent to which such a difference could be accounted for by socially desirable responding, internalized egalitarian values, and dual attitudes toward the stigmatized. Findings show a dissociation between threat reactions on the explicit and implicit measures. Protected status contributed to this dissociation by virtue of its effect on explicit but not implicit reports of threat. Specifically, participants reported more threat toward the targets with unprotected stigmas than toward targets with protected stigmas when completing the explicit measure. By contrast, protected status had no effect on the implicit measure of threat in that the IAT effect that indicated an association between stigmas and threat was very similar for protected and unprotected stigmas. Subsequent analyses reveal that dual attitudes best accounted for the differential effect of protected status on the explicit and implicit measures of threat.

Protected Status and Dual Attitudes Toward the Stigmatized

In this research, social norms regarding a stigma’s protected status influenced threat reactions to the stigmatized on the explicit measure but not on the implicit measure. On the explicit measure, participants showed more threat toward targets with unprotected stigmas than protected stigmas, but showed no such difference on the implicit measure of threat.

Of the processes considered, the results suggest that this pattern of differential effects of protected status might have occurred because of participants’ dual attitudes toward the stigmatized. Specifically, analyses that controlled for the stigma characteristics of danger, responsibility, and character reduced the protected-status effect on the explicit measure of threat. The tendency for people to take additional information into account during controlled processing is consistent with the theory of dual attitudes which proposes that people can simultaneously hold two conflicting attitudes, one that is governed by controlled processes and another that is governed by automatic processes (Wilson et al., 2000). Attitudes governed by controlled processes may be based partly on explanations and justifications for one’s attitude. Because these explanations and justifications require cognitive resources to access, they should be most influential under conditions of low cognitive load (Wilson et al., 2000).
Application of Research Findings

The expression of threat in response to the stigmatized denotes a negative affective reaction and can, therefore, be considered one expression of prejudice. As such, the finding that participants took a stigma’s protected status into account during controlled processing suggests that individuals with protected stigmas may be shielded to some extent from some forms of prejudice, whereas individuals with unprotected stigmas may not. This possibility has important implications for both perceivers and stigmatized targets. First, results showing that a stigma’s protected status did not influence threat reactions on the implicit measure suggests that perceivers who lack sufficient time and cognitive resources with which to make decisions are the most likely to exhibit negative reactions to the stigmatized on an automatic level, regardless of the social norms that may be operating. Ensuring that individuals in supervisory roles are not overloaded when making important decisions for stigmatized targets, therefore, may play an important role in certain prejudice reduction efforts, especially when the context in which perceivers interact with stigmatized individuals is one that has the potential to elicit strong affective reactions.

Second, the results suggest that the availability of ample time and cognitive resources is not sufficient to reduce explicit, affective reactions when perceivers are evaluating individuals with unprotected stigmas. Participants reported more threat, less liking, and more general negative affect toward targets with unprotected stigmas than protected stigmas on the explicit measure, despite the fact that they had sufficient time and cognitive resources with which to make their evaluations. Although this pattern emerged in the context of stigmatized individuals who may not readily engender deep sympathy (i.e., prostitutes, thieves, drug addicts, and adulterers), the finding is nonetheless important because it likely reflects a more general process that is not limited to these particular groups. Moreover, it is vitally important that all individuals, even those with unprotected stigmas, be given fair and impartial treatment under a variety of circumstances, such as criminal trials and medical treatment.

Third, the protected status of stigmatized groups may change over time and in response to social and political factors. For example, examination of classic and contemporary research suggests that public expressions of ethnic and racial prejudice that were considered acceptable during the early part of the 20th century (e.g., Katz & Braly, 1933; LaPierre, 1936) are now considered unacceptable (Crandall et al., 2002; Fazio et al., 1995; Judd et al., 1995). Although this suggests that the protected status of some stigmatized social groups has shifted from relatively unprotected to relatively protected, it is also possible for the reverse to occur. For example, following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, prejudice, discrimination, and aggression against Arab Americans has increased (American Civil Liberties Union, 2001; CNN News, 2001; Equal Opportunity
Employment Commission, 2001), suggesting that Arab Americans have experienced a decline in their protected status.

Our findings showing that a stigma’s protected status influenced explicit threat reactions more strongly than implicit threat reactions suggests that downward shifts in a stigma’s protected status may increase overt, negative reactions to stigmatized individuals. Thus, organizations committed to reducing various forms of prejudice toward stigmatized groups may have to develop an institutional culture that proscribes bias against these individuals; in effect changing their protected status within the organization.

Protected Status, Social Desirability, and Internalized Egalitarian Values

The current data did not support the idea that protected status differentially affected threat reactions on the explicit and implicit measures because of social desirability concerns or internalized egalitarian values. However, these findings need to be considered in light of four points. First, it is possible that our modification of the EMS and IMS subscales (the measures that we used to assess social desirability and internalized egalitarian values, respectively) to pertain to stigmas in general, rather than to Black people in particular, adversely affected the instruments. However, the high internal consistencies and low intercorrelation of the revised scales were comparable to data for the original measures (Plant & Devine, 1998), suggesting that our modifications did not invalidate the scales.

Second, whereas the EMS and IMS were designed to assess people’s motivation to control prejudice, our measures assessed threat reactions. One might wonder, therefore, whether scores on the EMS and IMS failed to account for the effect of protected status on explicit threat reactions to the stigmatized because our measure of threat was unrelated to prejudice. Several aspects of our research, however, suggest that this explanation is unlikely. To begin, the experience of threat denotes a negative affective reaction, and affect constitutes a central component of virtually every contemporary, theoretical definition of prejudice (e.g., Ashmore, 1970; Brendl, Markman, & Messner, 2001; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997). In addition, there is very strong empirical evidence that stigmatized targets elicit threat from perceivers (e.g., Blascovich et al., 2001; Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Goffman, 1963; Greenberg et al., 1986; Katz, 1981; Kinder & Sears, 1981; Lerner, 1980; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Phelps et al., 2000; Rokeach & Mezei, 1966; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993; Stangor & Crandall, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; for reviews, see Crocker et al., 1998; Jones et al., 1984). Finally, among participants in this study, threat reactions on the explicit measure correlated in the expected direction with liking and general negative affect—constructs that commonly have been used to assess prejudice.
and intergroup attitudes in past work (e.g., Haddock et al., 1993; Jussim et al., 1995; Zanna, 1994). Thus, the data obtained from participants in this research, as well as theoretical and empirical research from the general stigma literature, all suggest that threat is one form of prejudice.

A third possible explanation as to why socially desirable responding and internalized egalitarian values did not account for the differential effect of protected status may be that our measures assessing these constructs were less specific than those that assessed the stigma characteristics. For example, the stigma characteristic of danger pertained to the danger associated with the particular stigmas under investigation, whereas social desirability was more general, reflecting participants’ general inclination to present themselves in a socially desirable manner with respect to stigmas overall. However, additional analyses provided no support for this explanation. Recall that we had calculated the degree of association between explicit and implicit reports of threat separately for each of the stigmas under investigation. If the effects of social desirability or internalized egalitarian values had been operating in our research, then these correlations should have become larger as the protected status of the stigmas declined. This is because (a) people should be less motivated to conceal their true negative reactions on explicit measures the less protected a target’s stigma is from prejudice; and (b) people should be less likely to internalize social sanctions proscribing negative reactions the less protected a stigma is from prejudice. Because these correlations do not rely on our versions of the EMS or the IMS, they do not suffer from the potential limitation that our versions were not specific to the stigmas. As reported in the Results, however, all of the correlations relating explicit and implicit reports of threat on a stigma-by-stigma basis were small in magnitude, and none were statistically significant. This provides further evidence that socially desirable responding and internalized egalitarian values were most likely not responsible for the differential effect that protected status had on explicit and implicit reports of threat in this research.

Fourth, social desirability and internalized egalitarian values may have larger effects for stigmas that are strongly protected from prejudice. Although data from the preliminary study show that the protected stigmas that we used were, indeed, comparatively protected, they may be less protected from prejudice than stigmas based on race and ethnicity (Crandall et al., 2002), which traditionally have been the focus of stigma research (e.g., Dovidio, Evans, & Tyler, 1984; Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Fazio et al., 1995; Greenwald et al., 1998). So, for example, social desirability concerns may have less effect on reporting threat reactions to drug addicts than to African Americans. Given evidence linking social desirability and internalized egalitarian values to explicit reports of prejudice against racial and ethnic groups (e.g., Devine, 1989; Greenwald et al., 1998), this explanation seems particularly plausible.
Gender and Threat

The current investigation revealed unexpected relationships between participant gender and threat reactions to the stigmatized. Women reported more threat and general negative affect toward targets with unprotected stigmas than protected stigmas on the explicit measure, whereas men’s implicit responses exhibited a stronger association between the threat and the stigmas than did women’s. Because of the small number of men in the sample and the absence of applicable theory, one should be cautious about engaging in too much speculation when attempting to explain these findings. However, the data do indicate that women reported greater explicit threat reactions to the unprotected than protected targets than did men because the women perceived the unprotected targets as more dangerous. Further explication of the relationship between gender and reactions to the stigmatized awaits additional research.

Limitations

Shared method variance. Because this study used two different kinds of measures to assess threat—an explicit measure and an implicit measure—it is important to consider the extent to which shared method variance might have affected the two main findings of the research. The first main finding was that the protected status of the stigmas influenced threat reactions on the explicit measure, but not on the implicit measure. However, it is unlikely that shared method variance was responsible for this pattern. Protected status was manipulated experimentally through the stigmas that participants evaluated. Consequently, the manipulation of protected status did not share a method with either the explicit or the implicit measure of threat, thereby reducing the likelihood that shared method variance was responsible for the differential effect that protected status had on the two measures.

The second main finding of this research is that the stigma characteristics of danger, responsibility, and character accounted for the differential effects of protected status by virtue of their ability to reduce its effect on the explicit measure of threat. However, if this finding had been a result of the effects of shared method variance, then shared method variance should have produced the same finding for the other self-report measures, which it did not. Moreover, the correlational data did not conform to the pattern that shared method variance would have been expected to generate. For example, despite the fact that the IMS is a self-report measure, responses to it correlated about as strongly with implicit reports of threat as with explicit reports of threat. The same was true for the stigma characteristic of stability. These findings make the shared method variance explanation less tenable because one would, in the absence of extant theory, be required to argue that the shared method variance effects operated for some of
the self-report measures, but not for others. By contrast, consistent with study hypotheses, the theory of dual attitudes can readily explain the pattern of findings wherein the stigma characteristics, but not the other self-report measures, could account for the differential effect of protected status on explicit and implicit reports of threat.

Correlates of protected status. A main goal of this research was to examine how a stigma’s protected status affects explicit and implicit threat reactions to the stigmatized. We manipulated protected status by presenting participants with real stigmas that participants in a preliminary study had perceived as being either relatively protected or relatively unprotected from prejudice by social norms. We purposefully chose to study real stigmas in order to gain a better understanding of factors that influence reactions toward individuals belonging to real stigmatized social groups. However, because real stigmas can differ from one another in a myriad of ways other than just protected status, our use of real stigmas meant that there would very likely be other dimensions, in addition to protected status, on which the stigmas would differ. For example, in addition to being perceived as less protected from prejudice, the stigmas thief, prostitute, adulterer, and drug addict might also be perceived as reflecting immoral behavior to a greater extent than are the stigmas old, homeless, depressed, and poor. Similarly, perceivers may tend to make more internal attributions for stigmatized targets who are less protected from prejudice when attempting to explain the origin of their stigmas. Although the potential for factors to correlate with our protected-status manipulation is not ideal, we believe that it is less of a concern than it might appear to be at first glance.

For one, the potential for correlates of protected status to have been operating in this research does not undermine our conclusions that protected status had a greater effect on the explicit than on the implicit measure, and that participants’ dual attitudes toward the stigmatized best accounted for this differential effect. Participants still took additional information related to the stigmas’ protected status into account on the explicit but not on the implicit measure of threat. In addition, the factors that correlated with the protected-status manipulation in this study are, most likely, also those that correlate with a stigma’s protected status in the naturalistic environment. In fact, it may very well be that these correlates contribute to a stigma’s protected status in the first place. For example, the very reason that adulterers may be unprotected from prejudice is because they are perceived to engage in immoral behavior and because perceivers may tend to make internal versus external attributions regarding the origin of their stigma.

In this respect, our manipulation reflects the complexity of the protected status of stigmas and, therefore, makes it more likely that our findings are externally valid. This being said, it is also true that we could have disentangled protected status from the factors with which it is associated, such as by using artificial groups. Although such a procedure certainly has its advantages, it was
not appropriate here because it would have divorced the protected status of the stigmas from the very factors that lead people to engage in the three processes that we were studying. For instance, had we divorced protected status from its associated factors, participants would not have been highly motivated to conceal their true reactions, would not have had any ingrained beliefs about the stigmas to access during automatic processing, and would not have had additional information about the stigmas to take into account during controlled processing. Divorcing protected status from its correlates, therefore, would have made it impossible to examine the central issues addressed in this research.

Implicit measure of threat. The present investigation made use of the IAT to assess threat reactions to the stigmatized. Although the fact that participants responded faster to the IAT when making compatible responses (i.e., flawed + threatened and ideal + comfortable) than when making incompatible responses (i.e., flawed + comfortable and ideal + threatened) clearly indicates that the IAT had measured some construct successfully, there is admittedly no independent validation other than high face validity that the construct measured by the IAT was related to threat. However, we do know from past research that perceivers do feel threatened by stigmatized individuals (e.g., Blascovich et al., 2001) and that the construct that influenced IAT responses in this research was related to stigma because it differentiated the flawed, stigmatized labels from the ideal labels. These points suggest that the IAT did measure threat in some respect, though a definitive conclusion regarding this issue must await future validation.

Another potential concern regarding the implicit measure is that protected status did not affect IAT responses. However, the null finding for protected status on the IAT is entirely consistent with the prediction that protected status would have a greater effect on the explicit measure than on the implicit measure. Further, because support for the processes of social desirability, internalized egalitarian values, and dual attitudes was based on their ability to account for the effect of protected status on the explicit measure alone, the null effect of protected status on the IAT did not stack the deck in favor of one process over any other process.

In considering possible reasons why protected status did not influence the implicit measure of threat, two possibilities warrant consideration. First, the null effect may have occurred because the effect of protected status on the relationship between stigma labels and threat words is mediated by controlled processing, whereas associations revealed by the implicit measure are products of automatic processing. In this case, the findings suggest that differences in protected status will produce a dissociation between explicit and implicit responses only through their effects on the explicit measure. This possibility is consistent both with the rationale outlined in the Introduction with respect to the hypothesized protected-status effect and with the idea that each of the three underlying processes investigated tends to operate through controlled processing.
A second reason why protected status might not have influenced the implicit measure was addressed in the Results. Because the IAT included both ideal and stigmatized labels, the ideal–stigma contrast may have been so extreme as to render the IAT insensitive to any comparatively small effect of protected status. However, it was determined that protected status still had a greater effect on the explicit measure when the stigmatized targets had been rated in the context of the ideal targets. Therefore, even if the null effect of protected status on the implicit measure was a result of the overwhelming effect of the ideal–stigma contrast, this same contrast was not able to overwhelm the effect of protected status on the explicit measure. Hence, protected status still had a greater effect on the explicit measure than the implicit measure, even in the context of a possibly extreme ideal–stigma contrast effect.

Conclusion

This research demonstrated that a stigma’s protected status can have differential effects on explicit and implicit reactions to the stigmatized. In this study, the protected status of the stigmas had a significant effect on threat reactions assessed with an explicit measure, but did not have a significant effect on threat reactions assessed with an implicit measure. The theory of dual attitudes was best able to account for this pattern of differential effects. Specifically, the tendency for participants to report more threat toward the targets with unprotected stigmas than protected stigmas on the explicit measure was related to how dangerous participants perceived the targets, how responsible participants believed the targets were for having acquired their stigmas, and the degree to which participants thought the targets’ stigmas were indicative of a flawed character. These findings are consistent with the view that stigmas are psychologically and physically threatening and that societies may respond to these threats with norms that allow people to communicate a shared representation of individuals who appear especially harmful (Stangor & Crandall, 2000). In order to reduce negative reactions toward stigmatized targets, organizations may have to ensure both that individuals in supervisory roles have adequate cognitive resources when making decisions that will have important consequences for stigmatized targets and that they maintain an institutional culture that proscribes bias against the stigmatized, especially those for whom society tends to provide little protection from prejudice.

References

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