CHAPTER 23

Identity Experiments

Design Challenges and Opportunities for Studying Race and Ethnic Politics*

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Abstract

The concept of identity has long captured the interest of scholars, and its importance in both the social sciences and in society more broadly continues to rise. As the literature surrounding identity has expanded, increased attention has been given to experimental designs that measure the concept, consequences, and correlates of identity. This chapter focuses on racial and ethnic identity within the context of experimental methods from both an analytical and methodological perspective. First, the chapter provides an overview of scholarship on the study of identity, highlighting the importance of social identity theory as the starting point for a long trajectory of theoretical and empirical work. Next, design challenges and opportunities are addressed, with specific attention paid to the conceptual use of identity as a variable. The following section provides examples of experimental research on racial and ethnic identity, focusing on in-group and out-group studies and studies that measure political outcomes related to race and ethnicity. One common shortcoming of identity research is the tendency to use group membership as a proxy for group identity and group consciousness, or to use the terms interchangeably when they are in fact theoretically distinct concepts. I argue that experimental designs may demonstrate the need to disentangle group membership from group identity and group consciousness, and I offer a strategy for adapting measurement tools to study identity. The chapter concludes by providing recommendations and identifying areas for future research to expand our understanding of racial and ethnic identity through the use of experiments.

23.1 Establishing the Basis for Experiments in Identity

The concept of identity has long captured the interest of scholars, and its importance in both the social sciences and in society more broadly continues to rise. As the literature surrounding identity has expanded, increased attention has been given to experimental designs that measure the concept, consequences, and correlates of identity. But many studies, experimental and otherwise, conflate group membership with group identity and group consciousness, basing their findings on the assumption that self-categorization with a social group produces the same types of outcomes as self-identification with a group. This oversight can result in confusion over exactly what is being identified and the inferences that can be drawn from empirical results.

This chapter provides an overview of the study of identity using experimental methods. The chapter begins by discussing social identity theory, a foundational concept for identity studies. Although social identity theory and related group paradigm experiments provided a useful starting point for a long trajectory of experimental work that followed, these early experiments set up subsequent researchers to focus on manipulating group membership rather than group identity, even though theories would otherwise encourage researchers not to take identification with social groups for granted. Next, the chapter provides and overview of experimental methodology, highlighting the design challenges and opportunities for experiments to investigate the concept of identity. The chapter continues with an argument that experiments on race and ethnicity have not always disentangled group membership from group identity and group consciousness. One common shortcoming of identity research is the tendency to use group membership as a proxy for group identity and for group consciousness, or to use the terms interchangeably when they are in fact theoretically distinct concepts. I argue that experimental designs provide a compelling way to disentangle group membership from

group identity and group consciousness, and I offer a strategy for adapting measurement tools to study identity. Finally, I discuss the ways experiments may be well positioned to distinguish between group membership, group identity, and group consciousness, and I identify areas of research that help answer the questions at the core of identity studies.

23.1.1 *Social Identity Theory*

Before discussing how identity has been used in experimental research, it is important to distinguish between the terms used throughout the social science literature to discuss individuals and their relationships to groups. While "group membership" refers to a person's ascriptive categorization in a particular group, "group identity" refers to a person's psychological sense of attachment or belonging to that group (Frable 1997; McClain et al. 2009; Stets and Burke 2000; Taifel 1974). Identity is often invoked when individuals desire to create meaning and purpose amid coexisting (and at times conflicting) cultural, ideological, personal, and collective experiences (Frable 1997; Tajfel 1981). An identity may be a social category (such as sorority member, veteran, or race car enthusiast), a social relationship (such as brother, grandmother, or friend), or a personal characteristic (such as race, gender, or religion). Relevant social identities vary from person to person and can include many types of identifying factors such as national origin, partisanship, the neighborhood where a person resides, the school where a person studies, family relationships, religious affiliations, and many other possibilities. Abdelal et al. define collective identity as a social category that varies along two dimensions: content (the meaning of a collective identity) and contestation (the degree of agreement within a group over the content of the shared category) (Abdelal et al. 2006). Given the many dimensions of self-identification, empiricists face a challenging task in theorizing, measuring, and assessing identity and its political correlates.

In the social science literature, group identity has been conceptualized within the framework of social identity theory,

which posits that an individual's identity comes primarily from the groups to which that individual belongs. Tajfel, Turner, and their fellow researchers initially developed social identity theory to explain the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination. According to social identity theory, subjective distinctions between groups provide the basis for the comparison of a person's in-group with members of the out-group (e.g., a fan of the New York Yankees baseball team cheering, "Go Yankees!"). Because even subtle distinctions between groups can provide a foundation for intergroup bias, the tendency to view in-group members more favorably relative to other groups often serves as the basis for discrimination against out-groups (e.g., the same Yankee's fan yelling, "Boo Red Sox!") (McClain et al. 2009; Tajfel 1981; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner et al. 1979). Central to social identity theory is the notion that people have a need for positive social identity that "requires them to establish a positively valued distinctiveness for their own group compared to other groups" (Turner and Reynolds 2001, p. 134). Because individuals do not just have personal selfhood, but multiple affiliations with different social categories, a person's behavior might change depending on the social context in which he or she considers their identity.

Social identity theory has been foundational for the study of identity and has provided a starting point for a long trajectory of experimental work. The motivational underpinnings of social identity theory are useful for understanding the substance of intergroup politics (McClain et al. 2009) and the influence of political attitudes on identity formation (Huddy 2001). Social identity theory has also informed the way researchers have attempted to measure identities such as race and ethnicity. Indeed, researchers have operationalized group identity in a number of ways throughout the literature. For example, Olsen (1970) compared Black Americans who considered themselves to be members of a minority group with those who did not. Verba and Nie (1987) devised an index that summed the number of times Black

Americans referred to race in response to a series of open-ended questions. Lee (2009) and Spry (2018) employed a point allocation system in which respondents were asked to allocate a fixed number of identity "points" to a set of socially relevant categories.

Identities certainly contribute to a person's sense of self, but in order to influence political outcomes, identities must be activated in some way. To more fully understand the relationship between identity and its political correlates, a distinction must be drawn between group identity, which is concerned with how a person describes themself, and group consciousness, which extends the notion of group identity to consider the politicization of a person's identity. Group consciousness is defined as in-group identification plus a sense of political awareness about the group's relative position in society, plus the belief that collective action is the best means to realize the group's shared interests (Dawson 1994; Miller et al. 1981). Group consciousness is the basis for the link between identity and political outcomes. Although social identity theory and minimal group paradigm experiments have provided a useful starting point, these early experiments may have led later researchers to focus on group membership, since group membership was manipulated in the early studies (as examples later in this chapter will show), even though the theories should have otherwise encouraged researchers not to take identification with demographic groups for granted. If group membership, group identity, and group consciousness have different theoretical meanings, one would expect these concepts to be empirically distinct as well, at least in instances where identity is believed to influence political outcomes. Many prior studies have made assumptions about identity while in effect measuring group membership or categorization, but identity scholars in political science have successfully used experiments as a way of better understanding best practices for measuring the concept of identity as well as its empirical correlates.

As scholarly interest in identity continues to rise, the level of analytic rigor with

which identity is examined must also rise. The ubiquity of identity as a topic of social scientific inquiry has ironically undermined the conceptual clarity of identity as a variable (Abdelal et al. 2006; Chandra 2009; Davis 2011; Muste 2014). The study of identity is further complicated by the fact that identity can be used as either an independent variable or a dependent variable. Researchers must be clear when developing causal models about whether they want to know if identity is causing a person to produce a particular outcome (thus using identity as an independent variable) or if some other thing is causing a person to express a particular identity (thus using identity as a dependent variable).

Over time, the use of survey, lab, and natural experiments to investigate group dynamics has provided a theoretically and empirically rich backdrop for continued studies on identity. While identities such as partisanship, nationality, gender, race, and ethnicity are undoubtedly an essential part of politics, experiments focusing on race and ethnicity and gender have advanced substantially in recent years. The present chapter will provide an overview of advances in experiments on identity, focusing specifically on race and ethnicity. The chapters that follow in this volume focus specifically on racial priming experiments (Chapter 24), gender in elections (Chapter 25), and gender in comparative politics (Chapter 26), areas where experiments have been particularly useful research tools.

23.2 Conducting Experiments in Identity

Experiments are useful for the study of identity because they offer the unique advantage of allowing researchers to assess the cause of any observed changes in a given outcome. Random assignment ensures that any differences that emerge between conditions are the result of experimental manipulation and not preexisting or systematic differences between groups. Through the use of experimental procedure, causal arguments about the relationship between

identity and other important covariates may be advanced.

As useful as experiments are for leveraging causality, there are substantial design challenges that are especially relevant to identity-based research. One particular disadvantage is that researchers cannot randomize physical traits such as race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, or other personal characteristics that are assigned at birth. Such immutable characteristics cannot be convincingly or ethically reassigned among participants by researchers (Sen and Wasow 2016).

Other challenges for identity-based experiments are related to the conceptual framework used to analyze identity as a variable. Self-reported measures of identity, such as checked boxes or multiple-choice options, are convenient and are frequently used on surveys. However, checked boxes for reporting self-placement in categories such as race, class, gender, or religion are ascriptive, meaning they reveal the categories to which a respondent is perceived to belong by others, but may not necessarily reveal whether a person feels a sense of identity with those categories. Additional measures that ask "how close" a respondent feels to an identity group or "how important" the group is to the respondent come closer to measuring in-group identification, but typically ask respondents to report their closeness to one group at a time, not to multiple groups within the same measure, which misses an opportunity to measure how close a respondent feels to one group category relative to other categories. In addition, the closeness and importance measures are sensitive to a number of design considerations, including variations in mode, format, response options, and question order (see Muste 2014 for additional discussion).

Respondents may also differ in their definitions and interpretations of the meaning of categories. Because the collective meaning of a given identity may vary, at times substantially, between individuals within a group, researchers concerned with identity as a variable must contend with variation in interpretations, especially when the definition of a particular group of interest is not

provided by the study. Similarly, researchers may be able to manipulate identity signals by exposing respondents to racial cues, but there is no way for researchers to manipulate the perception or interpretation of such cues. Some group categories (such as partisanship, class, or student) are also more mutable than others (such as gender, race, or, in some cases, religion). When the boundaries of categories are more rigid, there may be different political consequences than when categories are more permeable. Additionally, some people may espouse stronger attachments to their identity groups than others in the same group. Researchers, experimental and otherwise, should consider in their designs whether there may be reason to believe that the strength or magnitude of a person's identity with a particular group matters. Consequently, researchers must be careful to define exactly what element of race (or racial categorization) is being manipulated in a study in order to avoid confusion as to what exactly is being identified (Sen and Wasow 2016).

23.3 Examples of Identity Experiments

23.3.1 *Minimal Group Studies*

As noted throughout this chapter, social categories form the basis for collective identities. In-group and out-group studies use a broad conceptualization of identity. They prime individuals to think of themselves as members of an in-group, then assess outcomes (usually behavioral) directed toward members of real or perceived out-groups.

Turner et al. (1979) used comparisons between in-groups and out-groups to study the relationship between in-group favoritism and discrimination. Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions, one where participants received a "high" monetary reward and one with a "low" monetary reward, and they were asked to distribute money across relevant and irrelevant comparison out-groups. The researchers found that participants sacrificed group and personal gain to achieve intergroup differences in monetary outcomes that favored the in-group and were less fair and more discriminatory toward the relevant than the irrelevant out-group, especially in the high-reward condition.

As in-group and out-group studies by Turner and others began to establish the group-based foundations of discrimination, the field turned to minimal group paradigm experiments to investigate the minimum conditions necessary to establish a sense of group membership that would in turn trigger discriminatory behavior toward a perceived out-group. Taifel et al. (1971) and Hogg and Sunderland (1991) used minimal group paradigm experiments to argue that even small and arbitrary distinctions between groups, such as preferences for paintings or the color of one's clothing, could cause individuals to favor their own groups at the expense of others. In an early study conducted by Taifel et al. (1971), school-age boys were randomly told that they were either "overestimators" or "underestimators" of the number of dots on a display screen. In a second experiment by Tajfel et al. schoolboys were randomly told that they were individually members of the "Klee" or "Kandinsky" group after viewing abstract paintings and expressing their preferences with no other context than the painter's name (Taifel et al. 1971). Minimal group paradigm studies rest on the assumption that there exists no prior rationale for any of the participants to believe that they belonged to the arbitrary group assignments and that participants have no important shared history with other members of an assigned group. Early minimal group paradigm studies posited that even under flimsy and otherwise meaningless social categorization, in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination would occur. The early findings of minimal group paradigm studies challenged the popular assumption that individual personality traits or preexisting social tensions were necessary conditions for discrimination. Rather, according to the minimal group paradigm, categorization alone was a sufficient condition to prompt a sense of group identity that could, in turn, introduce discriminatory behavior (Hogg and

Sunderland 1991; Tajfel and Turner 1979). The irony of the minimal group paradigm studies is that they served as a foundation for social identity theory and an inspiration for future experimental work while implicitly manipulating group membership rather than identity.

23.3.2 Superordinate Identity Studies

While minimal group paradigm studies examined the conditions necessary for discrimination to occur, subsequent research responded by investigating whether super-ordinate goals could be used to overcome in-group favoritism and bias. One early purported insight was that groups that shared a common goal could sometimes create or discover a larger shared identity and thus avoid intergroup conflict. The Robbers Cave experiments by Sherif (1988) provide examples of turning "us" versus "them" into "we." In these studies, the researchers generated conflict between young boys on the basis of seemingly meaningless classifications and argued that while minimal distinctions were sufficient to produce prejudice between groups, superordinate goals could unite groups and allow them to overcome their prejudices. Upon arrival to a camp at the Robbers Cave State Park, the boys, who did not know one another prior to the study, were randomly assigned to one of two groups and encouraged to participate in activities that facilitated group bonding, such as hiking and swimming.

The researchers then introduced a competition stage, where the two groups engaged in competitive activities (such as baseball and tug-of-war games with announced winners and losers) that resulted in rivalry and eventually expressions of prejudice against the opposing group. The boys then overcame the prejudices that developed between the groups when the researchers introduced situations where the two groups had to work together to achieve a common goal. For example, a bus carrying two groups drove into a ditch, and all of the boys had to work together to push it out (Sherif 1988).

The Robbers Cave experiments, like the minimal group paradigm studies that came before them, attempted to mimic the kinds of intergroup conflicts faced by groups around the world. However, these studies have been subject to a number of criticisms. Early group paradigm studies featured school-age participants – usually White, male, middle-class students – yet claimed to provide generalizable results such that broad theories about intergroup conflict could be advanced. Further, the studies imposed artificial group categories, as well as artificial competition, to claim that group membership was sufficient to produce prejudice and that superordinate goals could overcome intergroup bias. In real life, the types of conflicts that often arise between groups, such as disputes between ethnic groups or competition over scarce resources, are situated within known social and political contexts that may be deeply rooted and difficult to overcome. Indeed, some scholars have critiqued the conflation of arbitrary group membership with social identity in group paradigm research (Schiffmann and Wicklund 1992), while later replication studies cast doubt on the results of group paradigm research (Hewstone et al. 1981; Mummendey and Schreiber 1984).

Despite the limitations of early studies, researchers have extended work in intergroup conflict and bias to more closely approximate the kinds of conflict encountered by groups in everyday life. Gaertner et al. (1996) demonstrate how superordinate goals can overcome established intergroup prejudice. In a series of lab experiments, survey experiments involving students at a multiethnic high school and business executives who experienced a corporate merger, and a field experiment involving fans attending a college football game, the authors show that greater perceptions of a superordinate identity resulted in lower levels of intergroup bias toward original out-group members. Chowdhury et al. (2016) experimentally investigated the effects of real and minimal identities on group conflict. In the baseline condition, two groups, Asians and Caucasians, engaged in a contest, but

information about the racial composition of the opposing group was not revealed. In the minimal identity treatment, each group was arbitrarily assigned a color code, whereas in the real identity group, the racial composition of the opposing group was revealed. The researchers found that, compared to the baseline, conflict effort increased in the real identity treatment, but not in the minimal identity treatment, underscoring the need for research applications to extend beyond arbitrary group categorization into substantively meaningful group categories.

23.3.3 *Audit Studies*

Experiments have had a particularly strong impact on the study of racial and ethnic identity. In fact, many applications of social identity take race and ethnicity as powerful foundations for in-group bias. It comes as no surprise, then, that many applications of social identity theory in political science have focused on racial and ethnic politics (McDermott 2009).

Research on racial and ethnic politics has been particularly influenced by audit studies. Audits are a specific type of field experiment used to test for discriminatory behavior when survey and interview formats introduce the possibility of social desirability bias. Audit studies allow researchers to detect behaviors such as racial discrimination and decision-making in real-world scenarios (Gaddis 2018). The "individuals" used in audit studies can be actual people in an in-person audit (a strategy commonly used in housing audits) or hypothetical people in correspondence audits (such as email and CV response audits). Typically in a racial audit study, researchers vary the racial characteristics of the "individuals" as the treatment and take great care to keep all other characteristics equal that are not part of the experimental treatment. Thus, correspondence audits present a much more straightforward opportunity to fulfill the experimental requirement of excludability than in-person audits, which rely on trained assistants and must ensure that individuals sent into the field vary only by race, and are otherwise similar across a number of other

characteristics including age, height, clothing style, demeanor, and qualifications. In the USA, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has routinely used in-person audits to test for discrimination against racial minorities. The first HUD housing audit, conducted in 1977, trained pairs of testers to conduct the audits and sent them into 40 metro areas, resulting in 3264 audits. The Housing Market Practices Survey (HMPS) found discrimination against Black Americans in reported housing availability as well as treatment by real estate agents, and the groundbreaking research cleared a path for future audit studies commissioned by the government (Ross and Turner 2005; Turner and James 2015; Turner et al. 2002; Yinger 1991, 1993).

Until the early 2000s, most audit studies were conducted in-person and relied on highly trained assistants to perform the audits. As technology advanced and people began to submit housing and employment applications over the Internet, researchers adapted by developing correspondence audits. In a particularly influential correspondence audit, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) used resumes that varied the perceived race of the applicant (a "Black-sounding" name versus a "White-sounding" name) as well as the quality of the resume. The authors show that presumed-White applicants were about 50% more likely than presumed-Black applicants to receive a callback. Further, the results indicated that White respondents benefitted more than Black respondents from a higher-quality resume. While the Bertrand and Mullainathan study sent resumes via fax and mail, the timing of the study made it easy for other researchers to replicate it online and extend the applications of correspondence audits to examine discrimination in other countries (Booth et al. 2012; Drydakis and Vlassis 2010) for other racial and ethnic groups (Jacquiemet and Yannelis 2012; Oreopoulos 2011; Oreopoulos and Dechief 2012) and for social identities besides race (Banerjee et al. 2009; Correl et al. 2007; Lahey 2008; Tilcsik 2011). For a comprehensive review of audit experiments, see Chapter 3 of this volume and Gaddis (2018).

23.3.4 Priming Studies

Priming studies are another type of experiment used commonly in racial and ethnic politics research. Priming studies document the explanatory power of negative racial predispositions, examining the conditions under which prejudice is activated or primed. Most racial priming experiments randomly assign participants to either a stereotypical racial cue or to a counter-stereotypical or nonracial cue, then assess whether differences arise between the varying conditions on outcomes such as candidate choice, policy preferences, and allocation of donations or rewards. Mendelberg (2001) conducted a series of experiments examining implicit and explicit racial cues. She presented participants with a manufactured message outlining a gubernatorial candidate's anti-welfare stance, varying whether the message was implicitly racial, explicitly racial, or counter-stereotypical. Mendelberg found a strong priming effect among participants in the implicit message treatment group (racial resentment was strongly correlated with race policy views among the implicit message group), but found a significantly weaker priming effect in the other conditions. In a second experiment, Mendelberg randomly assigned participants to view one of three manufactured television news reports, again with implicitly racial, explicitly racial, or nonracial messages. She also varied whether participants were told they were close to conforming with or violating norms on three issues, including "ethnic relations." Mendelberg found that the effects of priming are generally driven by individuals' concern for violating egalitarian norms. Taken together, Mendelberg's results suggest that racial cues can activate preexisting racial attitudes, with implications for the ways political campaigns influence mass political decision-making.

Valentino et al. (2002) extended Mendelberg's work by examining the mechanism through which racial cues operate. In this lab study, the authors used a convenience sample of adults, randomly assigning each participant to view a version of a campaign advertisement for then-presidential candidate George W. Bush. All of the treatment conditions contained identical narration about Bush's appeal for lower taxes and smaller government. The visuals accompanying the narration contained either no racial cues or increasingly racial implicit imagery. In the neutral condition, the only racially identifiable people are Bush and his wife. In the "undeserving Blacks" condition, the ad showed African Americans when the narrator mentioned "wasteful government programs." Lastly, in the "race comparison" condition, images of African Americans were shown when the narrator made negative references to government, whereas White Americans were shown when the narrator made more positive comments. Following treatment, Valentino et al. had participants perform a response latency task designed to measure the accessibility of racial attitudes in memory. Overall, the results indicated that racial cues can prime racial attitudes and that cognitive accessibility mediates the effect of racial priming. Racial priming experiments tend to suggest that racial cues activate latent attitudes that can have an effect on opinion formation, though debates in the literature (see Huber and Lapinski 2006; Mendelberg 2008) as well as ongoing work (see Hutchings and Jardina 2009) underscore the need to further investigate the conditions under which cues matter and for whom. Valenzuela and Reny continue the discussion of racial priming experiments in Chapter 24 of this volume.

In a study of ethnic and religious political mobilization in Africa, McCauley (2014) argued that changes in the salience of ethnicity and religion were associated with variation in policy preferences at the individual level in Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Subjects were exposed to one of two treatments designed to artificially prime either ethnic or religious identity, followed by a series of questions about their social and political priorities. Treatments consisted of radio news reports produced by the researcher that varied whether the social groups mentioned in the reports were religious or ethnic groups (participants in the control condition were not exposed to radio reports). McCauley found that group

members who received the religious prime expressed a preference for moral policy, communities that prioritized moral living, and the rejection of corruption. Under the ethnic prime, participants preferred candidates who emphasized local development, wealth within the community, and individual advancement over transparency. The results suggest that mobilization of identity has consequences for political preferences. Other ethnic priming experiments have tested the effects of ethnic identity and cross-cutting cleavages on vote choice (Carlson 2015; Dunning and Harrison 2010).

23.3.5 *Racial and Ethnic Attachment Studies*

Whereas priming studies exploit prejudice against a perceived out-group, racial and ethnic attachment studies seek to understand how group consciousness operates among groups. Junn and Masuoka (2008) build upon decades of scholarship focusing on linked fate and expressions of shared outcomes among Black Americans to understand how group consciousness functions among Asian Americans. In an embedded survey experiment, Junn and Masuoka measure the effect of descriptive representation (when one's elected representative belongs to the same group as oneself) on racial group consciousness. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two groups. In the first group, respondents were exposed to pictures of US presidential cabinet officials that belonged to the same racial group as the viewer (Ronald Brown and Rod Paige for the Black respondents and Norman Mineta and Elaine Chao for the Asian American respondents). The photos were accompanied by identical text: "Both President Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have included diverse Americans in their cabinets." The caption under each photograph included a description of the cabinet official's position and an emphasis on their race. Those assigned to the control condition received no photos or text. While Black respondents were less responsive to the descriptive representation stimulus on

a number of outcome measures related to group consciousness, Asian Americans demonstrated strong results from the experimental manipulation, with Asian American respondents who viewed a representative headshot more likely to express closeness with their racial group, a sense of linked fate with fellow group members, and the sense that their racial political identity is somewhat important, as well as being more likely to favor the inclusion of "American" in their self-categorization (i.e., "Chinese American" or "Asian American") than those assigned to the control group.

Hetey and Eberhardt (2014) examined the relationship between racial disparities and policy reform in a study that exposed people to real and extreme racial disparities and observed how this drove their support for more punitive criminal justice policies. The authors manipulated the racial composition of the prisons and demonstrated that when a prison is represented as "more Black," people were more concerned about crime and expressed a preference for harsher punitive policy than when a prison is represented as "less Black." Exposure to extreme racial disparities, Hetey and Eberhardt argue, can lead people to support the very policies that produce those disparities.

Scacco and Warren (2018) conducted a field experiment to examine claims of the social contact hypothesis, testing whether sustained contact in a vocational training setting could improve intergroup relations between Christian and Muslim young men in a conflict-prone region of Nigeria. The study randomized recruitment into the training program, assignment to a religiously homogeneous or heterogeneous classroom, and assignment to a coreligious or non-coreligious learning partner within the classroom. Using both survey and behavioral measures for outcomes, Scacco and Warren found that, though prejudiced attitudes are resistant to change, intergroup contact did influence discriminatory behavior: after the training program, participants assigned to heterogeneous classrooms discriminated less against out-group members in a behavioral game than participants assigned to the

homogeneous classroom. In a striking explanation of the findings, the authors offer that the heterogeneous class subjects did not actually discriminate less than participants in the control group who did not attend a training program. Rather, participants assigned to homogeneous classes tended to discriminate significantly more than those in the control group, which suggests that overexposure to in-group bonding may serve to heighten discrimination, whereas mixed-group settings do not do so because they simply reduce the amount of time spent with in-group members.

23.4 Consequences of Conflating Group Membership, Identity, and Consciousness

Table 23.1 illustrates the central point of this chapter: that the literature as it stands does not do a great job of disentangling group membership from group identity and group consciousness. Past studies have advanced arguments about the nature of identity while often manipulating theoretically distinct concepts. While effects in these studies may be causally identified, there is an overwhelming tendency across studies to conflate the meanings of these concepts, which can result in confusion over exactly what is being identified and the inferences that can be drawn from experimental results. This mistake can lead researchers to make naive or inaccurate assumptions about the relationship between group identities and political outcomes.

One consequence of this mistake is that early group paradigm and superordinate identity studies may have inadvertently established a precedent for future research to rely on group membership as a proxy for group identity without providing an empirical justification for using the concepts interchangeably. Later work has revealed that group identity better predicts attitudes and behaviors than group membership in some domains (Spry 2018; Valenzuela and Michelson 2016).

In the case of audit studies, conflating concepts introduces challenges of interpretation as well. Even when researchers are careful to define the manipulation in precise terms (such as the "racial soundingness" of names on a resume), the extent to which traits associated with race should be considered as proxies for race itself is unclear. For example, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) report that the treatment of receiving a resume with names like "Aisha" or "Rasheed" yielded lower callback rates than resumes containing names like "Ebony" or "Jermaine," though all are purportedly "African American-sounding" names (Sen and Wasow 2016).

Another consequence of conflating concepts is that studies may overstate claims about the causal effects of race, ethnicity, or exposure to racial/ethnic cues while, in fact, only an element of race or ethnicity has been experimentally manipulated (Chandra 2009). Racial and ethnic cues are only meaningful (and, indeed, only generate effects) when they evoke thoughts or stereotypes that subjects associate with members of the out-group in specific contexts. Priming studies that manipulate exposure to out-group racial cues or in-group consciousness run the risk of overemphasizing the effects of "race" writ large when, typically, only a specific characteristic associated with race is used in the cue. In reality, racial signals operate within specific social, political, historical, and personal contexts that must be taken into account if assumptions are to be made about the effects of race as a whole.

Even when studies attempt to measure outcomes such as linked fate or resistance to discrimination against out-group members, the criteria used to determine subjects' positioning in racial or ethnic in-group categories are based on a naive assumption that individuals who ascriptively belong to particular racial or ethnic categories think about their own identities in those categorical terms. Manipulating consciousness with a presumed in-group takes the participant's self-identification with that in-group for granted and may thus overlook important variation in the ways that respondents

Table 23.1 Racial and ethnic identity experiments.

Type of study	Examples	Concept measured / manipulated	Limitations/stakes
Minimal group	Taifel et al. (1971), Turner et al. (1979), and Hogg and Sunderland (1991)	Group membership (assignment to arbitrary group categories)	Theory relates to identity, but measurement takes identity for granted. Identity may better predict attitudes and behaviors than group membership in some domains
Superordinate identity	Sherif 1988 and Gaertner et al. (1996)	Group membership (assignment to group categories)	Imposing superordinate categories may not account for deeply rooted social contexts and biases that occur in the world
Audit	Turner et al. (2002) and Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004)	Group membership (exposure to a perceived out-group)	Effective for measuring discrimination, but racial cues may not encompass all dimensions of race
Racial/ethnic priming	Mendelberg (2001), Valentino et al. (2002), and McCauley (2014)	Group membership (exposure to a perceived out-group), group consciousness (when in-group identity is primed)	May overstate the effect of race/ethnicity when only an element of race/ethnicity is used as a cue
Racial/ethnic attachment	Junn and Masuoka (2008) and Hetey and Eberhardt (2014)	Group consciousness	Manipulating consciousness with a perceived in-group takes the subject's identification with that in-group for granted

interpret cues that evoke in-group and out-group considerations.

While past studies have suffered from an overreliance on group membership as a proxy for group identity and group consciousness, there are reasonable explanations for this design choice. One of the main reasons that some experiments focus on manipulating group membership is because such studies are really manipulating exposure to an out-group member (e.g., audit studies), due to the concern that race and ethnicity are not mutable characteristics, while exposure to or contact with out-groups or racial/ethnic cues can be randomly assigned. Other times, group membership itself may be the concept of interest if, for example, a researcher desires to know the minimal conditions necessary for a group-related outcome to occur. However, as questions about group membership, group identity, and group consciousness are all fundamental to political science, studies attempting to

measure the effects of race and ethnicity must better account for the differences between concepts, and experiments offer a compelling path forward. Experiments are well positioned to measure and manipulate group membership, group identity, and group consciousness. As Sen and Wasow (2016) note, when the operationalization of race (or identity more broadly) allows for more flexible boundaries of measurement, the problem of manipulability can be resolved by identifying underlying elements of larger identity constructs that are relevant to the research question at hand.

23.5 Using Experiments to Disentangle Group Membership, Identity, and Consciousness

So far, I have illustrated the use of experiments to study identity, focusing specifically on social identity theory, group paradigm

studies, and applications in race and ethnic politics. Throughout the chapter, I have highlighted the challenges and opportunities presented by experimental identity research and emphasized that, while many studies claim to investigate identity, there is a broad tendency in the field to empirically conflate group membership, group identity, and group consciousness.

Experiments provide a compelling path forward to disentangle group identity from group membership and group consciousness and to advance important causal arguments made on the basis of identity. As identity research advances, one crucial empirical goal should be to investigate whether the political outcomes observed for individuals are different when we are looking from the perspective of group membership (observing relationships in data based on ascriptive categorization alone, such as "checked boxes") versus group identity (observing relationships in data by asking a person which group identities matter to them). Indeed, the argument that individuals should be allowed to indicate the identities that they consider salient is grounded in the existing literature (Davis 2011; Lee 2009). Spry (2018) demonstrates that inferences about political attitudes respond to self-categorization by randomly assigning respondents to varying measurement conditions that ask respondents to indicate which identities matter most to them. Specifically, Spry adopts a point allocation design (see Lee 2009) that measures identity by giving respondents a fixed number of "identity points" to allocate at their discretion across a set of socially relevant categories (including race, gender, class, and religion) and compares the point allocation approach to the conventional measure of checked boxes. The random assignment of individuals to different measurement conditions illustrates how different approaches to measurement may reveal different outcomes on important identity-related questions while also allowing for the comparison of policy attitudes (or other politically relevant outcomes) among people who are given the opportunity to select a primary identity from a list of socially relevant categories.

The design also reveals whether the outcomes observed when individuals select a primary identity are different from the attitudes observed when using conventional measures of demographic correlation. The advantage of the point allocation design compared with other methods of identity measurement is that point allocation provides a relative measure of identity (as multiple group categories are considered in a single measure), allows for the recognition of a primary identity (the group with the highest number of points), and produces a measure of a person's magnitude of identity with each group (the distribution of points across categories) in one efficient measure. Point allocation has the potential to provide more information about how individuals self-identify relative to other measures, yet it is flexible enough to be analyzed in ways that are analogous to more conventional measures of group membership and self-identification.

The results from Spry's study complement the findings of theoretical and qualitative work showing that individual perceptions of identity are more subjective than researchers have assumed using conventional strategies for the measurement of identity. For example, individuals in the study who allocated the most points to White, male, or Protestant categories consistently stuck out as having distinctive views from the population average, but also as having stronger views than those observed using the conventional checked box measure, especially for welfare and immigration issues. Concerning immigration, respondents were asked to rate their feelings toward "illegal immigrants" using a 100-point "feeling thermometer" scale. Respondents who selected White, male, or Protestant as their primary identity category reported especially cold feelings toward undocumented immigrants, revealing a statistically significant difference from the population average and from the average attitude observed when using a conventional checked box measure. Respondents who allocated the most points to a Hispanic group identity reported warmer feelings toward undocumented immigrants than those who merely checked the Hispanic box. The data

suggest that attitudes around policies that politicize a person's primary identity tend to be especially strong, underscoring the sensitivity of inference to research design and measurement strategy (for an additional description of the study, see Spry 2017).

Spry's work creates empirical distinctions between group membership (checked boxes) and group identity (relative point allocation among a set of socially relevant categories). Other work exploits within-group variation to understand how particular aspects of race and ethnicity shape the concept of racial or ethnic identity as a whole. For example, Johnson (2020) uses an original survey experiment of Afro Latinos in Panama to test the relationship between racial fluidity (the permeable link between phenotype and racial self-identification) and Black group consciousness in Latin America. Johnson randomly assigned respondents in a survey to one of three question formats for reporting their racial identification: an open format ("What is your race?"), a dichotomous format (using the terms "Black" and "White"), and a six-category format (using the terms "White," "Mixed," "Indigenous," "Black," "Mulatto," and "Other"). The study revealed that racial fluidity has a significant effect on who identifies as Black, but surprisingly little impact on standard measures of group consciousness.

Emerging research has emphasized the need for researchers to consider the nuances between measures for racial and ethnic identification, and it has underscored the importance of measurement strategies that account for the multidimensional nature of race and ethnic identity. As experiments adapt to reflect the ever-changing ways in which people think about their identities and relationships to groups, a new and exciting research frontier will emerge.

23.6 Recommendations and Future Research in Identity Experiments

This chapter has highlighted the role of experiments in identity research, focusing specifically on race and ethnicity. Future experimental work on identity must push the field forward in three key areas: methodological innovation, incorporation of intersectionality and multiple identities, and addressing enduring concerns about the nature of prejudice and intergroup conflict.

While the field has advanced substantially in the past several years, experimental methodology must continue to progress by improving the design of the survey instruments used to measure identity (see Spry 2018) and incorporating measurement designs that measure identity across multiple dimensions such as ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, and class (see Johnson 2020; Sen and Wasow 2016).

Methodological innovations will also prove useful for addressing intersectionality within causal research. Intersectionality presumes that, for some individuals, certain identities are inextricably tied, resulting in multiple forms of oppression (Crenshaw 1991). While many of the studies mentioned in this chapter examine race and gender, future experimental studies should examine how the combination of race and gender within individuals and across groups may be related to important political outcomes such as perceived discrimination, expressions of group consciousness, and preference for candidates and policy. Audit studies account for combinations of race and gender to some degree, but the field must catch up in practice to demonstrate this theoretically and substantively meaningful concept.

Finally, experimental studies should draw on the legacy of the in-group favoritism literature and connect this literature to enduring concerns about the nature of prejudice and conflict in contemporary life. How can identity-related experiments provide insight and address current challenges? Can experimental tools help researchers identify strategies for improving intergroup relations? Race, ethnicity, and other forms of identity will continue to play vital roles in politics, and as social dynamics continue to influence political outcomes, experimental research can play a vital role in advancing causal arguments that help explain, and hopefully provide solutions to, real-world challenges.

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