Prejudice as Self-Image Maintenance:
Affirming the Self Through Derogating Others

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The authors argue that self-image maintenance processes play an important role in stereotyping and prejudice. Three studies demonstrated that when individuals evaluated a member of a stereotyped group, they were less likely to evaluate that person negatively if their self-images had been bolstered through a self-affirmation procedure, and they were more likely to evaluate that person stereotypically if their self-images had been threatened by negative feedback. Moreover, among those individuals whose self-image had been threatened, derogating a stereotyped target mediated an increase in their self-esteem. The authors suggest that stereotyping and prejudice may be a common means to maintain one's self-image, and they discuss the role of self-image-maintenance processes in the context of motivational, sociocultural, and cognitive approaches to stereotyping and prejudice.

A most striking testament to the social nature of the human psyche is the extent to which the self-concept—that which is the very essence of one's individuality—is integrally linked with interpersonal dynamics. Since the earliest days of the formal discipline of psychology, the significant influences of a number of social factors on the self-concept have been recognized. A central focus of sociocultural and social–cognitive approaches to psychology has concerned the ways in which individuals' self-concepts are defined and refined by the people around them. This is evident in early discussions of the social nature of individuals' self-concepts (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934) and of social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), and it continues to be evident in more recent work, such as that concerning self-fulfilling prophecies (e.g., Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Snyder, 1984) and cultural influences (Abrams, 1994; Cameron & Lalonde, 1994; Cohen & Nisbett, 1994; H. R. Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 1994; Triandis, 1989; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994).

The converse focus—the self-concept's influence on perceptions of and reactions toward others—has been recognized more fully within the last two decades, through, for example, research on self-schemas (H. Markus, 1977; H. Markus & Wurf, 1987), self-verification (Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992), self-discrepancies (Higgins, 1996; Higgins & Tykocinski, 1992), and a host of self-serving biases in individuals' perceptions, judgments, and memories involving the self (e.g., Ditto & Lopez, 1992; Greenwald, 1980; Klein & Kunda, 1992, 1993; Nis-

bett & Ross, 1980; Ross & Sicoly, 1979; Schlenker, Weigold, & Hallam, 1990).

Particularly within the past decade, research has converged on the role of self-image- and self-esteem-maintenance processes in people's perceptions and reactions regarding others. These approaches, whose roots can be seen in the earlier work of James, Festinger, Heider, Sherif, Tajfel, and others, include research on downward social comparison (Brown, Collins, & Schmidt, 1988; Brown & Gallagher, 1992; Gibbons & Gerrard, 1991; Gibbons & McCoy, 1991; Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Wills, 1981, 1991; Wood & Taylor, 1991), self-evaluation maintenance (Tesser, 1988; Tesser & Cornell, 1991), social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1988; Brewer, 1993; Crocker, Thompson, McGraw, & Ingerman, 1987; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Smith, 1993; Turner, 1982), terror management (Greenberg et al., 1992), and self-affirmation (Liu & Steele, 1986; Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983).

This article examines the role of self-image-maintenance processes in a particular set of reactions and perceptions: those concerning prejudice and negative evaluations of others. More specifically, we examine the thesis that many manifestations of prejudice stem, in part, from the motivation to maintain a feeling of self-worth and self-integrity. That is, self-image threat may lead people to engage in prejudiced evaluations of others. These negative evaluations can, and often do, make people feel better about themselves. Prejudice, therefore, can be self-affirming. By using available stereotypes to justify and act on prejudices, individuals may be able to reclaim for themselves a feeling of mastery and self-worth, often saving themselves from having to confront the real sources of self-image threat.

Several self-image-maintenance processes are described or implied in the existing literature, but the research reported in this article focuses on one in particular: self-affirmation. Steele and his colleagues (e.g., Steele, Spencer, & Lynch, 1993) have argued that people seek to maintain "an image of self-integrity, that is, overall moral and adaptive adequacy" (p. 885). If an individual experiences a threat to this image, he or she attempts to restore this image by reevaluating and reinterpreting experi-

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ences and events in ways that reaffirm the self's integrity and value. Supported by research on self-affirmation effects in cognitive dissonance, Steele et al. (1993) argued that when facing a potential threat, even an important one, people have "the option of leaving the threat unrationalized—that is, accepting the threat without countering it or its implications—and affirming some other important aspect of the self that reinforces one's overall self-adequacy" (p. 885).

We argue that prejudice often serves a self-affirming function for individuals, and providing people with other means of self-affirmation should reduce their desire to make prejudiced evaluations. The link between self-image threats and the use of prejudice should be weakened by providing people with the opportunity to self-affirm, that is, by providing them with information that restores their positive sense of self-integrity. This approach is distinct from many of the classic approaches to stereotyping and prejudice, such as frustration–aggression theory and scapegoating (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939; Miller & Bugelski, 1948), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982), and downward social comparison theory (Wills, 1981). We argue that this process of self-affirmation should reduce the desire to make prejudiced evaluations even though it does not release pent-up anger or aggression, as frustration–aggression theory would require; enhance social identity, as social identity theory would require; make self–other comparisons, as downward social comparison theory would require; or confront the threat itself in any way. Only a self-affirmational perspective suggests that restoring a positive sense of self-integrity in this way would result in the decrease of prejudiced evaluations. Of course, this thesis shares many assumptions with these other theoretical positions. Our approach, however, can be seen as extending previous approaches by examining self-image maintenance as both cause and effect of prejudiced evaluations and by integrating these approaches with contemporary views of the self.

Taken together, the studies reported in this article examined both sides of this process: the roles of self-affirmation and self-image threat in influencing the likelihood that individuals will use stereotypes or prejudice and the role of prejudice in helping individuals restore a positive sense of self.

Study 1

In Study 1, we examined the hypothesis that self-affirmation should make participants less likely to evaluate another individual in ways that reflect their prejudice toward the individual's group. Participants in this study were asked to evaluate a target person who apparently was either a member of a group for which there was a readily available negative stereotype or a member of some other outgroup for which there was not a strong available stereotype. Before being exposed to this target person, participants were either self-affirmed or not affirmed. That is, half of the participants completed a task designed to affirm and make salient an important aspect of their self-concepts, and the other half completed a task designed not to affirm any important aspects of their self-concepts.

We believe that many stereotypes and prejudices are such readily available and cognitively justifiable means of self-enhancement that individuals often use their stereotypes and preju-

dices to self-enhance in the face of everyday vulnerabilities and frustrations (e.g., see Wood & Taylor, 1991). That is, unless other motives are activated, such as a goal of accurate perception (Darley, Fleming, Hilton, & Swann, 1988; Neuberg & Fiske, 1987), accountability (Tetlock, 1983), or social desirability or egalitarian motives (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1991; Monteith, 1993), people may find stereotyping and prejudice to be a reliable and effective way to protect their self-esteem in a frequently threatening world. To the extent, then, that the use of stereotypes and prejudice stems in part from self-image maintenance needs, self-affirmation should make individuals less likely to resort to this use. Study 1 was designed to test this hypothesis.

Method

Participants

Seventy-two introductory psychology students from the University of Michigan participated in this experiment as partial fulfillment of a course requirement.[1]

Procedure

The participants were told that they would participate in two experiments in this session. The first experiment was portrayed as a study of values. The second experiment was portrayed as an investigation of how employees evaluate candidates in the hiring process.

Manipulation of self-affirmation. Half of the participants completed a self-affirmation procedure, and half did not. This procedure was a modified version of that used by Steele and Liu (1983; see also Steele, 1988; Tesser & Cornell, 1991) to affirm and make salient an important part of individuals' self-concepts. Participants were given a list of several values (adapted from values characterized by the Allport–Vernon Study of Values), including *business/economics, art/music/theater, social life/relationships,* and *science/pursuit of knowledge.* Participants in the self-affirmation condition were asked to circle the value that was most important to them personally and then to write a few paragraphs explaining why this value was important to them.[2] In contrast, participants in the no-affirmation condition were asked to circle the value that was least important to them personally and then to write a paragraph explaining why this value might be important to someone else. Steele and his colleagues (e.g., Spencer & Steele, 1990; Steele, 1988) have found that causing participants to think about a value that is personally very important to them is an effective means of producing self-affirmation and that, in the absence of self-image threat, it does not affect participants' state self-esteem.

Evaluation task. For what we portrayed as the second experiment, participants were placed in individual cubicles and were told that their task was to evaluate an individual who had applied for a job as a personnel manager at a particular organization. The participants were given general information about the responsibilities of a personnel manager at this hypothetical organization and were encouraged to try to make an accurate assessment of the candidate's suitability for the job.

All participants next examined information about a fictitious job can-

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[1] Although 72 people participated in the experiment, 18 were excluded because they were Jewish, for reasons that are described in the *Manipulation of target's ethnicity* section. Thus, the data from 54 participants were included in all analyses.

[2] None of our participants wrote paragraphs concerning prejudice or tolerance. Moreover, the effects of the manipulation were not related to which value—business/economics, art/music/theater, social life/relationships, or science/pursuit of knowledge—the participants chose.

didate who was about to graduate from their university. Participants were given the candidate's completed job application to examine. The application contained questions about the candidate's previous work experience, academic and extracurricular skills and interests, and other résumé-type information. The completed application was constructed to suggest that the applicant was fairly well qualified for the position but was not necessarily a stellar candidate. Attached to the application was a photograph of the candidate. All of the participants saw virtually the same application and photograph; the variations are noted in the section below. After examining this material, participants watched an 8-min videotape presented as excerpts from the candidate's job interview. All participants saw the same videotape, which featured a fairly neutral performance by the candidate—that is, her responses tended to be adequate but not extremely positive or negative. After watching the excerpts, participants completed a questionnaire about the candidate and her qualifications.

Manipulation of target's ethnicity. Although all participants saw the same job interview excerpts, saw the same woman in the photograph attached to the job application, and read the same information about her work experiences, academic record, and other job-relevant information, we included two minor variations in the photograph and three in the application to suggest either that the candidate was Jewish or that she was not Jewish (and probably was Italian).

We used this distinction for several reasons. At the time and place in which this study was conducted, there was a very well known and relatively freely discussed stereotype concerning the "Jewish American princess" (JAP). There was a fairly sizable and salient minority of students at this campus who were Jewish women from New York City and Long Island, New York, and these women were the targets of a number of JAP jokes that spread across campus. In contrast to stereotypes about African Americans, gay men and lesbians, and many other groups, the JAP stereotype was one that many students were willing to discuss quite candidly, with many of them openly endorsing it.[3]

Another factor that played a role in our decision to examine this form of prejudice was that we were able to select a stimulus person who could be considered representative of the Jewish American princess and yet, with a few subtle manipulations, could just as easily be considered representative of a non-Jewish group—one that also was an outgroup to most participants but about which there was no strong negative stereotype or prejudice on this campus. This alternative categorization was of an Italian American woman. Although also a minority on campus, this group was not nearly as salient on campus, and as pilot testing confirmed, there was no strong, consensual stereotype or prejudice on campus concerning this group.

To manipulate the target's ethnic background, we varied the following elements of her application: her name (Julie Goldberg vs. Maria D'Agostino), an extracurricular activity (volunteering for a Jewish or Catholic organization), and her sorority (either of two sororities that shared similar reputations in terms of status, but one of which consisted predominantly of Jewish women and one of which consisted predominantly of non-Jewish women of European, but not Hispanic, descent). All the other information on the application, including all of the job-relevant information, was identical.

In both conditions, the photograph attached to the job application was of the same woman (who was also featured in the videotape). We had chosen a female undergraduate, unknown to the participants, who could be seen either as fitting the prototypic image of a Jewish American princess or as non-Jewish (and probably Italian). The photograph varied slightly, however, so that "Julie" was wearing a necklace featuring the Star of David and had her hair clipped up in back (in a clip that some pilot test students referred to as a JAP clip), whereas "Maria" was wearing a cross and had her hair down. Pilot testing suggested that our manipulation was successful.

This woman appeared in the video wearing a sweater that covered her necklace, and her hair was down but brushed in such a way that its length seemed somewhere in between the styles depicted in the two photographs. As indicated above, all participants saw the same 8-min video.

Dependent measures. Participants rated the candidate in terms of her overall personality and her qualifications for the job. Her personality was assessed by the extent to which participants agreed (on a 7-point scale) that each of the following traits described her: intelligent, insensitive, trustworthy, arrogant, sincere, inconsiderate, friendly, self-centered, down-to-earth, rude, creative, materialistic, motivated, cliquish, ambitious, conceited, happy, vain, warm, superficial. Negative traits were reverse scored. Her job qualifications were assessed by the extent to which participants agreed (on a 7-point scale) with the following statements: "I feel this person would make an excellent candidate for the position in question," "I would likely give this person serious consideration for the position in question," "I would guess that this person is in the top 20% of people interviewed," and "I felt favorably toward this person." Both scales showed good internal reliability (Cronbach's alphas of .93 and .91, respectively). Finally, participants were asked to indicate their own and the target's ethnicity and religion.

Results

Recall that our prediction was that when participants were not self-affirmed, they would evaluate the target more negatively when she was portrayed as Jewish than when she was portrayed as Italian, whereas when participants were self-affirmed, this difference would be reduced or eliminated.

The critical measure in this study was participants' ratings of the target's personality across a variety of dimensions. These ratings were subjected to a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The ANOVA revealed that there was no significant main effect for the manipulation of affirmation, $F(1, 50) = 1.8$, $p > .15$, but that there was a significant main effect for the manipulation of the apparent ethnicity of the target, as the target was rated more positively when she appeared to be Italian than when she appeared to be Jewish, $F(1, 50) = 4.9$, $p < .05$. Most importantly, this main effect was qualified by a significant interaction, $F(1, 50) = 8.5$, $p < .01$. As can be seen in Figure 1, and consistent with our predictions, not affirmed participants who evaluated the Jewish target were significantly more negative in their evaluations of the target's personality than were participants in all other conditions, $t(50) = 3.7$, $p < .001$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other.[4]

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[3] One of the reasons for this may be that the stereotype is diffused across two types of prejudice: anti-Semitism and sexism. That is, those who endorse the stereotype are protected against being considered anti-Semitic because they are not implicating Jewish men in their derogatory comments or beliefs, and they are protected against being considered sexist because they are not implicating most women. A second reason may be that the targeted group is perceived as being relatively privileged, and thus, disparaging them may not seem as harmful.

[4] We used this planned comparison for both dependent measures in this study, as well as a comparable planned comparison for each of the dependent measures in Studies 2 and 3, because it was the most direct test of our theoretically derived hypotheses (see, e.g., Hays, 1981; Keppel, 1973; Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991; Winer, 1971). For each of these measures, we also conducted the more conservative Newman–Keuls post hoc comparisons. In each case, the Newman–Keuls comparisons indicated the difference tested in the planned comparison to be significant and revealed further that none of the other conditions differed significantly from each other.
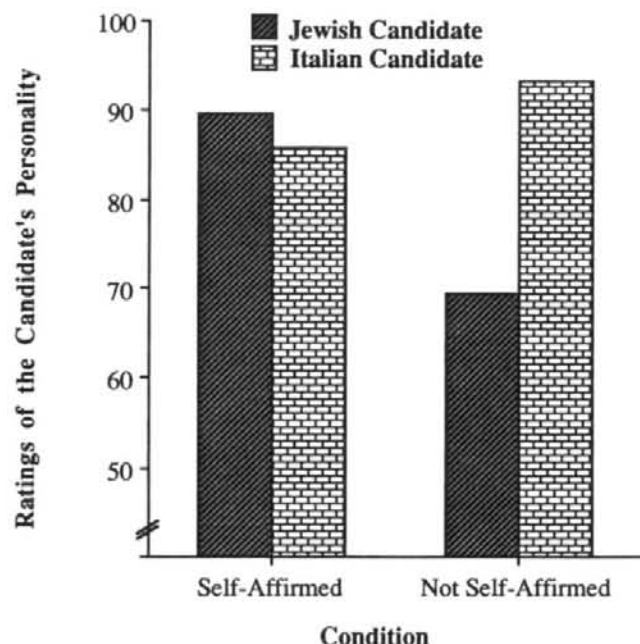
Figure 1. Rating of candidate's personality as a function of self-affirmation condition and ethnicity of the candidate. Higher numbers indicate more favorable evaluations.

Ratings of how qualified the target was for the job in question also were consistent with our predictions. A two-way ANOVA revealed that participants who had not been affirmed tended to rate the target more negatively than did participants who had been affirmed, $F(1, 50) = 4.6, p < .05$. The ANOVA revealed further that participants rated the candidate more positively when she was depicted as Italian than when she was depicted as Jewish, $F(1, 50) = 6.3, p < .05$. These main effects were qualified, however, by a marginally significant interaction between the two independent variables, $F(1, 50) = 3.0, p < .10$. Consistent with our predictions, not affirmed participants evaluated the qualifications of the candidate more negatively when she was portrayed as Jewish ($M = 14.9$) rather than Italian ($M = 20.6$), whereas affirmed participants did not make this discrimination ($Ms = 20.2$ and 21.2, respectively). The planned comparison indicated that not affirmed participants who evaluated the Jewish target were significantly more negative in their evaluations of the target's job qualifications than were participants in all other conditions, $t(50) = 3.7, p < .001$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that self-affirmation can reduce the likelihood that individuals will derogate members of stereotyped groups. In the absence of self-affirmation, participants' evaluations of the job candidate were biased as a function of her apparent ethnicity. That is, these participants evaluated the target more negatively if she was a member of a stereotyped group than if she was not. Among participants who had been self-affirmed, however, this difference was eliminated.

These results, therefore, highlight the significant role played by the self-concept in prejudice. More specifically, they support the idea that thinking about a self-relevant value, even one completely unrelated to prejudice, can reduce the expression of prejudice. Thinking about a self-relevant value has this effect even though it need not release pent-up anger or aggression, enhance social identity, or involve self–other comparisons, as frustration–aggression theory, social identity theory, and downward social-comparison theory would require.

In a replication of this study, we also examined the potential mediating role of participants' mood in this paradigm with an independent sample of 71 participants. We measured participants' mood using the Mehrabian and Russell (1974) mood scale after the manipulation of self-affirmation but before the participants evaluated the target. The mood scale consists of three subscales, each consisting of six sets of bipolar adjectives. These subscales measure pleasure (e.g., happy–unhappy, pleased–annoyed), arousal (e.g., stimulated–relaxed, excited–calm), and dominance (e.g., controlled–controlling, influential–influenced). Consistent with the findings of Liu and Steele (1986), the manipulation of self-affirmation had no significant effects on any one or any combination of these subscales (all $Fs < 1$). Moreover, participants' mood was unrelated to their evaluation of the target's personality, $r(69) = -.120, ns$, or of her qualifications for the job, $r(69) = .04, ns$. Replicating the results of Study 1, not affirmed participants who evaluated the Jewish target rated the target's personality significantly more negatively than did participants in all other cells, $t(67) = 2.4, p < .01$. Similarly, not affirmed participants who evaluated the Jewish target tended to rate the target's job qualifications more negatively than did participants in all other cells, $t(67) = 1.8, p < .05$.

The results of these studies suggest that at least part of the negative evaluation of people who are stereotyped may result from people trying to affirm their self-image. To the extent that people's self-images have been buffered by other means of self-affirmation, they should be less drawn to such a strategy. In the absence of such self-affirmation, however, stereotyping and prejudice may provide a mechanism by which people protect or bolster their self-esteem. Stereotyping and prejudice may be reinforced, therefore, because they can make people feel better about themselves.

Study 2

The results of Study 1 suggest that self-affirmation can play an important role in reducing the effects of stereotyping or prejudice on individuals' evaluations of a member of a stereotyped group. In Study 2, we focused on the other side of this self-image maintenance coin by examining whether a self-image threat would exacerbate the effects of stereotyping or prejudice on individuals' evaluations of a member of a stereotyped group.

Study 2 differed from Study 1 in two other important ways, thereby providing a better test of the generalizability of our hypotheses. First, rather than varying the target's apparent ethnicity, in Study 2 we manipulated the target's apparent sexual orientation. Thus, whereas the stereotyped group in Study 1 was contrasted with a nonstereotyped group that was also a distinct minority, the stereotyped group in Study 2 was contrasted with

the nonstereotyped majority. Second, rather than measuring participants' general derogation of a target as a function of her membership in a stereotyped group, Study 2 measured participants' stereotyping of an individual as a function of his membership in a stereotyped group.

More specifically, some participants in this study received self-image-threatening information in the form of bogus negative feedback on an intelligence test; the other participants received no such threat. Later, all participants evaluated a target on a series of trait dimensions relevant to popular stereotypes of gay men. The biographical information about the target was manipulated so as to suggest to some of the participants that the target may have been gay and to suggest to the other participants that he was straight (heterosexual). The hypothesis tested in Study 2 was that participants should be more likely to exhibit stereotyping of the (apparently) gay target if they had previously received negative feedback on the intelligence test than if they had not.

Method

Participants

Sixty-one male undergraduates from Williams College participated in this experiment either for extra credit for their introductory psychology course or for the chance to win money in a random drawing.

Procedure

Participants reported to the laboratory individually and completed the tasks in individual rooms containing a desk and a Macintosh computer. Participants first read a sheet of paper containing the cover story, which stated that the study involved a series of different cognitive and social judgment tasks. The first part of the study involved the manipulation of self-relevant feedback (described below). After some filler tasks (e.g., a simple word-stem completion task) designed to preserve the integrity of the cover story, participants completed the social judgment task, in which the participants read information about a male target. The information was designed to suggest either that the target was gay or that he was straight. After rating the target on a series of dimensions, the participants were probed for any suspicions, debriefed thoroughly, and thanked for their participation.

Manipulation of feedback. Half of the participants were assigned randomly to the negative feedback condition, and the other half were assigned to the neutral condition. To the former half, the experimenter introduced the first set of tasks as "a new form of intelligence test that is given on the computer. It measures both verbal and reasoning abilities." To the latter half, the experimenter explained that they had been assigned to a control condition in which they were simply to read the materials contained in a bogus test of intelligence. The experimenter revealed to these participants that the participants in the treatment condition of the study would be told that the test was a real, valid measure of intelligence. In other words, the experimenter told the neutral condition participants the truth. These participants were instructed to refrain from trying hard to answer the questions on the bogus test because many of the questions had no correct answer and because the time limits were unrealistically quick. The experimenter also told them that the computer would present them with bogus scores at the conclusion of the test. To assure the participants that these scores were indeed bogus, the experimenter told them what these scores would be. The experimenter explained that the participants in the treatment condition would be led to believe that the scores were real. The purpose of having the participants in the neutral condition learn this cover story and go through the test

was so that they would be exposed to the same test and specific items as the participants in the negative feedback condition, but that the test would have no relevance to their self-image.[5]

All subsequent instructions for the test were presented on the computer. The instructions were presented in a professional-looking design that introduced the intelligence test as "The Reasoning and Verbal Acuity Battery." The instructions explained that the test had been validated in numerous studies throughout the United States and Canada. The test consisted of five parts, each tapping different sets of intellectual skills. The first four parts consisted of analogies, antonyms, sentence completions, and syllogisms. The fifth part was called a "verbal–nonverbal matching test" and involved matching difficult vocabulary words to various pictures; this was a modified version of the Ammons and Ammons (1962) Quick Test of Intelligence. The instructions to this battery of tests explained that research had shown that this combination of tasks was the ideal, most valid method to measure individuals' general intelligence.

To emphasize the relevance of these intellectual skills, each test within the battery was introduced with an explanation of what it measured. Many of the specific items in these tests were taken from advanced tests used for admission to graduate school or law school. To make the tests seem even more challenging (and thus to help to justify the bogus feedback for the participants in the negative feedback condition), we modified several of the items so that there was no correct answer among the options given. Moreover, the time limits for each item were very short (ranging from 10 to 20 s, depending on the test), and a clock showing the seconds ticking away appeared on the screen for each item.

At the conclusion of this battery of tests, the computer program indicated that it was calculating the scores. After 7 s a new screen appeared that indicated the participant's percentile rankings (relative to other college students tested in the United States and Canada) for each test. Each participant received an identical set of scores: 51st percentile for the analogies test, 54th for the antonyms, 56th for the sentence completions, 33rd for the syllogisms, and 38th for the verbal–nonverbal matching. Given the prestige of the college in which this study was conducted and the students' previous scores on tests such as the Scholastic Achievement Test, these scores are extremely disappointing to the students from this population. (See Footnote 5.)

Manipulation of target's apparent sexual orientation. After administering a series of brief cognitive tasks designed to enhance the integrity of the cover story, the experimenter introduced the "social judgment tasks" by informing the participants that they would read some information about an individual and make some judgments about him or her.

All participants read about a target named Greg, a 31-year-old struggling actor living in the East Village in New York City. The information summarized Greg's ambitions and career struggles and listed some of the many odd jobs that Greg had taken to pay the rent while he pursued his dream. The information continued by detailing a recent event in Greg's life concerning landing "a fairly large part in a serious and rather controversial play directed by a young director." Participants read that Greg was excited about the play and, in particular, about working with this young director. The director's name was not mentioned, but gender pronouns indicated that the director was a man. The participants read that after the first week of rehearsals, Greg approached the director and asked him whether he wanted to get "a drink or something" with him

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[5] Consistent with the intent of the manipulation, pilot testing of 36 other participants from the same population revealed that the state self-esteem (as measured by Heatherton & Polivy's [1991] state self-esteem scale) of participants in the neutral condition was not significantly lower than that of participants who were not exposed to the test or cover story ($F < 1$). In addition, the state self-esteem of these participants (in either condition) was significantly higher than that of pilot test participants who were led to believe the test was real ($Fs > 6$).

after that night's rehearsal so that they could talk about his role in some more depth. The story continued for a few paragraphs, summarizing the play's opening and reviews, and it concluded with the information that while continuing to act in the play, Greg was writing his own play and had already gotten a commitment from the director to help him with it.

The information about Greg was identical across conditions with the following exceptions. In the first sentence, the participants in the straight-implied condition read that Greg "has been living with his girlfriend, Anne, in a small apartment" for several years. Anne's name was mentioned three more times in subsequent parts of the story about Greg, and there was one additional reference to his "girlfriend." For the gay-implied condition, in the first sentence we replaced the word "girl-friend" with "partner" and dropped reference to Anne. Neither the partner's name nor the partner's gender was specified, and there were no subsequent references to this partner.

Many of the details of the story about Greg (e.g., his living in the East Village, his caring "for a very close and very ill friend for the last 2 months of his friend's life," and his relationship with the director) were included to support the implication in the gay-implied condition that Greg was gay. Because each piece of information by itself very plausibly could describe a straight actor's life, however, we believed that the participants who were introduced immediately to references to Greg's girlfriend would not entertain the idea that Greg was gay.[6]

Dependent measures. Participants used an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (*not at all*) to 10 (*extremely*) to rate Greg's personality on each of 10 dimensions. Three of these (intelligent, funny, and boring) were included as stereotype-irrelevant fillers. The stereotype-relevant traits included sensitive, assertive/aggressive, considerate, feminine, strong, creative, and passive (see Fein, Cross, & Spencer, 1995; Kite & Deaux, 1987). Assertive/aggressive and strong were reverse-coded so that for each item, higher ratings indicated greater stereotyping. An index of this set of seven traits showed moderate internal reliability (Cronbach's α = .77). It may be worth noting that these traits, when taken out of a stereotyped context, are not necessarily negative and may indeed be rather positive. But to the extent that participants perceived these traits as more descriptive of a target if they thought that the target was gay than if they thought he was straight, this would indicate stereotyping, and the valence of these traits would be debatable.

In addition, participants used the same 11-point scale to indicate the degree to which they would like Greg as a friend and the degree to which their own personality was similar to Greg's. These measures, of course, were less ambiguous in terms of valence: Lower ratings on these two measures clearly indicated more negative feelings toward the target.

Results

Recall that we predicted that if participants read information about a target that implied that he was gay, they would be more likely to evaluate this target consistently with the gay stereotype if they had received threatening, negative feedback about their performance on the intelligence test than if they had not received any threatening feedback. If the information about the target indicated that he was straight, however, the manipulation of feedback should not have had a strong effect on participants' evaluation of the target. The results supported these predictions.

Stereotyping

A two-way ANOVA on the ratings of the target on the set of seven stereotype-relevant trait dimensions revealed a significant main effect for the manipulation of feedback, $F(1, 57) = 11.3$, $p < .001$, indicating that participants who had received negative feedback on the intelligence test rated the target more stereotypi-
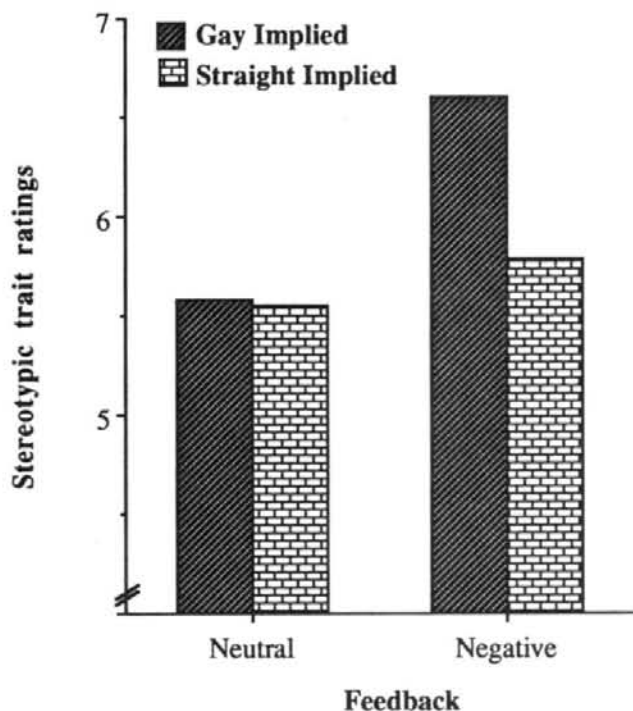

Figure 2. Rating of target on stereotype-relevant traits as a function of feedback and implied sexual orientation of the target. Higher numbers indicate greater stereotyping.

cally (i.e., gave higher ratings on the stereotype-consistent items) than did participants who had not received any feedback. In addition, the ANOVA revealed a significant effect for the manipulation of the target's apparent sexual orientation, $F(1, 57) = 5.3$, $p < .03$, indicating that participants who read information that implied that the target was gay rated him more stereotypically than if they read information suggesting that he was straight. Most importantly, the ANOVA revealed a significant interaction, $F(1, 57) = 4.4$, $p < .05$. As can be seen in Figure 2, and consistent with our predictions, participants who had received negative feedback and read information implying that the target was gay rated the target much more stereotypically than did participants in all other conditions, $t(57) = 4.1$, $p < .001$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other (see Footnote 4).

Although the stereotype-irrelevant traits were used as filler to make the participants less likely to be suspicious of the intent of our questions, we did conduct an ANOVA on the ratings concerning those traits. The independent variables did not have

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[6] An obvious question is why we did not simply state that Greg was gay. Pilot testing of students from this campus revealed quite strongly that many of the participants became suspicious of the purpose of the study if they read that the target was gay. More than half of the participants told the experimenter that they suspected that the study concerned their stereotypes about gay men. When we eliminated any explicit references to Greg's sexuality, our pilot test participants did not raise these suspicions, although most of them did spontaneously entertain the thought that Greg was gay.

any significant effects on participants' ratings of the target on any or all of these traits (all *F*s < 1).

Liking and Similarity

The measure of stereotyping yielded results consistent with our predictions. But would self-esteem threat also make participants less willing to indicate that they would like the target as a friend or that their own personality was similar to the target's? To address this question, we conducted an ANOVA on each of these measures.

The ANOVA on participants' ratings of the degree to which they would like the target as a friend revealed a significant main effect for the manipulation of feedback, $F(1, 57) = 5.7$, $p < .03$, indicating that participants who had received negative feedback on the intelligence test rated themselves as less inclined to like the target ($M = 5.81$) than did participants in the neutral condition ($M = 6.87$). The main effect for the manipulation of the information about the target's apparent sexual orientation did not approach significance ($F < 1$), but the interaction between the two variables was significant, $F(1, 57) = 4.1$, $p < .05$. Participants who had received negative feedback on the intelligence test were significantly less inclined to like the target than were those who had not received the feedback, whether or not the target information suggested he was gay, but the interaction reflects the tendency for this difference to be greater in the gay-implied condition ($Ms = 5.48$ vs. 6.98) than in the straight-implied condition ($Ms = 6.11$ vs. 6.75).

The ANOVA on participants' ratings of how similar their own personality was to the target's revealed a significant main effect for the manipulation of feedback, $F(1, 57) = 5.3$, $p < .03$, reflecting the tendency for participants to rate their personality as less similar to the target's if they had received negative feedback on the intelligence test ($M = 4.16$) than if they had received no feedback ($M = 5.33$). The manipulation of information about the target's sexual orientation did not have a significant effect ($F < 1$). More important, the independent variables produced a significant interaction, $F(1, 57) = 4.1$, $p < .05$. Consistent with our predictions, participants were particularly unlikely to rate their personality as similar to the target's if they had received negative feedback and read information implying that the target was gay ($M = 3.94$), $t(57) = 2.3$, $p < .03$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other.

Discussion

Consistent with our predictions, participants showed more stereotyping in their evaluations of the target if they had previously received negative feedback about their own performance on an intelligence test. In addition to resulting in greater stereotyping, the negative feedback led participants to psychologically distance themselves from the target if they had reason to suspect that he was gay, by rating themselves as less likely to be friends with or be similar in personality to the target. If the information about the target suggested he was straight, however, the negative feedback had less effect on these measures.

These results support the hypothesis that self-esteem threat can increase individuals' likelihood of exhibiting stereotyping or prejudice toward members of stereotyped groups. Using a different stereotype, a different stereotype comparison condition (i.e., a majority rather than alternative minority group condition), and different dependent measures from those used in Study 1, Study 2 yielded results consistent with the hypothesis that self-image-maintenance processes can play an important moderating role in stereotyping or prejudice.

But does stereotyping or prejudice in response to self-image threat restore an individual's self-esteem? This question was addressed in Study 3.

Study 3

Our view suggests that one motivation for stereotype- or prejudice-based evaluations is that these sorts of evaluations can restore a threatened self-image. Study 3 provides the first complete test of this hypothesis by examining both sides of this process: the role of a threatened self-image in causing participants to derogate a member of a stereotyped group and the role of this derogation in restoring participants' threatened self-image. Thus, an important goal of Study 3 was to provide the first evidence that negative evaluation of a stereotyped target in response to self-image threat mediates increase in self-esteem.

Participants in Study 3 took what they thought was an intelligence test. Unlike in Study 2, all participants in Study 3 were led to believe that the test was real. They received bogus positive or negative feedback.[7] After the feedback, all participants completed a questionnaire that measured their state self-esteem. In an ostensibly unrelated experiment that followed, participants evaluated a woman portrayed as Jewish or Italian, as in Study 1. Following this evaluation, participants again completed the state self-esteem questionnaire so that we could monitor changes in their self-esteem.

We predicted that (a) participants who received negative feedback would have lower state self-esteem than participants who received positive feedback, (b) participants who received negative feedback and evaluated the Jewish target would rate the target more negatively than would the participants in the other conditions, (c) participants who received negative feedback and evaluated the Jewish target would exhibit a greater increase in state self-esteem than would participants in the other conditions, and (d) this increase in state self-esteem would be mediated by their evaluations of the target.

Method

Participants

One hundred twenty-six introductory psychology students from the University of Michigan participated in this experiment for partial fulfillment of a course requirement.[8]

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[7] We believed that it would be difficult or impossible to provide performance feedback that would be neutral for most participants, unless, as in Study 2, we did not lead the participants to believe that the test was real. An average score was quite threatening to our participants, and determining how much above average would be neutral for all participants seemed impossible.

[8] Although 126 participants participated in the experiment, 17 were excluded because they were Jewish, 7 because they were foreign students and, consequently, would have been less likely to be familiar with the stereotype about Jewish American women, 4 because they misidentified the target's ethnicity, and 2 because they did not believe the false feed-

Procedure

Overview. Participants reported to the laboratory in pairs and were told that they would be participating in two experiments: an intelligence test and a social interaction. Participants first were given an intelligence test and were given bogus feedback about their performance. They next completed a measure of their state self-esteem (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991) and were asked to indicate their score on the intelligence test, after which they were thanked for their participation, dismissed, and sent to the "social evaluation" experiment, where they were met by a different experimenter. The social evaluation experiment involved the same procedure as that used in Study 1. That is, participants received information about a job candidate who was depicted as either Jewish or Italian. After evaluating this candidate's personality and job qualifications by using the same measures as those used in Study 1, participants again completed the Heatherton and Polivy measure of state self-esteem, after which they were asked to indicate their own and the target's race and ethnicity. Finally, they were probed for any suspicions, debriefed thoroughly, and thanked for their participation.

Manipulation of feedback. When participants arrived for what was portrayed as the first experiment, they were told that the study was concerned with a new, improved form of intelligence test. The rationale and instructions were similar to but briefer than those given to the participants in Study 2. The intelligence test used in this study consisted of a longer but less difficult version of one of the tests from the battery of tests used in Study 2: the verbal–nonverbal matching test in which participants tried to match difficult vocabulary words to various pictures. This test was purported to be a very valid test of verbal and nonverbal skills. The experimenter began by giving each participant a pencil and a form commonly used for exams featuring multiple-choice questions that are graded via a computer. The test consisted of three sets of 10 words each.

The test was designed to be difficult and ambiguous enough for students to believe either positive or negative performance feedback. Some of the words were difficult or obscure for the average student (e.g., *capacious, celerity*), and some were easier (*forlorn, imminent*), but all had the feel of the kinds of vocabulary items that are included in college entrance exams, and many were such that participants felt as if they may have known what they meant but could not be sure. Moreover, the match between words and pictures often was not obvious, particularly given the fast pace of the test. Pretests and postexperiment interviews confirmed that participants tended to be unsure of how they were doing during the test and to believe the feedback that was given them.

At the completion of the test, the experimenter took the participants' answers and went into an adjacent room. The door to this room was left open, and the participants could hear what sounded like a Scantron machine grading the tests. The experimenter returned each participant's answer form to him or her. The experimenter explained that a red mark appeared next to each incorrect answer, that the first number on the bottom of the form indicated the number of correct answers, and that the second number indicated the participant's percentile ranking relative to all the other students who had taken the test thus far.

The feedback was, of course, bogus. Half of the participants received positive false feedback about their test performance (i.e., a high score that ostensibly put them in the 93rd percentile for the university), whereas the other half received negative false feedback (i.e., a low score that ostensibly put them in the 47th percentile). Although the 47th percentile is close to the median, pretesting had indicated that participants uniformly found this to be very negative feedback (see also Stein, 1994).

Results and Discussion

Recall that we predicted that if participants had received threatening, negative feedback about their performance on the intelligence test, they would be more likely to derogate the target as a function of her apparent ethnicity than if they had received positive feedback about their performance. We also predicted that derogating the stereotyped target would help restore threatened participants' self-esteem. The results were consistent with these predictions.

Evaluations of the Target

Participants' ratings of the target's personality were subjected to a two-way ANOVA, which revealed strong support for our predictions. Two significant main effects emerged: Participants who had received negative feedback about their performance on the intelligence test rated the target's personality more negatively than did participants who had received positive feedback, $F(1, 92) = 9.1, p < .05$, and participants who were led to believe that the woman was Jewish rated her qualifications more negatively than did participants who were led to believe that the woman was Italian, $F(1, 92) = 5.2, p < .01$. More importantly, these main effects were qualified by a significant interaction between the manipulations of feedback and ethnicity, $F(1, 92) = 7.1, p < .01$. As can be seen in Figure 3, participants who had received positive feedback did not evaluate the personality of the target as a function of her apparent ethnicity, whereas participants who had received negative feedback evaluated the qualifications of the target much more negatively if she was portrayed as Jewish than if she was portrayed as Italian. The planned comparison indicated that participants who had re-
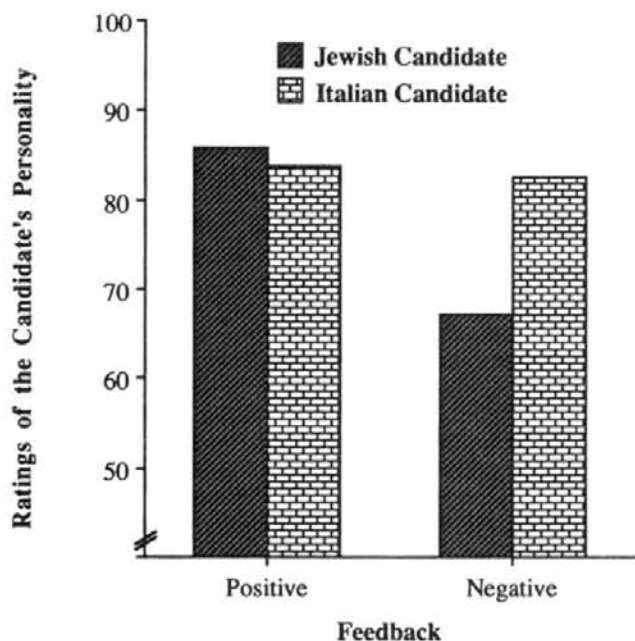
Figure 3. Rating of candidate's personality as a function of feedback and ethnicity of the candidate. Higher numbers indicate more favorable evaluations.

back about their performance on the intelligence test. Thus, the data from 96 participants were included in all analyses.

ceived negative feedback and evaluated the Jewish target were significantly more negative in their evaluations of the target's personality than were participants in all other conditions, $t(92) = 4.5, p < .001$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other (see Footnote 4).

The ANOVA of the ratings of the target's job qualifications yielded a similar pattern of results. The two main effects were again significant: Participants who had received negative feedback about their performance on the intelligence test rated the target's qualifications more negatively than did participants who had received positive feedback, $F(1, 92) = 3.7, p = .05$, and participants who were led to believe that the woman was Jewish rated her qualifications more negatively than did participants who were led to believe that the woman was Italian, $F(1, 92) = 6.3, p < .05$. Although the interaction was not significant for this measure, $F(1, 92) = 2.3, p < .12$, the pattern of cell means was consistent with our predictions. Participants who had received positive feedback did not evaluate the target very differently as a function of her apparent ethnicity ($M_{Jewish} = 18.8$ vs. $M_{Italian} = 19.7$), but participants who had received negative feedback evaluated the qualifications of the target much more negatively if she was portrayed as Jewish ($M = 15.3$) than if she was portrayed as Italian ($M = 19.3$). The planned comparison indicated that participants who had received negative feedback and evaluated the Jewish target were significantly more negative in their evaluations of the target's qualifications than were participants in all other conditions, $t(92) = 3.4, p < .001$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other.

These results, therefore, provide a conceptual replication of those found in Study 2 and support the generalizability of the findings by demonstrating them in the context of a different stereotype, a different kind of nonstereotyped group, and different dependent measures.

Self-Esteem

In Study 3 we measured participants' state self-esteem at two points: after the feedback manipulation and after they rated the target. The theoretical range for this scale is 20 to 100, with higher numbers indicating higher state self-esteem. As expected, feedback had a significant effect on participants' state self-esteem. Participants who received the positive feedback felt better about themselves ($M = 77.5$) than did those who received the negative feedback ($M = 72.9$), $F(1, 94) = 4.4, p < .05$.

The change in state self-esteem from this first measure to the measure taken after participants evaluated the target was also consistent with predictions. The ANOVA revealed a marginally significant interaction between feedback and ethnicity, $F(1, 92) = 2.7, p = .10$. As can be seen in Figure 4, and consistent with our predictions, participants who received negative feedback and evaluated the Jewish target had a significantly greater increase in state self-esteem than did participants in the other conditions, $t(92) = 2.3, p < .05$. None of the other conditions differed significantly from each other on this measure.

These results suggest that the participants who received negative feedback and rated the Jewish woman restored their self-esteem by engaging in negative evaluation of the stereotyped target. We conducted a path analysis to test this reasoning (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Figure 5 depicts the results of this
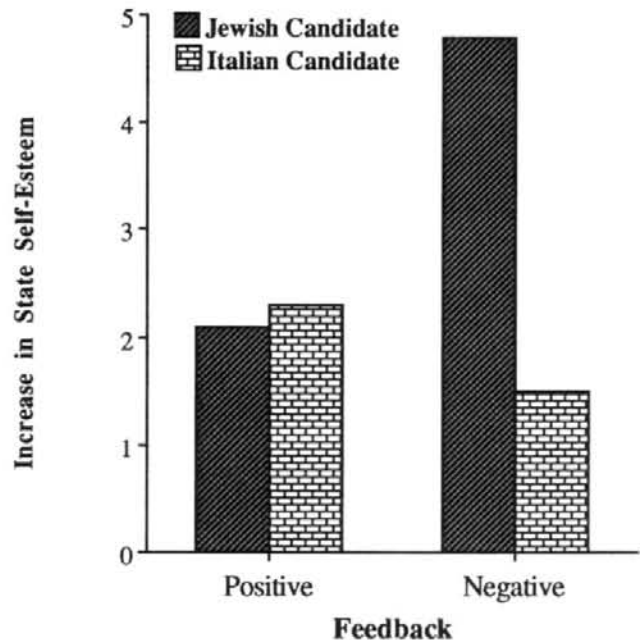

Figure 4. Change in state self-esteem as a function of feedback and ethnicity of the job candidate. Higher numbers indicate greater increase in state self-esteem.

analysis. We allowed the planned interaction contrast to predict change in participants' self-esteem. This direct effect was significant, $\beta = .23, t(92) = 2.3, p < .05$. Next we allowed the planned interaction contrast to predict participants' ratings of the target's personality. This path was significant as well, $\beta = .42, t(92) = 4.6, p < .01$. Finally, we allowed the planned interaction contrast and participants' ratings of the target's personality to predict participants' change in state self-esteem. The path from participants' ratings of the target was significant, $\beta = .37, t(92) = 3.5, p < .01$, but the direct effect of the planned interaction contrast on participants' change in self-esteem was no longer significant, $\beta = .07, t(92) = 0.7, p > .40$. Thus, this path analysis suggests that the direct effect of the manipulations in this experiment on participants' change in state self-esteem was mediated by their evaluations of the stereotyped target's personality. These analyses suggest that the negative feedback led to increased derogation of the Jewish target, which in turn led to increased state self-esteem, rather than suggesting that positive feedback led to a reduced derogation of the Jewish target.

Taken together, these results provide the first demonstration that self-image threats, such as negative feedback, can lead to negative evaluations of a stereotyped target and that these negative evaluations, in turn, can restore people's threatened self-images. Moreover, these findings support our hypothesis that derogating a stereotyped target in response to self-image threat mediates increase in self-esteem. These results, therefore, strongly corroborate the idea that negative evaluations of a stereotyped target may often result from an effort to affirm a threatened self-image.
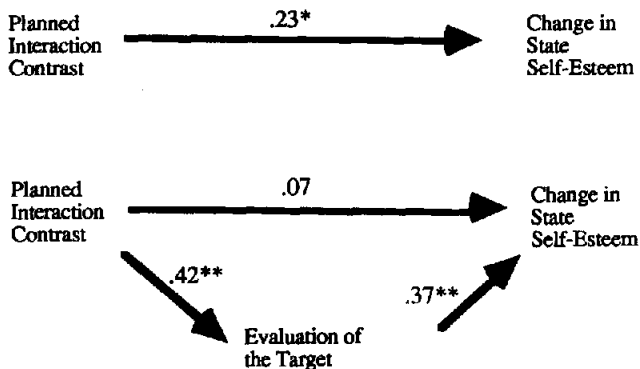
Figure 5. Change in state self-esteem as mediated by negative evaluations of the job candidate's personality. $*p < .05. **p < .01.$

General Discussion

This set of three studies examined evaluations of a member of a stereotyped group. Study 1 found that participants evaluated an individual target person more negatively if they thought she was a member of a stereotyped group than if they thought she was a member of a nonstereotyped group, but this effect did not occur if the participants' self-images had been bolstered through an affirmation procedure. Study 2 found that receiving self-image-threatening information led participants to evaluate an individual more stereotypically if he appeared to be a member of a stereotyped group. Study 3 demonstrated that receiving self-image-threatening information led participants to negatively evaluate an individual if she appeared to be a member of a stereotyped group, and these negative evaluations in turn were particularly effective in restoring participants' self-esteem. Moreover, the degree to which these participants made negative evaluations of the stereotyped target mediated the restoration of their self-esteem. Taken together, this research suggests that a threat to one's positive self-image or a self-affirmation that provides a buffer against self-image threats can moderate negative evaluations of a member of a stereotyped group and that these biased evaluations can in turn affect one's sense of self-worth.

Self-Affirmation and Negative Evaluations of Others

This set of studies highlights the role of self processes in the perceptions of others. Information that threatens perceivers' sense of self-worth leads to the need to restore a positive self-image. Research by Steele and others (Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983; Steele et al., 1993) has shown that people can restore a threatened self-image in a number of ways, including by drawing on their own self-concept resources or by taking advantage of affirmational opportunities available in the situation. Steele et al. (1993) have suggested, however, that it may be difficult for people to spontaneously draw upon their self-concept resources to affirm their self-image. Therefore, people will often look to the situation to find opportunities to affirm their self-image. The studies presented here demonstrate that stereotyping or derogation of a member of a stereotyped group can provide such situational opportunities to restore a threatened self-image. Because it is likely that people often will encounter others in

situations where it is personally and socially acceptable to evaluate them negatively, stereotyping and prejudice may be common reactions to self-image threat. However, when perceivers encounter someone who is a member of a group for which they do not have strong, accessible negative stereotypes, such as the woman in Studies 1 and 3 who was Italian or the man in Study 2 who apparently was straight, stereotyping or derogation is unlikely to be used as a self-affirmational strategy.

These studies also suggest that self-affirmation processes may affect a wide range of phenomena. Most of the research on self-affirmation theory has examined how self-affirmation affects cognitive dissonance processes (Steele, 1988; Steele & Liu, 1983; Steele et al., 1993), but some research has suggested that self-affirmation can also influence self-evaluation maintenance (Tesser & Cornell, 1991), learned helplessness reactions (Liu & Steele, 1986), and the academic performance of women and minorities (Steele & Aronson, 1995). The present research, in which self-affirmation affected stereotyping and prejudice, provides further evidence that self-affirmation and self-image maintenance processes have broad applicability to a wide range of important phenomena.

Relations to Other Theories

Our approach emphasizes that stereotyping others is one of several possible self-image-maintenance strategies (Steele, 1988; Tesser & Cornell, 1991). We argue that negatively evaluating others has the potential to restore a positive self-image. Because these evaluations are part of a larger self-system that seeks to maintain an overall image of the self as morally and adaptively adequate, the state of the self-image—specifically, the extent to which it is threatened or affirmed—will influence when people will engage in stereotyping and when that stereotyping will restore a positive self-image. This approach clearly is related to other theories of stereotyping and prejudice, such as frustration–aggression, social identity, and downward social comparison. However, there are distinct theoretical differences between our approach and these approaches. In addition, the findings of the current studies support our approach and would not be predicted by these other theories.

In contrast to frustration–aggression theory, which argues that people may displace aggression by derogating others in response to blocked goals and frustrations in their life, our approach emphasizes that threats to the self-image in particular, rather than any source of frustration, lead to derogation of others. The results of Study 1 highlight this difference. Consistent with our predictions, we found that self-affirmation reduced participants' tendency to derogate a stereotyped target. It is unclear from frustration–aggression theory how a self-affirmation procedure such as that used in Study 1 would reduce frustration, unless frustration is defined more broadly than it has been in the past.

Social identity theory suggests that people favor their own groups over other groups in an effort to boost their group's status, which in turn boosts their own self-esteem. Although our approach would suggest that favoring one's own group over another group can restore one's self-image, we argue that negatively evaluating a stereotyped target can restore one's self-image even if group evaluations and in-group–out-group com-

parisons are not made. In the current studies there is no evidence that people are making in-group–out-group evaluations or comparisons. Both the threats and the affirmation were directed at the self, rather than at the group, and the evaluations were always of a single individual. Given that the self-affirmation manipulation in Study 1 was irrelevant to participants' group identity or status, it is unclear how social identity theory could account for the results of this study. Moreover, from a perspective that emphasizes in-group–out-group differences, one might predict that the negative feedback in Study 3 should have caused participants to derogate the Italian candidate because the Italian candidate could be considered an out-group member for most of the participants. In addition, such derogation should have been associated with a greater increase in self-esteem. The results do not support this account.

Downward social comparison theory argues that people make negative evaluations of others to bolster their self-esteem. A more precisely defined conception of downward social comparison, however, might require that social comparisons involve self–other distinctions. Our approach suggests that such self–other distinctions might indeed restore one's self-image, but negative evaluations of stereotyped others that do not involve self–other comparisons should also restore one's self-image. In the current studies there is no evidence that our participants made self–other comparisons when evaluating the targets. Moreover, even if participants made self–other distinctions, downward social comparison theory would predict that the self-image threats should have led to derogation of all other targets, whether or not they appeared to be members of a stereotyped group. The results of our studies do not support such a prediction.

At a theoretical level, therefore, our approach is consistent in many ways with other theories, such as frustration–aggression, social identity, and downward social comparison theory, although there are some important differences. In addition, only our account can explain the set of results found in the current studies.

At an empirical level, several studies have shown that self-image threat can lead to negative evaluations of others (Brown & Gallagher, 1992; Crocker et al., 1987; Gibbons & Gerrard, 1991), and other studies have demonstrated that negative evaluations of others can lead to increased self-esteem (Brickman & Bulman, 1977; Taylor & Lobel, 1989; Wills, 1991; Wood & Taylor, 1991). Our studies differ from these previous studies by demonstrating that when people experience self-image threats, their negative evaluations of stereotyped others can mediate an increase in self-esteem. Furthermore, the current studies are the first to show that thinking about a self-relevant value unrelated to prejudice can lead to a reduction in stereotyping. Thus, the findings of the current studies support our contention that stereotypic evaluations of others can serve a self-image-maintenance function.

In our view, any negative evaluation of others—through downward social comparisons, intergroup discrimination, or stereotyping and prejudice—has the potential to serve a self-image-maintenance function. Because of the prevalence, consensual nature, and potential subtlety of negative stereotypes in particular, stereotyping and prejudice may be an especially common and effective means of self-affirmation.

The Role of Motivation in Stereotyping and Prejudice

Major reviews of the stereotyping and prejudice literature (e.g., Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Hamilton & Trolier, 1986; Hilton & von Hippel, 1996; Snyder & Miene, 1994; Stroebe & Insko, 1989) acknowledge the role of motivational factors (which may be paired with or subsumed under a personality or psychodynamic approach) as one of the principal perspectives or approaches to the study of stereotyping and prejudice, along with the sociocultural and cognitive approaches. Typically, however, relatively little empirical evidence beyond research concerning psychodynamic-based constructs and theories from the 1940s and 1950s or intergroup relations and related phenomena (e.g., realistic group conflict and social identity theory) is cited in support of this perspective. The present research, along with recent examinations of the roles of affect and emotion (Esses, Haddock, & Zanna, 1994; Forgas, 1995; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Mackie & Hamilton, 1993) and inhibition in stereotyping and prejudice (Bodenhausen & Macrae, in press; Devine, 1989; Devine, Monteith, Zuwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Monteith, 1993), examinations of the functions of stereotyping and prejudice (Snyder & Miene, 1994), examinations of the influence of desired beliefs on person perception (Klein & Kunda, 1992), and examinations of the roles of self-esteem and collective self-esteem in intergroup perceptions and discrimination (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Crocker et al., 1987), reflects a burgeoning interest in processes that are relevant to this underdeveloped motivational perspective.

The results of the studies reported in this article suggest that prejudiced perceptions of members of stereotyped groups can, under the appropriate conditions, help perceivers restore a positive self-image. Engaging in stereotyping and prejudice, therefore, can be an attractive way for many individuals to feel better about themselves in the absence of more readily available means of alleviating self-image threats or of affirming oneself. Given the same sociocultural context, and given the same cues and information and information-processing conditions, perceivers who are motivated to restore a feeling of overall self-worth should be more likely than other perceivers to seek out or take advantage of stereotypes.

This is not to suggest, however, that sociocultural and cognitive factors are not also critically important in the processes examined in our studies. Rather, these studies reflect an interplay of each of these factors. This is reflected in the interaction between ethnicity or sexual orientation of the target and the manipulation of self-affirmation (Study 1) or self-esteem threat (Studies 2 and 3). If the need to restore a positive overall sense of self-worth influenced prejudice independently of social–cognitive factors, then the manipulations of self-affirmation and self-threat should have resulted simply in more positive (when self-affirmed) or more negative (when the self was threatened and not affirmed) evaluations of the target individual. Rather, the manipulations of self-affirmation and self-threat significantly influenced participants' evaluations of the target only when they thought she or he was a member of a group for which there was a strong and negative stereotype, but not when they thought the target was not a member of such a group. Furthermore, evaluating the target negatively was associated with greater self-esteem boost in the former but not in the latter condition. Thus, the

presence of the stereotype, stemming from sociocultural and cognitive factors, facilitated the process of derogating the target person and restoring self-esteem.

Only after recognizing the interplay among sociocultural, cognitive, and motivational factors can one adequately address the question of why derogating *any* target would not make participants feel better about themselves. In other words, if a threat to perceivers' self-esteem makes them want to restore their self-esteem, why not derogate an Italian woman if she is more available than a Jewish woman? Cognitive and sociocultural factors provide an answer to this question. Within the culture in which Studies 1 and 3 were conducted, there was a strong negative stereotype of Jewish American women but not of Italian American women. The JAP stereotype provided participants with the cognitive basis for perceiving the individual in a negative light. Similarly, the gay man stereotype provided participants in Study 2 with the cognitive basis for perceiving the individual in a stereotypical and negative light. Derogation would seem less justifiable in the absence of the stereotype because participants' judgments would not have been biased by the stereotype. Rather than feel better about themselves, most individuals likely would feel worse if they realized that they had disparaged another person in order to restore their own sense of self-worth (e.g., Devine et al., 1991). Stereotypes, through social-cognitive processes such as assimilation, illusory correlations, and schematic processing, can therefore facilitate self-image maintenance, particularly to the extent that perceivers are not aware of this influence.

The Nature of Stereotyping

Most of the stereotypes that we can think of are predominantly negative. Although they are very different from each other, stereotypes about African Americans, people with disabilities, Latinos, women, Native Americans, older people, gay men, lesbians, and those low in social economic status are similar in that they are primarily negative. The current analysis provides a possible explanation for the predominantly negative character of these stereotypes. Although there are undoubtedly other mechanisms that create and perpetuate negative stereotypes (e.g., illusory correlations, out-group homogeneity, in-group bias, and social roles), our analysis suggests that stereotypes may often take on a negative character because the negativity can help restore people's self-images. When people form stereotypes about a group, they may be more likely to characterize the group in negative terms because such characterizations allow evaluations of the group that can be used for later self-affirmation. Similarly, these stereotypes may be particularly resistant to change because they can make perceivers feel better about themselves.

This analysis emphasizes the important role that motivation can play in stereotyping and prejudice. People may be more likely to stereotype others or engage in prejudicial evaluations to the extent that they are motivated to restore or enhance their self-images. Thus, understanding people's motivations may be critical in determining whether they will stereotype others, how they will stereotype others, and what form these stereotypes will take. Stereotyping and prejudice are clearly an important problem in our society. Our analysis suggests that a complete

understanding of these processes, and ways of mitigating them, requires an understanding of the role of the self in people's perceptions of others.

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