

IDENTITY FORM MATTERS: WHITE RACIAL IDENTITY AND INTER-GROUP  
ATTITUDES

by

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(Under the direction of Victoria C. Plaut)

ABSTRACT

Previous research has drawn mixed conclusions regarding the relationship between White racial identity and inter-group attitudes. Building upon research by Perry (2002) and Knowles and Peng (2005), we propose that a multidimensional model of White racial identity accounting for both identity strength and form is necessary to predict inter-group attitudes. In Study 1, White participants were categorized as exhibiting different White identity forms. “Power-cognizant” identity was associated with more positive inter-group attitudes than “Post-cultural” identity, despite equivalent identity strength. In Study 2, among White participants, belief in White privilege moderated the relationship between identity strength and inter-group attitudes. The findings support the multidimensional model and suggest that, for some Whites, a strong racial identity may lead to positive inter-group attitudes.

INDEX WORDS: White identity, racial identity, belief in White privilege, prejudice, system-justifying beliefs

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Do White anti-racism activists, White neo-Nazis, and White students at “super majority” White high schools think about their Whiteness in the same way? According to ethnographers who have interviewed them, certainly not (Campbell, 2006; Eichstedt, 2001; Perry, 2002). Far less clear are the consequences of these differing views. Fewer than 100 peer-reviewed articles have investigated White racial identification (cf., Knowles & Peng, 2005). In our review of the literature, we found in psychology journals only 13 peer-reviewed articles that measured both White identity and its association with inter-group attitudes (e.g., system-justifying beliefs, diversity endorsement, stereotyping, affect toward out-groups). Of these, only seven appear in the social and personality psychology journals. Widening this research gap, the extant White identity research has little methodological or conceptual clarity – a reality that has plagued researchers for over two decades (White & Burke, 1987).

In the present research, we take initial steps to reconcile the seemingly disparate White identity literature. To this end, we look to a multidimensional model of White identity (Knowles & Peng, 2005). In two studies, we present evidence suggesting that to best explain the relationship between White identity and inter-group attitudes, researchers must account for both *identity centrality* and *in-group evaluation* as well as *identity form*. As we demonstrate, the extent to which individuals recognize *White privilege*, an especially important expression of identity form, has implications for inter-group attitudes. We also present a methodological foundation from which to conduct future White identity research. As we detail herein, such a foundation is currently wanting.

## The Inconsistent Relationship of White Identity and Inter-Group Attitudes

While there is no consensus on how to best measure White identity, current measures can be catalogued into three types: racial contrasting measures, identity strength measures, and identity form measures. Given the disparity of measures of White identity, it is little surprise that the relationship between White identity and inter-group attitudes is unclear. Studies have suggested that a strong White identity predicts more negative inter-group attitudes in general (e.g., White & Burke, 1987), more negative inter-group attitudes under certain conditions (e.g., Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006), no differences (e.g., Verkuyten, 2005), and even more positive inter-group attitudes (e.g., Arriola & Cole, 2001). Why such an ambiguous association? The measurement of White identity appears to determine its relationship to inter-group attitudes: racial contrasting measures have shown a negative relationship, identity strength measures a marginal relationship, and identity form measures a positive relationship.

### *Racial Contrasting Measures: A Negative Relationship*

Using racial contrasting measures, researchers conclude that individuals have strong racial identities if they exhibit an especially strong psychological connection to the in-group and an especially weak psychological connection to an out-group. For example, Whites have strong White identities to the extent that they contrast themselves against a racial other – often, Blacks. White and Burke (1987) classified White participants as having a strong White identity to the extent they described themselves with many stereotypically White behaviors and few stereotypically Black behaviors. The White Identity Centrality Implicit Associations Test (WICIAT; Knowles & Peng, 2005) is an implicit racial contrasting measure built on the framework of the Implicit Associations Test (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). With the WICIAT, White participants are classified as having strong White identities to the extent they

implicitly associate their selves with stereotypically White names (e.g., Daniel) while disassociating their selves with stereotypically Black names (e.g., Tyrone).

Racial contrasting measures have shown a negative relationship between White identity and inter-group attitudes (Knowles & Peng, 2005; White & Burke, 1987). Why might this be? To calculate identity scores, racial contrasting measures take into account the disassociation of the self and Blacks – potentially, a marker of anti-Black affect. Anti-Black affect is also a common dependent variable in studies of racial prejudice. Therefore, the relationship between White identity and negative inter-group attitudes in these studies may be due in part to how White identity is measured.

#### *Identity Strength Measures: A Tenuous Relationship*

Measures of identity strength are based in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which posits that individuals gain self-understanding and affirmation through their group memberships (e.g., one's soccer team, university, gender, race). Accordingly, researchers conclude that a person who exhibits an especially strong psychological connection to his or her racial in-group has a strong racial identity. The Collective Self-Esteem scale (CSE; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) is the most popular measure of White identity strength, although others exist (Phinney, 1992; Phinney & Ong, 2007; Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997; Tropp & Wright, 2001).

Studies that utilize identity strength measures have shown a tenuous relationship between White identity and inter-group attitudes. For example, a strong White identity predicted decreased support for Affirmative Action only when the policy was framed as a decrease in proportional White employment rather than an increase in proportional Black employment (Lowery et al., 2006). Other studies have found that when their in-group's economic or political

power is threatened, Whites' racial identities strengthen. However, these strengthened identities predicted only marginally more negative inter-group attitudes (Gonsalkorale, Carlisle, & von Hippel, 2007) or did not predict more negative attitudes at all (Verkuyten & Zaremba, 2005).

In the absence of a threat to the in-group, there is an even weaker relationship between identity strength and inter-group attitudes. In one study among the Dutch, a strong White identity predicted less diversity endorsement, but it did not predict negative affect toward or stereotypes of racial out-groups (Verkuyten, 2005). Similarly, a study of American political attitudes over the past three decades found that White identity strength had no effect on feelings toward Blacks and a very small negative effect on diversity endorsement (Wong & Cho, 2005). Also, Knowles and Peng (2005) found that a battery of explicit identity strength measures, including the CSE, did not predict inter-group attitudes.

In some research, higher scores on identity strength measures have actually predicted positive outcomes, such as increased multicultural counseling competency (Chao, 2006). Other research has found stronger White identities among the highly-educated and women (Wong and Cho, 2005), groups that typically demonstrate relatively positive inter-group attitudes (Kinder & Sanders, 1996).

#### *Identity Form Measures: A Positive Relationship*

In contrast to identity strength measures, identity form measures have consistently linked strong White identities to positive inter-group attitudes. Identity form measures are based on Helms' (1984) theory of racial identity. According to this theory, as Whites learn of and come to grips with their undeserved racial privileges, their identities strengthen and change form. As a result, some Whites adopt an identity form in which they strongly identify as White and consequently embrace positive inter-group attitudes.

Using identity form measures, such as the White Racial Identity Attitude Scale (WRIAS; Helms, 1990), researchers have found that strong White identities predict self-reported comfort toward Blacks (Claney & Parker, 1989), support for Affirmative Action (Arriola & Cole, 2001), and increased multicultural competency among doctoral counseling students (Vinson & Neimeyer, 2000) and school counselors (Constantine, 2002). These measures have been criticized, however, for lacking sufficient reliability and validity and for having an unclear factor structure (Behrens, 1997; Choney & Rowe, 1994; Rowe, Behrens, & Leach, 1995). Despite Helms' (1999) rebuttal, use of these types of identity form measures has decreased substantially.

#### Reconciliation: A Multidimensional Model of White Identity

To reconcile the discrepancies in the literature, we look to the multidimensional model of White identity first offered by Knowles and Peng (2005). Building on Sellers and colleagues' (1997) multidimensional model of Black identity, Knowles and Peng suggested that White identity consists of three dimensions: identity centrality, in-group evaluation, and identity form.

##### *Identity Strength and Form*

Identity centrality is the extent to which one's self-definition is tied to the in-group, while in-group evaluation is how positively one views the in-group. The CSE measures both of these dimensions simultaneously, and past research using that scale has reported large positive correlations between identity centrality and in-group evaluation (e.g., Luhtanen & Crocker, 1990). Thus, in the present research, we use *identity strength* to refer to both.

For the identity form dimension, we look to Perry's (2002) identity form theory (cf. Knowles & Peng, 2005), which differs from Helms' (1984) theory by suggesting that a strong White identity does not always lead to positive inter-group outcomes. According to this theory, the amount and valence of Whites' exposure to diversity predisposes them to adopt distinct

identity forms. Whites with little exposure to diversity adopt a weak *White-as-norm* identity form. While they have difficulty discussing their own race and are ignorant of societal racism, they report holding positive inter-group attitudes. Whites who have been exposed to diversity develop stronger racial identities. Whites adopt a *post-cultural* form if they experience racial segregation (i.e., negative exposure to diversity). They recognize that Whites are more privileged in American society; however, they view this privilege as an expression of Whites' racial superiority. In contrast, Whites adopt a strong *power-cognizant* form (see Knowles and Peng, 2005) if they have experienced racial integration (i.e., positive exposure to diversity). They are cognizant of Whites' unearned privileges and seek to improve inter-group relations. Thus, there is more than one form (i.e., power-cognizant and post-cultural) associated with a strong White identity.<sup>1</sup>

### *The Pivotal Role of Form*

How can a multidimensional model of White identity based in Perry's (2002) identity form theory help to reconcile the disparate effects on intergroup outcomes found in the White identity literature? We speculate identity form has confounded the relationship between identity strength and inter-group attitudes. For Whites who have adopted a post-cultural identity, a strong White identity will predict negative inter-group attitudes. But for Whites who have adopted a power-cognizant identity, a strong White identity will predict positive inter-group attitudes. No study, however, has empirically tested whether power cognizant Whites express less prejudiced inter-group attitudes than those with other White identity forms. Likewise, no study has investigated the relationship of identity strength to identity form.

## White Identity and the Belief in White Privilege

What, exactly, differentiates highly identified Whites who adopt a power-cognizant identity form from those who adopt another identity form? Alternatively, what is so special about power-cognizant Whites? The most obvious explanation for their positive inter-group attitudes is that they are more keenly aware of the privileges Whiteness confers in American society. As conceptualized by McIntosh (1990), Whites' skin color hands them an "invisible knapsack" of privileges (e.g., never having one's success attributed to Affirmative Action policies) – invisible because so many Whites are unable to perceive it or prefer to out-rightly deny its existence (Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2008). Correlational research suggests that "belief in White privilege" predicts positive inter-group attitudes (Swim & Miller, 1999); as does qualitative research with both anti-racism activists (Eichstedt, 2001) and young evangelical Christians (Paris & Schoon, 2007). Other, experimental research has demonstrated that Whites must be cognizant of their own undeserved privileges, and not merely be aware of racial inequalities, before they can adopt positive inter-group attitudes (Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005). No study to date, however, has investigated the role of belief in White privilege in defining the relationship between White identity strength and inter-group attitudes.

### Overview and Hypotheses

We propose that researchers must take both identity strength and form into account in order to understand the relationship between White identity and inter-group attitudes. To our knowledge, no research has investigated this multidimensional model or studied Perry's (2002) White identity forms systematically in a controlled setting. Moreover, we are aware of no research that compares the proposed White identity forms using validated measures of inter-group attitudes, a gap in the literature we help resolve in Study 1. In this study, we first examine

the relationship between identity strength and identity form, hypothesizing that White participants categorized as post-cultural or power-cognizant will not differ in their strength of racial identification, while those classified as White-as-norm will have weaker racial identification. Next, we compare identity forms on their association with inter-group attitudes. Specifically, we hypothesize that White participants categorized as post-cultural will have more negative inter-group attitudes than will power-cognizant Whites, while those with a White-as-norm identity may not show a clear pattern.

Furthermore, taking this multidimensional approach should permit an investigation of the role of a particular expression of power cognizance—belief in White privilege—in moderating the relationship between White identity strength and inter-group attitudes. We examine this association in Study 2. We hypothesize that we will find analogous results to Study 1: strongly identified Whites will only display negative inter-group attitudes if they do not recognize White privilege. Moreover, the inter-group attitudes of strongly identified Whites who do believe in White privilege will not differ from those of weakly identified Whites.

In summary, across both studies, we hypothesize that a strong White identity is not always associated with negative inter-group attitudes, and this association depends on identity form. For Whites who adopt a power-cognizant identity (Study 1) or demonstrate a strong belief in White privilege (Study 2), a strong White identity will predict positive inter-group attitudes.

## CHAPTER 2

### STUDY 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to develop a method to test for individuals' identity form and then to test both the association between identity form and identity strength and the hypothesis that power-cognizance is the most predictive of positive inter-group attitudes. To this end, we asked White participants to write a brief essay about their racial identity and then categorized them into the forms suggested by Perry (2002) and Knowles and Peng (2005) on the basis of their responses. Research by McAdams, Josselson, and Lieblich (2006) has supported the validity of this qualitative approach to the study of self-identity. Moreover, numerous researchers have used a qualitative approach to study White racial identity (e.g., Campbell, 2006; Eichstedt, 2001; Perry, 2002). We therefore concluded an essay task would be the most appropriate and most informative way to elicit information about Whites' racial identity.

Participants also completed several measures of inter-group attitudes such as system-justifying beliefs, diversity endorsement, and feeling thermometers. We were thus able to systematically investigate the relationship between the White identity forms and established inter-group attitude measures.

#### Methods

##### *Participants*

Ninety-four self-identified White University of Georgia students (82% women, average age 19.0,  $SD = 1.51$ ) participated in exchange for the partial fulfillment of a course requirement. Data collected from two self-identified racial minority participants were excluded from all analyses.

### *Procedure*

Participants were run individually by a White male or female experimenter who told them the study was about racial identity. Using a lab computer, participants completed a questionnaire that included the following measures. The inter-group attitude measures were presented in randomized order. Also, we counterbalanced the order in which participants completed the racial identity essay and the other measures such that some participants completed the essay first and other last. No order effects were observed.

### *Identity Measures*

*Racial identity essay.* Participants wrote one or two paragraphs about their racial identity guided only by the short prompt, “Please describe what your race/ethnicity means to you.” Two White raters, one male and one female, categorized participants’ responses into the proposed identity forms (i.e., post-cultural, power-cognizance, and White-as-norm). Raters were instructed to categorize participants using the rubric shown in Table 1.<sup>1</sup> Raters agreed for 88.3% of the essays. We conservatively excluded the remaining 11 essays, for which the raters failed to agree. Agreement was substantial (Landis & Koch, 1977) for all three forms (post-cultural,  $kappa = 0.79$ ; power-cognizance,  $kappa = 0.77$ ; and White-as-norm,  $kappa = 0.89$ ).

Nineteen participants were categorized as power-cognizant. For example, the following participant was categorized as power-cognizant for identifying as White, recognizing race-based status differences, and suggesting that these differences are unjustifiable:

...By having such opportunities, like good job availability and less discrimination, I do not experience the troubles and trials many people of minority races must deal with daily. My race provides me with security in the job field... Being white also shelters me from the "real" world of racial discrimination. My skin color does usually protect me from racism... In all, my race provides me with positives and negatives that affect my identity, just as it would for another person of a different ethnicity.

Thirty participants were categorized as post-cultural. For example, the following participant was categorized as post-cultural for identifying as White, recognizing race-based status differences, but suggesting these differences are fair:

My race is very much a part of who I am...Not that I don't talk to people of other races, but the majority of my interactions with people are with people which are the same race as me. My race provides me with different values and goals that I feel I should be able to accomplish... graduating college and getting a good job. I believe I value success more than some people of other races.

Thirty-four participants were categorized as White-as-norm. For example, the following participant was categorized as White-as-norm for not identifying as White and adopting the identity of a 'typical' American:

My race/ethnicity does not play a large part in my identity. I am not even really sure what ethnicity I am or where my family is from. I feel if I associate with any ethnicity it would just be a regular or typical American family. I don't feel a strong sense of identity to race or ethnicity at all.

*Belief in White Privilege.* A single 7-point item, "I get certain advantages and opportunities because of my skin color" (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*) was used to check whether power-cognizant participants exhibited a stronger belief in White privilege than other participants.

*Collective Self-Esteem (CSE).* Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) 16-item, 7-point scale (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*) was used to assess the strength of racial identification (e.g., "My race is an important reflection of who I am"). Where necessary, participants' responses were reverse-coded and averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.85$ ) in which higher scores reflected higher racial identification.

*Inter-group Attitudes Measures*

We included three measures that broadly represent inter-group attitudes. These include measures of individuals' beliefs about the legitimacy of the unequal status of groups in society, endorsement of racial and ethnic diversity in university settings, and White in-group bias.

*System Justifying Beliefs (SJB).* We used two scales to assess the belief in a just social system. The first was the 8-item, 6-point Belief in a Just World (BJW) scale (e.g., “I feel the world treats people fairly”; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Seigler, 1996). The second was the 4-item, 7-point Perceived Social System Legitimacy (PSSL) scale (e.g., “America is an open society where individuals of any ethnicity can achieve higher status; O’Brien & Major, 2005), adapted from Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, and Federico (1998). Both scales used response options ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*. In the present study, these scales were strongly and positively correlated ( $r = 0.48, p < 0.01$ ). Thus, we combined them into a single measure of system justifying beliefs (O’Brien & Major, 2005). Participants’ responses were averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ) in which higher scores reflected a greater belief in a just social system.

*Diversity endorsement.* Two 7-point items (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*), were adapted from a multiculturalism scale (Berry & Kalin, 1995) and a diversity endorsement scale (REFERENCE MASKED), and measured endorsement of institutional action to promote diversity (e.g., “Universities should foster environments where differences are valued”; “A university education should expose students to the important differences in ideas and values that exist in the world”). Participants’ responses to these two items were averaged to form a composite ( $r = 0.61$ ) in which higher scores reflected more endorsement of diversity practices.

*Feeling thermometers.* A feeling thermometer was used to measure affect toward target groups on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 ('cold') to 10 ('warm'). Participants rated 12 groups, including Whites and Blacks. We were interested not only in feelings toward the White in-group and the Black out-group but also in the difference in ratings of feelings between these groups. We calculated this difference by subtracting the Black feeling thermometer from the White feeling thermometer. We have included affect toward the White in-group, the Black out-group, and their difference given the possibility that each may have a unique relationship with White racial identity (Brewer, 1999).

### *Demographics*

Additionally, participants reported their race, age, and gender.

### Results

A preliminary examination of the data revealed two participants with consistently extreme responses, one power-cognizant participant and one post-cultural participant. These participants were excluded from further analyses.

Relationships between measures are reported in Table 2. As can be expected, measures of positive inter-group attitudes (i.e., diversity endorsement and feeling thermometers for Blacks) were highly and positively correlated with one another. Measures of negative inter-group attitudes (i.e., system justifying beliefs and greater White minus Black feeling thermometer differences) were likewise highly and positively correlated. Moreover, positive inter-group attitudes were highly yet negatively correlated with negative inter-group attitudes.

We hypothesized that post-cultural and power-cognizant participants would have equally strong racial identification, compared to weaker racial identification for White-as-norm participants. While we had no additional hypotheses concerning White-as-norm participants, we

hypothesized that post-cultural participants would display more negative inter-group attitudes than would power-cognizant participants. To test these hypotheses, we submitted each dependent measure to a one-way analysis of variance of White identity form. Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 3.

### *Identity*

*Belief in White Privilege.* First, to check whether power-cognizant Whites reported higher belief in White privilege, we compared identity forms on this item. A significant omnibus effect of White identity form,  $F(2, 78) = 8.04, p < 0.01$ , was further analyzed with LSD post-hoc comparisons. As expected, the power-cognizant form ( $M = 5.94, SD = 0.94$ ) was associated with a stronger belief in White privilege than both the post-cultural form ( $M = 4.93, SD = 1.58$ ),  $t(45) = 2.39, p = 0.02, d = 0.84$ , and the White-as-norm form ( $M = 4.29, SD = 1.47$ ),  $t(50) = 4.00, p < 0.01, d = 0.64$ . Post-cultural participants and White-as-norm forms did not differ at the conventional level of significance,  $t(61) = 1.78, p = 0.08$ .

*CSE scores.* A significant omnibus effect of White identity form,  $F(2, 78) = 5.98, p < 0.01$ , further analyzed with LSD post-hoc comparisons, suggested that, as expected, both the post-cultural form ( $M = 5.23, SD = 0.68$ ),  $t(61) = -3.29, p < 0.01, d = 0.84$ , and the power-cognizant form ( $M = 5.11, SD = 0.79$ ),  $t(50) = -2.27, p = 0.03, d = 0.64$ , were associated with stronger White racial identification than the White-as-norm form ( $M = 4.64, SD = 0.71$ ). Consistent with our hypothesis, the post-cultural and power-cognizant forms did not differ,  $t(45) = -0.57, ns$ .

### *Inter-group Attitudes*

*SJB scores.* A significant omnibus effect,  $F(2, 78) = 3.37, p = 0.04$ , further analyzed with LSD post-hoc comparisons, revealed that the post-cultural form ( $M = 3.56, SD = 0.80$ ) was

associated with stronger system justifying beliefs than both the White-as-norm form ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ),  $t(61) = 2.39$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $d = 0.61$  and the power-cognizant form ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ),  $t(50) = 2.00$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.57$ . However, the White-as-norm and power-cognizant forms did not differ,  $t(45) = -0.01$ , *ns*.

*Diversity Endorsement.* A significant omnibus effect,  $F(2, 78) = 4.13$ ,  $p = 0.02$ , further analyzed with LSD post-hoc comparisons, suggested that the post-cultural form ( $M = 4.67$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ) was again associated with the most negative outcome. The post-cultural form had significantly weaker diversity endorsement than both the White-as-norm form ( $M = 5.46$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ),  $t(61) = -2.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.61$ , and the power-cognizant form ( $M = 5.67$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(50) = -2.53$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.72$ . The White-as-norm and power-cognizant forms did not differ,  $t(45) = -0.55$ , *ns*.

*Feeling Thermometers.* The omnibus tests for feelings toward the White in-group,  $F(2, 78) = 1.81$ ,  $p = 0.17$ , and for the Black out-group,  $F(2, 78) = 1.29$ ,  $p = 0.28$ , did not reach conventional levels of significance. A significant omnibus effect was present, however, for the White minus Black difference in these scores,  $F(2, 78) = 4.78$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.84$ . LSD post-hoc comparisons suggested that the power-cognizant form ( $M = 0.67$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ) was associated with a smaller feeling thermometer difference (i.e., less in-group bias) than both the post-cultural form ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ),  $t(61) = -3.09$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.79$ , and the White-as-norm form ( $M = 1.79$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ),  $t(50) = -1.98$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.56$ . The post-cultural and White-as-norm forms did not differ,  $t(45) = 1.39$ ,  $p = 0.17$ .

Finally, to test the consistency of main effects across intergroup-attitude measures (SJB, diversity endorsement, and White-Black thermometer difference), we conducted a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the three inter-group attitude measures

(standardized and reverse-coded where appropriate) as the within-subjects factor. This analysis revealed no interaction of Inter-group Attitude x Identity Form ( $F < 1$ ), indicating no major variation of the identity form patterns across individual inter-group attitude measures.

### Discussion

In Study 1, participants were reliably categorized as exhibiting a “post-cultural”, “power-cognizant”, or “White-as-norm” identity form. Consistent with predictions, the post-cultural participants and power-cognizant participants did not differ on strength of racial identification – both identified more strongly than did White-as-norm participants. However, post-cultural participants tended to have more negative inter-group attitudes than did power-cognizant participants: they displayed greater racial bias, stronger system justifying beliefs, and less diversity endorsement.

As in other research using the CSE, identity strength predicted somewhat negative inter-group attitudes. Had we not also measured identity form, we might have incorrectly concluded that a strong White identity predicts negative inter-group attitudes. Because we adopt a multidimensional model of White identity that includes both identity strength and form, we hesitate to make the potentially flawed conclusion that a strong White identity predicts negative inter-group attitudes. In Study 1, strongly identified yet power-cognizant Whites actually held positive inter-group attitudes.

Moreover, our single-item assessment of participants' acknowledgment of White privilege suggested that power-cognizant Whites report more recognition of the privilege conferred by their race than do Whites exhibiting other identity forms. In Study 2, we therefore shift our focus toward a singular expression of power-cognizance: the belief in White privilege.

## CHAPTER 3

### STUDY 2

In Study 1, we found some evidence that power-cognizant Whites, compared to post-cultural Whites, not only are more likely to believe in White privilege but also are likely to do so while exhibiting equally strong racial identification. Perhaps the belief in White privilege helps to define the relationship between White identity strength and inter-group attitudes. Past research has shown that the belief in White privilege is a useful predictor of positive inter-group attitudes (Eichstedt, 2001; Paris & Schoon, 2007; Swim & Miller, 1999). In Study 2, we test whether the belief in White privilege moderates the relationship between identity strength and inter-group attitudes. To test White privilege, we abandon our single item measure in favor of Woodzicka and Banaszynski's (2008) validated and reliable Belief in White Privilege Scale (BWP). In addition, participants completed the CSE scale and measures of inter-group attitudes. We hypothesize that racial identification will predict negative inter-group attitudes for those participants who are low in the belief in White privilege (i.e., non-power-cognizant Whites) but not for those who are high in the belief in White privilege (i.e., power-cognizant Whites).

#### Method

##### *Participants*

Ninety-five self-identified White University of Georgia students (62% women, average age 19.4,  $SD = 1.21$ ) participated in exchange for the partial fulfillment of a course requirement. Data collected from 18 self-identified racial minority participants were excluded from all analyses.

### *Procedure*

Participants were run individually by a White male or female experimenter who told them the study was about racial identity. Using a lab computer, participants completed a questionnaire that included the following measures in randomized order, to control for potential order effects.

### *Identity Measures*

*Collective Self-Esteem (CSE)*. Luhtanen and Crocker's (1992) scale was again used to assess the strength of racial identification. Where necessary, participants' responses were reverse-coded and averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ) in which higher scores reflected higher racial identification.

*Beliefs about White Privilege (BWP)*. Woodzicka's and Banaszynski's (2008) 16-item, 7-point scale (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*) measured belief in White privilege, that is, the extent to which one's Whiteness confers on them unearned societal advantages (e.g., "Personally, having white skin has helped me get where I am in life"). Where necessary, participants' responses were reverse-coded and averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ) in which higher scores reflected greater belief in White privilege.

### *Inter-racial Attitudes Measures*

We included four measures of inter-group attitudes. Whereas we used a system justifying beliefs scale to measure support for group inequality in Study 1, in this study we used Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). We also included a measure of humanitarianism/egalitarianism, a diversity endorsement scale similar to that used in Study 1, and the same feeling thermometers as in Study 1.

*Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)*. Pratto and colleagues' (1994) 14-item, 7-point scale (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*) assessed support for group-based inequality (e.g., “Some groups of people are just more worthy than others”). Where necessary, participants’ responses were reverse-coded and averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) in which higher scores reflected more support for group-based inequality.

*Humanitarianism/Egalitarianism (H/E)*. We used Katz and Hass’s (1988) 10-item, 6-point scale (ranging from 1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 6 = *Strongly Agree*) to measure endorsement of humanitarian and egalitarian principles (e.g., “There should be equality for everyone – because we are all human beings”). Participants’ responses were averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ) in which higher scores reflected more endorsement of humanitarian and egalitarian principles.

*Diversity Endorsement*. This scale, expanded to include 6 items adapted from Berry and Kalin (1995) and REFERENCE MASKED, measured endorsement of institutional action to promote diversity. Participants’ responses were averaged to form a composite ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ) in which higher scores reflected more endorsement of diversity practices.

*Feeling thermometers*. A feeling thermometer was used to measure affect toward target groups on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (‘cold’) to 10 (‘warm’). Participants rated 12 groups, including Whites and Blacks. As in Study 1, we were primarily interested in feelings toward Whites, feelings toward Blacks, and the difference between these feelings.

### *Demographics*

Additionally, participants reported their race, age, and gender.

## Results

Examination of relationships between measures (reported in Table 4) revealed that belief in White privilege (BWP) is uncorrelated with racial identity. As expected, it was positively correlated with measures of positive inter-group attitudes and negatively with measures of negative inter-group attitudes. Measures of positive inter-group attitudes (i.e., diversity endorsement, Humanitarianism/Egalitarianism (H/E), and feeling thermometers for Blacks) were highly and positively correlated with one another. Measures of negative inter-group attitudes (i.e., Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and greater White minus Black feeling thermometer differences) were likewise highly and positively correlated. Moreover, positive inter-group attitudes were highly yet negatively correlated with negative inter-group attitudes.

We hypothesized that stronger racial identification, as measured by the CSE, would predict more negative inter-group attitudes among participants with lower BWP but not for those with higher BWP. To test this hypothesis, we submitted each dependent measure to a BWP (standardized continuous variable) x CSE (standardized continuous variable) regression analysis.

### *Social Dominance Orientation*

Greater BWP predicted lower SDO scores,  $\beta = -0.21$ ,  $t(91) = -1.86$ ,  $p = 0.07$ ,  $d = 0.39$ . Also, stronger racial identification predicted higher SDO scores,  $\beta = 0.32$ ,  $t(91) = 2.49$ ,  $p = 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.52$ . These main effects were, however, qualified by the hypothesized BWP x CSE interaction,  $\beta = -0.26$ ,  $t(91) = -2.04$ ,  $p = 0.04$ ,  $d = 0.43$ . Consistent with our hypothesis, simple slope analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that participants who had lower BWP had higher SDO scores the more they identified with their race,  $\beta = 0.56$ ,  $t(91) = 3.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.69$ . In contrast, participants who had higher BWP did not demonstrate a significant relationship

between CSE and SDO scores,  $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $t(91) = 0.41$ , *ns*. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between racial identification and SDO at different levels of BWP.

#### *Humantiarianism/Egalitarianism*

Greater BWP predicted higher H/E scores,  $\beta = 0.21$ ,  $t(91) = 2.23$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ,  $d = 0.47$ , while stronger racial identification predicted somewhat lower H/E scores,  $\beta = -0.18$ ,  $t(91) = -1.66$ ,  $p = 0.10$ ,  $d = 0.35$ . Again, these main effects were qualified by the hypothesized BWP x CSE,  $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $t(91) = 2.46$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $d = 0.52$ . Simple slope analysis revealed an identical pattern to the previous analysis. Participants who had lower BWP also had lower H/E scores the more they identified with their race,  $\beta = -0.42$ ,  $t(91) = -2.96$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.62$ . In contrast, participants who had higher BWP did not demonstrate a significant relationship between CSE and H/E scores,  $\beta = 0.07$ ,  $t(91) = 0.47$ , *ns*. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between racial identification and H/E at different levels of BWP.

#### *Diversity Endorsement*

Greater BWP predicted greater diversity endorsement,  $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $t(91) = 2.89$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.61$ , but racial identification did not,  $\beta = 0.06$ ,  $t(91) = 0.47$ , *ns*. The BWP main effect was qualified by the hypothesized BWP x CSE interaction,  $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $t(91) = 2.23$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ,  $d = 0.48$ . Again in concert with our hypothesis, simple slope analysis revealed that participants who had greater BWP had greater diversity endorsement the more they identified with their race,  $\beta = 0.31$ ,  $t(91) = 1.83$ ,  $p = .07$ ,  $d = 0.39$ . In contrast, participants who had lower BWP demonstrated a negative but non-significant relationship between racial identification and diversity endorsement,  $\beta = -0.20$ ,  $t(91) = -1.21$ ,  $p = 0.23$ . Figure 1 depicts the relationship between racial identification and diversity endorsement at different levels of BWP.

### *Feeling Thermometers*

*White in-group.* Stronger racial identification predicted warmer feelings toward Whites,  $\beta = 0.86$ ,  $t(91) = 4.36$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.91$ . Neither BWP,  $\beta = -0.03$ ,  $t(91) = -0.18$ , *ns* nor the interaction term,  $\beta = 0.20$ ,  $t(91) = 0.98$ , *ns* approached conventional levels of significance. Thus, highly identified White Americans displayed warmer feelings toward their in-group regardless of their belief in White privilege.

*Blacks.* Greater BWP predicted warmer feelings toward Blacks,  $\beta = 0.37$ ,  $t(91) = 1.73$ ,  $p = 0.09$ ,  $d = 0.36$ . Racial identification did not predict feelings toward Blacks,  $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $t(91) = 0.48$ , *ns*. Again we obtained the hypothesized BWP x CSE interaction,  $\beta = 0.71$ ,  $t(91) = 2.88$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.60$ . Simple slope analysis revealed that participants who had greater BWP had warmer feelings toward Blacks the more they identified with their race,  $\beta = 0.77$ ,  $t(91) = 2.27$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = 0.48$ . Also, participants who had lower BWP had somewhat cooler feelings toward Blacks the more they identified with their race,  $\beta = -0.54$ ,  $t(91) = -1.67$ ,  $p = 0.10$ ,  $d = 0.35$ .<sup>2</sup>

*White – Black difference.* Greater BWP predicted smaller feeling thermometer differences (i.e., less in-group bias),  $\beta = -0.40$ ,  $t(91) = -2.00$ ,  $p = 0.05$ ,  $d = 0.42$ . Increased racial identification predicted larger feeling thermometer differences (i.e., more in-group bias),  $\beta = 0.747$ ,  $t(91) = 3.29$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $d = 0.69$ . These main effects were qualified by the hypothesized BWP x CSE interaction,  $\beta = -0.51$ ,  $t(91) = -2.22$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ,  $d = 0.46$ . Simple slope analysis revealed the familiar and expected pattern. Participants who had lower BWP had larger feeling thermometer differences the more they identified with their race,  $\beta = 1.22$ ,  $t(91) = 4.01$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = 0.84$ . In contrast, participants who had higher BWP did not demonstrate a significant relationship between racial identification and feeling thermometer differences,  $\beta = 0.27$ ,  $t(91) =$

0.86, *ns*. Figure 1 depicts the relationship between racial identification and White-Black feeling thermometer difference at different levels of BWP.

Finally, to test the consistency of main and interaction effects across dependent measures (SDO, H/E, diversity endorsement, and White-Black thermometer difference), we conducted a repeated-measures ANOVA with the four inter-group attitude measures (standardized and reverse-coded where appropriate) as the within-subjects factor. This analysis revealed no interaction of Inter-group Attitude x CSE x BWP and no interaction of Inter-group Attitude with CSE or with BWP ( $F$ 's < .3), indicating no variation of the patterns of interest across individual inter-group attitude measures.

### Discussion

In Study 2, we found support for the hypothesis that the belief in White privilege moderates the relationship between the strength of racial identification and inter-group attitudes. Among participants with lower belief in White privilege, stronger racial identity was associated with greater racial bias, stronger system-justifying beliefs, weaker egalitarian attitudes, and marginally less diversity endorsement. As predicted, this pattern mirrors the pattern found in Study 1 for post-cultural Whites. Among participants with higher belief in White privilege, stronger racial identity was typically not associated with inter-group attitudes. In other words, strongly identified Whites who also believe in White privilege and weakly identified Whites have equally positive inter-group attitudes. As predicted, this pattern is identical to that found in Study 1 for power-cognizant and White-as-norm Whites. Thus, Study 2 both conceptually replicated Study 1 while potentially introducing a relatively simple methodological foundation for studying Perry's (2002) and Knowles and Peng's (2005) identity forms.

## CHAPTER 4

### GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the present studies, we found support for the White identity forms hypothesis advanced by Perry (2002) and expanded by Knowles and Peng (2005). In Study 1, we categorized participants as exhibiting a White-as-norm, post-cultural, or power-cognizant White identity form. Consistent with hypotheses, we then demonstrated that 1) post-cultural and power-cognizant Whites exhibited equally strong racial identification and 2) power-cognizant exhibited more positive inter-group attitudes than post-cultural Whites. In Study 2, we investigated whether the belief in White privilege was a key difference between identity forms. To this end, we used identity strength and the belief in White privilege as predictors of inter-group attitudes. Consistent with our hypothesis and Study 1, we found that a strong racial identification only predicted negative inter-group attitudes for Whites who did not believe in White privilege. Conversely, for Whites who did believe in White privilege, racial identification did not predict inter-group attitudes.

#### *Implications for Theory on White Identity*

We have argued that the multidimensional model introduced by Knowles and Peng (2005) and grounded in Perry (2002) can best account for the disparate findings in the extant literature as well as our findings in the present research. A multidimensional model of racial identity is not without precedent. Indeed, Knowles and Peng (2005) cited Sellers and colleagues' (1997) multidimensional model of Black identity as their inspiration for a corresponding model of White identity.

Our findings are somewhat inconsistent with Social Identity Theory. According to this theory, stronger racial identification among Whites should predict negative inter-group attitudes

(Tajfel & Turner, 1979). While we did find this relationship for Whites who did not believe in White privilege, we did not find it for those who do believe in White privilege. That is, in the present research we found that stronger racial identification does not always predict negative inter-group attitudes. Moreover, Social Identity Theory does not allow us to make predictions regarding the forms that racial identity might take. In Study 1, consistent with the multidimensional model and with Perry (2002), we demonstrated that White identity commonly takes on at least three forms: a White-as-norm, post-cultural, or power-cognizant form.

#### *Implications for Teaching the Belief in White Privilege*

Educators have been teaching the White privilege lesson since McIntosh (1990) opened her invisible knapsack of privilege. While many Whites are resistant to this lesson, researchers have noted positive outcomes (Bell, Love, & Roberts, 2007). Whether these outcomes are due to the lesson or to the racially diverse classrooms in which the lesson is learned is unclear. While recent research has suggested that the White privilege lesson itself may drive the effect (Adams, Edkins, Lacka, Pickett, & Cheryan, in press), additional empirical research must investigate why it improves inter-group attitudes. Such research will help us to better understand White identity development, and in turn, to construct better programs to promote the formation of positive White identities.

#### *Power-Cognizance under Threat*

In the present studies, we found that power-cognizant Whites exhibit strong White identities, measured with the CSE, an identity strength measure. While we have argued that power-cognizant Whites tend not to demonstrate negative inter-group attitudes, we did not measure these attitudes under conditions of threat. Recall that studies using identity strength measures often found that if a strong White identity predicted negative inter-group attitudes, it

tended to do so under conditions in which the White in-group or its resources were threatened (e.g., Lowery et. al, 2006). Therefore, there is the possibility that power-cognizant Whites will respond to threat with more negative inter-group attitudes, despite demonstrating positive attitudes in the present studies. Alternatively, the empirical link between a strong White identity and negative inter-group attitudes under conditions of threat in past research may have been driven only by strongly identified Whites who do not believe in White privilege. In the present studies, these Whites were far more likely to demonstrate negative inter-group attitudes even without the presence of threat. Future research should address these competing possibilities.

#### *The Consequences of a Weak White Racial Identity*

We have focused on the ambiguous consequences of a strong White racial identity. The consequences of a weak White racial identity (e.g., White-as-norm), however, are also ambiguous. According to Social Identity Theory, a weak White identity should be associated with positive inter-group attitudes. Other identity theorists, including Helms (1984) and Perry, suggest that a weak White identity may only be associated with positive inter-group attitudes because of egalitarian social norms. They, along with McIntosh (1990), argue that despite leading to positive explicit attitudes, a weak White identity may actually predict negative *behaviors* in interracial situations. Also, based on Helms' theory, Whites with weak racial identities are especially likely to become prejudiced when initially exposed to diversity. Moreover, other research has shown that trying to ignore race altogether can lead to negative interracial outcomes (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, in press; Park & Judd, 2005; Richeson & Nussbaum, 2004). Given these possibilities, future studies should investigate the consequences of a weak White identity. Therefore, while we found an association between positive inter-group attitudes and a weak White identity (i.e., the

White-as-norm form in Study 1 and low scores on the CSE in Study 2), we share other researchers' speculation that a weak White identity may actually have negative consequences.

### *Conclusion*

Do White anti-racist activists, White neo-Nazis, and White students at “super majority” White high schools think about their own Whiteness in the same way? The present studies suggest that these groups may differ not only in the strength of their racial identity, but more importantly, in the form of their racial identity. Furthermore, by using a multidimensional model that includes identity strength and form, we have demonstrated that a strong White identity is not always associated with negative inter-group attitudes. Strongly identified Whites who believe in White privilege seem likely to adopt an identity form that is associated with positive inter-group attitudes. Researchers may not detect these important relationships when investigating the implications of White identity for inter-group outcomes unless they measure both identity strength and identity form.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Perry (2002) described one additional identity form: "symbolic-ethnic." Because of the apparent rarity of this identity form or its potential overlap with other forms, we do not include it here. Interestingly, Perry (2002) reported its existence but does not mention it in other work (e.g., Perry, 2001), despite using the same sample of high school students. Also, unlike the White-as-norm, post-cultural, and power-cognizant forms, the symbolic-ethnic form is the only one to not have an analogous pairing in Helms' (1984) theory.

<sup>2</sup> Feeling thermometers for Asian Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Muslims were also analyzed. All analyzes reveal a similar although weaker pattern to that observed in feeling thermometers for Blacks. This pattern was not observed in feeling thermometers for teenagers, doctors, the Deaf, and people with disabilities.

Table 1

*Rubric for Coding the Racial Identity Essay (Study 1)*

Identity	Identified as White	Race-based Status Differences	
		Are Fair	Are Unfair
Power- Cognizance	Yes	No	Yes
Post-Cultural	Yes	Yes	No
White-as-Norm	No	-	-

*Note.* To be categorized as White-as-norm, participants had to explicitly state that they were “typical”, “normal”, or had no race.

Table 2

*Inter-correlations for all measures (Study 1)*

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. CSE	--					
2. SJB	.49**	--				
3. Diversity Endorsement	0.08	-.34**	--			
4. FT Blacks	-.24*	-.38**	.20 <sup>†</sup>	--		
5. FT Whites	.28**	.18 <sup>†</sup>	.01	.32**	--	
6. FT Difference	.43**	.49**	-.18 <sup>†</sup>	-.72**	.43**	--

*Note.* CSE = Collective Self-Esteem, SJB = System Justifying Beliefs, FT = Feeling thermometer, <sup>†</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 3

*Descriptive statistics for all measures (Study 1)*

Measures	Power-Cognizant		Post-Cultural		White-as-Norm	
	<i>N</i> = 18		<i>N</i> = 29		<i>N</i> = 34	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. CSE	5.11 <sub>1</sub>	0.79	5.23 <sub>1</sub>	0.68	4.64 <sub>2</sub>	0.71
2. SJB	3.11 <sub>1</sub>	0.80	3.56 <sub>2</sub>	0.80	3.10 <sub>1</sub>	0.69
3. Diversity Endorsement	5.67 <sub>1</sub>	1.00	4.67 <sub>2</sub>	1.42	5.46 <sub>1</sub>	1.36
4. FT Blacks	8.28	1.74	7.35	2.04	7.56	2.03
5. FT Whites	8.94	1.80	9.83	1.42	9.35	1.59
6. FT Difference	0.67 <sub>1</sub>	2.25	2.48 <sub>2</sub>	2.08	1.79 <sub>2</sub>	1.67

*Note.* CSE = Collective Self-Esteem, SJB = System Justifying Beliefs, FT = Feeling thermometer; significant differences at the  $p < .05$  level are denoted by divergent subscripts.

Table 4

*Inter-correlations for all measures (Study 2)*

Measures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. BWP	--							
2. CSE	.04	--						
3. SDO	-.21*	.24*	--					
4. H/E	.25*	-.16	-.68**	--				
5. Diversity Endorsement	.32**	.05	-.58**	.58**	--			
6. FT Blacks	.22*	.04	-.37**	.44**	.59**	--		
7. FT Whites	.01	.41**	.08	-.04	.11	.45**	--	
8. FT Difference	-.22*	.31**	.45**	-.48**	-.51**	-.64**	.40**	--

*Note.* BWP = Belief in White Privilege, CSE = Collective Self-Esteem, H/E = Humanitarianism/Egalitarianism,

SDO = Social Dominance Orientation, FT = Feeling thermometer, \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

### Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* The moderating effect of belief in White privilege on the relationship between strength of racial identity and dependent measures in Study 2 (Social Dominance Orientation, Humanitarianism/Egalitarianism, Diversity Endorsement, and White – Black Feeling Thermometer Difference).

Figure 1.

