

**Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination at the intersection of race and gender: an  
intersectional theory primer**

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## REVIEW OF INTERSECTIONALITY THEORIES

### **Abstract**

The incorporation of intersectionality within social psychology is becoming an increasingly common practice. From the hypotheses we generate to the methods we employ, as well as the analyses we run and the theories we use, researchers are moving away from studying social identities in isolation. By studying the interactional and emergent properties of multiple identities that go beyond the sum of identities, as well as understanding the complex nature of power and privilege, social psychologists can better understand processes such as stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. Yet it can be difficult for researchers to know exactly where to begin. This review serves as a primer for conducting intersectionally-informed research within social psychology, using the intersection of race and gender within the United States as a case study. We first describe the history of intersectional research in psychology, noting its barriers to implementation. Next, we review three classes of intersectionally-informed models — intersectional perception, experience, and treatment — and offer suggestions for future research as well as ways researchers can incorporate the model within their work.

*Keywords:* intersectionality, theory, race, gender, prejudice, discrimination

### **Stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination at the intersection of race and gender: an intersectional theory primer**

*“[Intersectionality] grew out of trying to conceptualize the way the law responded to issues where both race and gender discrimination were involved. What happened was like an accident, a collision. Intersectionality simply came from the idea that if you’re standing in the path of multiple forms of exclusion, you are likely to get hit by both. These women are injured, but when the race ambulance and the gender ambulance arrive at the scene, they see these women of color lying in the intersection and they say, “Well, we can’t figure out if this is just race or just sex discrimination. And unless they show us which one it was, we can’t help them.”*

~ Kimberlé Crenshaw, March 2004 interview with *Perspectives*

Social psychology has long studied the impact of identities like race and gender on cognitions, attitudes, and behaviors. Until recently, the bulk of this research examined identities in isolation, but there is now an increased focus on examining multiple identities simultaneously. Such research incorporates the interconnected nature of social identities into hypotheses, methods, and theories. However, it can be difficult to know exactly how to incorporate intersectionality into research, or even know which theory to incorporate given a particular research setting. Furthermore, intersectionality has recently been the target of mischaracterization, evidenced by movements to ban the teaching of intersectionality in multiple U.S. states (Zalaznick, 2021). Thus, a review of what intersectionality is and isn’t within social psychology is timely.

In this review, we provide a primer for conducting intersectional research, exploring the concept of intersectionality within social psychology from theoretical and empirical perspectives. Novel to this review, we interrogate the major empirical intersectional models within social and cognitive psychology (Hall et al., 2019; Lei et al., 2023; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sidanius et al., 2018), outlining each model’s assumptions, central predictions, and potential

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future inquiries. We note that this review is primarily centered within social psychology in the United States. However, the tenets of the review can be easily applied to other settings.

### **What is intersectionality?**

Intersectionality grew out of critical Black feminist writings in the 1960s that examined the often overlooked experiences of Black queer women within the United States (see Beale, 1990; Combahee River Collective, 2014). In 1989, University of California Los Angeles Law professor Kimberlé Crenshaw revitalized the study of intersectionality with her iconic law review “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” Crenshaw centered Black women in her conceptualization of intersectionality, writing that the “single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification, and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140). Crenshaw’s main premise was that current discourses around discrimination often erased the experiences of multiply marginalized populations, a problem she wished to correct through targeted anti-discrimination policies.

The notion that contemporary understandings of prejudice and discrimination in the law were fundamentally ignoring the experiences of multiply marginalized people led scholars in many disciplines to examine their field through an intersectional lens. Since 1989, there have been a plethora of scholars writing and expanding the concept of intersectionality, with a fair degree of overlap in defining what intersectionality encompasses. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins discusses the common thread within intersectional definitions, which is the point that social identities “operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but rather as reciprocally constructing phenomena” (Collins, 2015, p. 1) that are embedded within societal power

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structures (Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016a). Importantly, while the ideas of interconnection and power underlie most definitions of intersectionality, the context in which the concept of intersectionality is evoked can alter the connotation of the definition, and thus how it is used.

One use of intersectionality allows for greater nuance in social justice movements, making intersectionality a practice that accounts for historical inequalities. This account is primarily focused on how intersectionality can be used to advance social justice for multiply marginalized groups, such as Black women (Moradi & Grzanka, 2017; Overstreet et al., 2020; Rosenthal, 2016). For example, the emergence of womanism in the U.S. and the centering of Black women grew out of a presumed exclusionary White feminist lens, with grassroots organizations taking seriously the importance of linking intersectional theories to practice (Collins, 1996) when advocating on behalf of women of color. Within social psychology, scholars have begun to use intersectionality to advance social equity within the field, understanding that many of the problems within academia are intertwined and rooted in historical differences in privilege and accessibility (Ledgerwood et al., 2022).

A second use of intersectionality encompasses intersectionality as an analytical tool that informs theory, hypotheses, and methods. Social psychologists may believe this usage is more applicable to their research, as intersectionality can not only describe ways of engaging in research but can also generate empirical theories that guide hypothesis generation, analysis, and interpretations. This distinction matters because until recently, psychologists have primarily engaged with intersectionality as theories that only describe idiosyncrasies about the lives of people at the intersection of multiple identities, theories that are inherently unfalsifiable and nongeneralizable. However, intersectionality also encompasses systems of beliefs and practices that guide how we obtain psychological knowledge, systems that can account for the impact of

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multiple identities on perception, treatment, and experience. Perhaps due to this myopic view, psychologists have been resistant to incorporating intersectionality or treated intersectionality as merely the statistical artifact of the interaction between identities (the statistical interaction between race and gender in a model, for example). When researchers focus on intersectionality only statistically, they lose the original values that guided the development of intersectionality in the first place, namely the emergent properties of intersectional identities as well as the relevance of historical and current power.

Elizabeth Cole addresses the statistical artifact critique in her 2009 American Psychologist article, inviting psychologists to ask themselves three questions to interrogate the role of power in their research (Cole, 2009). They are “Who is included within this category?”, “What role does inequality play?” and “Where are there similarities?” As an example of “Who is included”, in 2000 less than 20% of studies on PsycINFO examining race/racism included gender/women (Reid, 2002), and by 2006, the portion of publications on gender that included race/racism remained below 10% (Silverstein, 2006). On the researcher’s side, 92% of publications that discussed race within top social psychological journals between 1974 and 2016 were edited by White editors-in-chiefs (Roberts et al., 2020). Interrogating the demographic makeup of samples, researchers, and reviewers is a critical first step in addressing disparities in who is represented within the social psychological literature.

Inquiring about the role that inequality plays highlights the sociohistorical impact of discrimination and disadvantage on shaping identity experiences and perceptions. Race and gender are more than characteristics of individuals; they reflect a long history of structural inequities that are relevant distal contexts to the proximal contexts being studied in the moment. Finally, looking for similarities encourages researchers to find commonalities across category

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*experiences* within asymmetrical power structures rather than assuming commonality within identities alone. For example, researchers have found that a sense of shared fate or experiences of discrimination can bind cross-coalitional groups together (e.g., minoritized racial and sexual orientation groups), showcasing how institutions mutually construct and oppress across identity markers (Cortland et al., 2017). Without this nuanced understanding, intersectionality theory is likely to be used to bolster current and historical inequity (e.g., patriarchal white supremacy) rather than allowing for growth and change within our understanding of social psychology.

### **History of intersectionality within social psychology**

Social psychology as a field has continually excluded intersectional scholarship (Settles et al., 2020), as evidenced by both its formal marginalization within publication networks as well as the informal misrepresentation of intersectionality in broader discourse (Settles et al., 2020). Nevertheless, as intersectionality has gained traction in psychology, there have been an increasing number of calls to action to change this exclusion (Bowleg, 2017; Else-Quest & Hyde, 2016b; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2019; L. R. Warner et al., 2016), including special issues devoted to intersectionality (see Buchanan et al., 2020; Grzanka et al., 2020; Overstreet et al., 2020; Parent et al., 2013; Remedios & Sanchez, 2018; Shields, 2008; V. G. Thomas, 2004). These calls to action, with many published in the last five years, underscore how resistant psychology has been to adopt intersectionality as mainstream. It also demonstrates the need for work in this area. Until recently, intersectionality has been seen as a “special topic” within social psychology, existing on the fringes. Indeed, APA only updated its multicultural guidelines with intersectionality at the forefront in 2019 (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019). Why has psychology been resistant to incorporating intersectional ways of thinking into its scholarship?

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Several scholars have written on psychology's resistance to intersectionality (see Goff & Kahn, 2013; McCormick-Huhn et al., 2019; Rosenthal, 2016; Settles et al., 2020; L. R. Warner et al., 2016). We briefly mention the main reasons here. First, intersectionality relies, in part, on the understanding that identities such as race and gender are interconnected and overlapping to influence discrimination and advantage. In contrast, psychology — especially quantitative-heavy fields like social psychology — was founded upon isolating phenomena to their component parts (a positivist approach; Haardörfer, 2019), which is the very antithesis of intersectionality. Indeed, the idea of a “universal truth” is one of the pillars of psychological research (Gergen, 1990), with the nature of a quintessential quantitative experiment being one in which only a single variable is manipulated at a time. Other potential variables are instead treated as noise (S. L. Williams & Fredrick, 2015), making it difficult to embrace intersectional practices. Statistical techniques generally assume that identities can be disaggregated — for example, that once race is ‘accounted for’ in a model, it cannot make its presence known through other identities such as gender or socioeconomic status (Gillborn et al., 2018). Such a belief has led scholars to ignore intersectional methods and conclusions. This is further entrenched by the consideration of quantitative research as the “gold standard” of scholarship. In contrast, qualitative research, especially work done by marginalized scholars, has been dismissed as “me-search”, or as more subjective, less scientific (Scott & Siltanen, 2016; Torrez et al., 2023), and less rigorous (Rabinowitz & Weseen, 1997). Given that the bulk of early intersectional work was qualitative, the stigma of qualitative work as nonscientific encompassed intersectionality as well. This review helps address this misconception by clearly outlining intersectional empirical models that include testable hypotheses.

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Finally, psychology has systematic biases regarding “who is included” in stimuli, research questions, and samples, issues that include the Western, educated, industrial, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) nature of the bulk of psychological work (Henrich et al., 2010). Prototypicality biases such as androcentrism (i.e., the default person is assumed to be male; Bailey et al., 2019), Whitecentrism (i.e., the default person is assumed to be White, especially in Western settings; Devos & Banaji, 2005), and heterocentrism (i.e., the default person is assumed to be heterosexual; Lick & Johnson, 2016) pervade social psychological research, contributing to the erasure of groups not seen as prototypical from research findings. Group erasures also exist beyond the WEIRD designation, as discussing research biases within the binary of WEIRD and non-WEIRD is still not only limited but reductive (e.g., Ghai, 2021).

Part of the privilege of being majoritized is to not be named as such (Pratto & Stewart, 2012), allowing prototypical targets to simply be human while nonprototypical targets are labeled (e.g. only women are seen to have a gender; Bailey et al., 2020). As another example, research on White or straight people is often discussed without qualifiers (e.g., “women” rather than “White women”) due to its assumed default nature, while research on Black or queer Americans is routinely discussed with both identities highlighted (Rad et al., 2018). Finally, the presumed prototypicality of Whiteness pervades most stimuli sets, from the names and skin tones used to even the cultural connotations embedded within vignettes (e.g., “Even the rats were white”; Cook & Over, 2021; Guthrie, 1976; Torrez et al., 2023). The overrepresentation of White scholarship makes it less likely for research that includes other racial groups to be conducted, simply because the stimuli materials aren’t as readily available. These factors combine into a broad lack of research that centers minoritized populations, due to not only availability of pertinent materials and samples but also due to a devaluing of this type of research overall.

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It is important to note that intersectionality is at risk of being used to perpetuate the very systems it was designed to overturn. As self-identifying as an intersectional scholar becomes increasingly mainstream, it also becomes more profitable for scholars in a “publish or perish” environment. Thus there is a possibility that engaging in intersectional research “becomes a self-congratulatory sticker to slap on a laptop or a line to add in an Instagram biography, rather than a lifelong commitment to an identity that requires constant self-reflexivity and advocacy” (Flood, 2019, p. 423). Within research, such a “defanging” of intersectionality can manifest by using the term “intersectional” without citing the foundational scholars within the field, or by not reckoning with the supremacist assumptions inherent to the work (Bauer et al., 2021). All the while, calls to integrate intersectionality into the center of social psychology’s production of knowledge (Settles et al., 2020) have yet to be answered, or are being addressed extremely slowly. The field of social psychology must reckon with its contribution to the exclusion of people of color from mainstream academic circles (Ledgerwood et al., 2022; Torrez et al., 2023). We must all take accountability for incorporating intersectionality into the future of social psychology.

### **Overview of Intersectional Theories**

As stated previously, intersectionality is a practice that makes our science more representative of the human experience as well as offers testable hypotheses regarding the perception, treatment, and experiences of intersectional identities. In this section, we review the empirical models related to intersectionality with a specific focus on race and gender, discussing model assumptions and future research. We discuss three classes of models, including perception models that outline how intersectional targets are perceived and when/whether they activate stereotypes, treatment models that outline how and why intersectional targets are treated

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similarly or different from one another, and finally experience models that outline how intersectional targets experience the combination of their identities in their lives. Each model offers one possibility for when and why intersectional categories are attended to, with concrete and testable hypotheses following those assumptions. As there is evidence in support of each model, the critical question of interest is thus not which theory is better but under what circumstances and in what domains are the theories best predictive. There are a few studies aimed at investigating boundary conditions between two or more theories (see Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Taylor et al., 2012; Veenstra, 2012 for examples) but more studies are needed.

### *Intersectional Perception Models*

**Lens-based account of intersectional perception.** The lens-based model (Petsko et al., 2022; Petsko & Bodenhausen, 2020) challenges the notion that intersectional targets are always perceived as a member of their compound identity (e.g., both race AND gender being salient when perceiving a Black woman). The model brings together disparate findings —such as Black women escaping backlash for acting in agentic ways (Livingston et al., 2012) but then being doubly punished for failure in a leadership context (Rosette & Livingston, 2012). The authors argue that these findings, and others, can be reconciled if we assume that individuals have multiple representational schemas (or lenses) that get selectively activated depending on the context when viewing a target. For example, a Latina is not always perceived through the lens of her compound identity “Latina”; there are certain contexts where she will be viewed through a singular lens as a “Latino person” or a “woman”. Importantly, when any given lens is activated, the assumptions associated with other potential lenses exert less influence on perception as individuals primarily attend to one lens at a time.

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There are four main factors that influence when one lens is used over another. The first factor is lens accessibility, or the ease of schema retrieval. Some schemas, like gender, might be universally easier to retrieve than others because of how ubiquitously such categorization is reinforced within society (Kurzban et al., 2001; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Schemas such as “U.S. American”, might be as cognitively rich as gender but less accessible within the United States. The “U.S. American” identity might only become easily accessible when the target of perception is outside the United States. The second factor is lens fit, or the connection between the lens and the context. For example, the lens of “gender” might be more relevant when discussing childrearing compared to race given the strong gendered nature of childrearing, and thus more likely to be used by perceivers in that context.

The third factor is perceiver goals, which highlight the role of motivated reasoning in prioritizing some lenses over others. This prioritization, or rather the lack thereof, can in part explain Crenshaw’s argument regarding discrimination towards Black women (e.g., primarily focusing on race *or* gender as singular lenses rather than the compound lens of race *and* gender; Crenshaw, 1989). An example includes seeing young Black boys not through a lens of youth but solely by their race, which ages them. Perceiving younger Black children as older is one of the reasons why they face increased carceral punishment for the same wrongdoings as younger White children (Goff et al., 2014). The final factor is distinctiveness, or whether a particular lens is rare given the context. For example, it was Barack Obama’s race and not his gender that made him distinctive in his role as the 44th president of the United States, making it likely that Mr. Obama was viewed primarily through a racial lens. In contrast, Kamala Harris is distinctive along both race and gendered lines in her role as the 49<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States, making it likely that her race *and* gender influence perceptions (Felmlee et al., 2023; Nee, 2023).

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The lens-based account of intersectional perception encourages researchers to think critically about what aspects of identity are relevant in their research context rather than defaulting to a compound lens simply because multiple identities are present. The four factors that influence lens use can be used to generate hypotheses: for example, Kamala Harris' race and gender are distinctive for her role, leading to the question as to whether perceptions of her were gendered, racialized, and/or an emergent blend of race and gender (Nee, 2023). Furthermore, there is limited research systematically investigating how the four factors influence lens activation, creating fertile ground for new research. Such future work can investigate how lens activation of the same target can fluctuate within the same interaction (e.g., a Black woman being perceived initially through a racial lens and then seen through a gendered lens after mentioning her children) as well as change over time (e.g., Black women being perceived initially as a valuable teammate but then as a threatening colleague when she exhibits competence; "pet to threat", Comas-Díaz & Greene, 2013). Finally, the lens-based account has direct implications for how discrimination can be mitigated. For example, altering which identity lens is activated in the moment, such as nudging people to see a target through a high-status, or shared-identity lens, could be one strategy for ameliorating discrimination.

**MOSAIC paradigm.** Like the lens-based account of intersectional perception, the MOSAIC (Model Of Stereotyping through Associated and Intersectional Categories) paradigm aims to reconcile disparate patterns of perception and discrimination of intersectional targets. The MOSAIC paradigm focuses on how stereotypes of categories combine at the intersection to influence perceptions of prototypicality as well as expectations of what the target should (prescriptions) and shouldn't (proscriptions) do relative to a target with a shared identity. The MOSAIC paradigm explicitly maps how additional categories like gender can influence the

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perception of a category like race even when only race is activated. For example, subliminally priming Asian identity can lead people to categorize women stereotypes faster than men stereotypes, suggesting that stereotypes of Asians and women share some common representational space (Galinsky et al., 2013). Indeed, this is the premise of the gendered race hypothesis or the assertion that racial groups invoke gendered characteristics. White is deemed neutral while Black is more masculine and Asian is more feminine respectively (Carpinella et al., 2015; Galinsky et al., 2013; Hall et al., 2015). These overlapping representations lead to a bias where Asian people, regardless of their gender, are deemed more suitable for feminine jobs due to the gendered nature of their racial group.

According to the model, there is a primary identity (the *foundational* demographic characteristic) that is shared across two hypothetical individuals. So, for example, comparing Black women to White women, the foundational category would be “women”. In addition, there are two other, peripheral, categories that are needed to anticipate differences in stereotypes across these two groups. The first is the *intersectional* demographic category or the category that is different across the two hypothetical people. In this example, the intersectional demographic category would be race, specifically Black and White. The second is the *associated* demographic category, which is an additional identity that is implicitly linked to either the foundational or the intersectional category. Continuing our example, “masculinity” is associated with the category “Black”, while there is no associated gender category for White.

When a perceiver encounters a target, they integrate across these three identity aspects. If the associated/intersectional categories conflict with the foundational one, the overall stereotype content of the foundational category will be diluted. If the associated/intersectional categories complement the foundational one, the overall stereotype content of the foundational category

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will be amplified. In our example, the associated category of masculinity conflicts with the foundational category of women, making the stereotypes of “women” be diluted when applied to Black women specifically. If we compare Black men to White men, the stereotype content for Black men would be amplified, as race being associated with masculinity amplifies the masculine gender.

The dilution of the stereotypes matters, as, according to the model, Black women will not be perceived as prototypical of their group, receive greater rewards for engaging in prescriptive behavior, and face a higher threshold for being punished regarding proscriptive behavior. For example, smiling and engaging in chaste sexual activities are desired traits in women and Black women are rewarded to a greater degree than White women when doing so (Cooley et al., 2018; McMahon & Kahn, 2016). Similarly, Black women engaging in agentic behaviors, something that is proscribed for women, are not punished to the same degree as White women (Livingston et al., 2012). In contrast, amplification increases perceived prototypicality. Thus, these targets are only rewarded for the behaviors they should do after extraordinary efforts and are more easily punished for behaviors they shouldn't do. For example, Asian women, compared to White women, face amplification when stereotypes across identities become integrated because their intersectional category (race) activates femininity, amplifying their woman foundational category. Due to this amplification, Asian women are punished to a greater degree than White women when displaying dominance traits (Tinkler et al., 2019).

The MOSAIC explains how stereotypes of singular identities can intersect to amplify or dilute the foundational stereotypes within a given context and gives a theoretical account of findings such as selective inhibition (e.g., stereotypes of single category groups having complementary negative stereotypes that lead the intersectional category being perceived more

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positively; Kang & Chasteen, 2009). Like the lens-based account, this model encourages researchers to pay close attention to how identities become activated in a given context, giving a firm basis to predict how stereotypes will influence perception. However, to fully apply the MOSAIC, there needs to be additional research that fully maps associated category content for various identities. For example, while masculinity is associated with “Black”, “Black” is likely also associated with other identity groups, such as the poor (Dupree et al., 2021). Can the MOSAIC accurately predict perceptions of Black rich people compared to Black poor people?

The MOSAIC model might also be bolstered by borrowing the moderators from the lens-based account, as factors such as perceivers’ goals might be relevant in determining what identities become contenders for the associated category. For example, let’s revisit the comparison between Black and White men. Again, “masculinity” is an associated category of Black, leading to Black men facing increased pressure to be masculine compared to White men. However, identities like “low status” and “subordinate” are also identities associated with the category “Black”. The stereotypes associated with “low status” conflict with stereotypes of “men”, leading to the opposite hypothesis where Black men’s masculine expectations should be *diluted* instead of amplified. Indeed, in a study that explicitly examined normative stereotypes of Black men, researchers found that it was *more* desirable for a White man to be masculine than a Black man (Hudson & Ghani, 2023), conflicting with known stereotypes of Black men as hyper-masculine (Ghavami & Peplau, 2013) Thus, there is a need for additional research to focus on which associated categories become relevant in a given situation.

**Sociohistorical model of intersectional social category prototypes.** This newer model posits that people learn prototypes based on how society is structured, which is often determined by the desires of the dominant group within society (e.g., White men in the U.S.; R. F. Lei et al.,

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2023). The sociohistorical model uses historical context to anticipate the content within the stereotypes at the intersections of identities, offering an integrative model that combines the theories of intersectional invisibility, gendered race, and gendered prejudice as well as explains why the models' predictions differ. For example, stereotypes of Black people in the United States are defined by slavery. Black people were seen primarily as laborers, infusing a masculine prototype into the category that has persisted to modern times (Lei et al., 2023). In contrast, Asian people (specifically East Asian people due to immigration patterns) have a more feminine prototype in the United States because their primary utility to White men was sexual.

The sociohistorical model explicitly models the underlying similarities in power structures that contribute to the marginalization of various low-status groups, creating a model that empirically defines Elizabeth Cole's third question "Where are the similarities?" Furthermore, this model encourages researchers to attend to the broader historical contexts that are implicated in their research settings, especially as it relates to the generation of stereotype content. There has been work connecting modern-day psychological outcomes with historical events, such as research showing that past historical dependency on slavery is associated with increased implicit pro-White bias among White Americans today (Vuletich & Payne, 2019).

As another example, caricatures of Native Americans are often used as mascots for colleges and sports teams, a practice that is deeply offensive to many Native Americans (Fryberg et al., 2021). And yet these mascots persist in the public sphere, even when they have been ostensibly removed (Kraus et al., 2019), creating a norm that encourages prejudice towards Native Americans. The presence of Native American mascots not only increases negative stereotyping of Native Americans overall and lowers self-esteem *among* Native Americans (Davis-Delano, Gone, et al., 2020), but is also associated with increased nationalism (Eason et

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al., 2021). These findings suggest that to unpack negative stereotypes and the deliberate and systematic erasure of Native Americans from the American public sphere, researchers must acquire a deep understanding of colonialism and the desire to control Native sovereignty to maintain White superiority (Dai et al., 2021; Davis-Delano, Galliher, et al., 2020).

One of the strengths of the sociohistorical model is its generalizability beyond race and gender. For example, the model argues that the rapid shift in public opinion as it relates to queer people (Charlesworth & Banaji, 2019) is because the prototype of a queer person is White, a group that has historically held a disproportionate amount of power (within the U.S. but also globally). Thus, White queer people have an incentive, as well as the means, to increase positive public opinion towards their marginalized identity. The model also can extend to other social contexts insofar as the relationships between the subordinated and dominant groups are historically understood. Future work should continue to explore the connection between historical events and perceptions, such as regional variation in the demographic racial groups and their corresponding stereotypes. The sociohistorical model would suggest that stereotypes of Asians in the United Kingdom should be more aligned with those of South Asians than East Asians (Goh & McCue, 2021) in contrast to the United States, because of differences in the immigration patterns of Asians in those two countries (Watkins et al., 2017). Again, attending to the historical context gives better predictive power even when examining a single identity (e.g., Asian immigrants).

### *Intersectional Treatment Models*

**Theory of Gendered Prejudice.** The theory of gendered prejudice (TGP; McDonald, Navarrete, et al., 2011; Sidanius et al., 2018) is the intersectional offspring of social dominance (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and parental investment theories (Trivers, 1972). Previously labeled as

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the subordinate male target hypothesis (McDonald et al., 2012), TGP has two basic assumptions that originate from its parental theories. Assumed from social dominance theory, there are three fundamental hierarchies — age, gender, and arbitrary-set (e.g., race) — that are categorically different from one another. Within the gender hierarchy, all else being equal, men are dominant over women. Assumed from parental investment theory, women put more effort and investment into raising offspring than men, leading women to have higher mate choosiness based on status and resources. Men put more effort into gaining status, power, and resource control and fight other men to get it. Combining the two assumptions, men, due to a mating strategy that puts a premium on obtaining resources, have more to gain from intergroup conflict than women and these benefits come from directing that conflict towards outgroup men rather than women.

These two basic assumptions lead to a set of circumstances such that men display higher levels of outgroup aggression and dominance than women, *ceteris paribus* (Lee et al., 2011; Sidanius et al., 1994). These attitudes facilitate group-based competition and thus men are also more likely to be the recipients of group-based violence compared to women, as they are targeted by men to obtain status and additional resources (Navarrete et al., 2010) and are feared by women in terms of sexual coercion (McDonald, Asher, et al., 2011; Navarrete et al., 2009). In summary, TGP's fundamental claim is that men are the primary agents *and* recipients of group-based discrimination (e.g., racism) while women experience discrimination primarily based on their gender and not their racial group.

Psychologists have amassed evidence in support of TGP. For example, using the classic shooter bias paradigm, Plant and colleagues (Plant et al., 2011) showed that there is a distinct bias to shoot Black men; White participants did not show a bias towards White men and women, nor Black women. In the hiring domain, minority men often have worse outcomes than minority

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women (Derous et al., 2012, 2015). In an audit study, although both Arab men and women face discrimination in terms of the number of callbacks they receive compared to their White counterparts, an additional three years of experience attenuates this bias for Arab women but actually exacerbates the bias for Arab men (Arai et al., 2008). Relatedly, the minority-White income gap is larger for men than it is for women, *and* minority women suffer a smaller penalty than White women (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Greenman & Xie, 2008).

TGP centers on the importance of gender in understanding how minoritized groups are treated, arguing that one cannot understand group-based discrimination without first attending to gender. TGP is a useful intersectional framework for research in domains in which reproductive fitness concerns are being managed as well as those where power and dominance are salient features. These domains include those revolving around status and resource accumulation for men (e.g., education, hiring, criminal justice) and avoiding sexual coercion for women (e.g., spaces of harassment and perceptions of promiscuity). Importantly, to date, the domains in which TGP has been studied have been male-centric by default, which makes it more likely there will be larger racial differences in men compared to women. There needs to be more research in neutral and woman-centric domains. Future research is needed to connect perceptions of minoritized individuals to how they are treated. For example, one testable premise at the intersection of the lens-based account and TGP, which is that the lens of gender is always relevant when assessing perceptions of multiply marginalized individuals.

**Intersectional Invisibility.** Intersectional Invisibility (II) centers prototypicalities of group membership (e.g., androcentrism or male-centric) as axes along which intersectional categories rotate (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). For every identity, there is a prototype of what a member from that group normatively looks like. For example, the prototypic group

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member of the category “Black” is a Black man due to androcentrism, while the prototypic member of the group “women” is a White woman, due to Whitecentrism. Given that Black women are not prototypical for their race or their gender, they are deemed *intersectionally invisible*. In line with this premise, women’s stereotypes most closely matched White women’s stereotypes, Black people’s stereotypes most closely matched Black men’s stereotypes, while Black women’s stereotypes tend to be unique (Ghavami & Peplau, 2012).

It’s focus is on how oppression works differently for those with single and multiple marginalized identities as a function of their invisibility, which can have both positive and negative consequences. In terms of the negative consequences, being invisible means that Black women are relatively ignored (E. L. Thomas et al., 2014). In a “Who said what?” paradigm, non-prototypical members of racial and gender groups are remembered less often and with reduced accuracy as compared to other groups (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Being perceptually invisible also means that Black women sidestep some of the harm aimed at more prototypical targets. For example, there is some evidence that shows that Black women are not sanctioned as heavily for aggressive leadership behaviors in the way Black men and White women are (Livingston et al., 2012). Black women often see themselves praised for being assertive and confrontational (S. L. Williams & Fredrick, 2015), which matches descriptive stereotype work (Rosette et al., 2016). Being “allowed” to express anger or dominance seems like a positive outcome of being intersectionally invisible. However, being allowed agentic dominance doesn’t lead to agentic competence, and Black women suffer from penalizations that deal with their lack of intelligence and ability to lead (Rosette et al., 2016).

It contends with both the positive and negative aspects of being at the intersection of identities. Researchers have theorized as to why Black women become invisibilized, which is

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due to a lack of patriarchal interdependence due to their race and a decreased perception of racialized threat due to their gender (Livingston & Rosette, 2020). Future work is needed to interrogate these assumptions, specifically around the importance of prototypicality and a lack of interdependence in generating invisibility. There are some contexts where Black women become *hypervisible*, making it difficult to understand the factors that underlie when intersectionally minoritized groups are invisible compared to hypervisible. For example, there are cases where explicitly decreasing the prototypicality of Black women can ironically increase the visibility of Black women rather than reduce it (Sesko & Biernat, 2018). Recent work has discussed the importance of perceiver goals as a moderator in determining whether a target will be rendered invisible, arguing that invisibility occurs when a target is perceived as neither helping nor harming the perceiver's interests (Neel & Lassetter, 2019). However, more work is needed.

Additionally, newer work has found intersectional invisibility effects for groups that have specific prototypes not in line with classic prototypicality biases. For example, the prototypical Asian person appears to be a woman, rather than a man, suggesting gynocentrism rather than androcentrism determines intersectional invisible categories. In line with this group-specific prototype, Asian *men* exhibit signs of invisibility rather than Asian women (Schug et al., 2015, 2017). Future work should integrate II with the sociohistorical model, which will produce predictions of when and why a given identity might contain unique prototypical expectations.

### ***Intersectional Experience Models***

**Social identity complexity.** Social identity complexity is a theory that outlines how people of intersectional identities can understand the connection between their identities. There are four integration forms: intersection, dominance, compartmentalization, and merger. If we take the *intersection* of race and gender, a Black woman can perceive her in-group to be “Black

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women” since Black women sit at the intersection of race and gender. Alternatively, she can construe one identity as more salient, or *dominant*, than another. At the intersection of race and gender, the dominance perspective has been researched separately as the ethnic prominence hypothesis (Levin et al., 2002), which proposes that race or ethnicity has an outsized effect on people's experience of discrimination compared to their gender. In the case of Black people, they perceive a stronger connection between themselves and their racial group rather than with their gender group. This means that Black women perceive themselves closer to Black men than to White women, although both groups share a common identity with Black women. As a concrete example, Latinas can experience gender-based stereotype threat when negative stereotypes of their racial group are activated but do not experience racial-based stereotype threat when negative stereotypes of their gender are activated (Gonzales et al., 2002). These findings suggest that for Latinas, their race encompasses their gender but not the reverse.

The third form of identity integration is *compartmentalization*. This form is the target-equivalent of the lens-based account of intersectional perception (see “Intersectional Perception Models” section), outlining how social identities become activated based on the context. Like the lens model, compartmentalization assumes that certain contexts can make one identity more salient than another. A Latina mom in a heterosexual relationship might strongly perceive her gender when at home but more strongly perceive her race at work. As another example, Asian women have different outcomes in math settings when either race or gender is made salient. When race is made salient, the stereotype that Asians are good at math increases Asian women’s math performance compared to when gender, and the assumption that women are bad at math, is made salient (Shih et al., 1999). The fourth and final form of identity integration is *merger*,

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where one's relevant identities are merged in an inclusive form. Here, ingroups are defined by anyone with a shared category, or anyone who identifies as Black or a woman.

These four forms of identity integration can be further classified as those with high or low complexity overall. Intersection and dominance are relatively low complexity because these forms essentially flatten multiple aspects of identity into one, while compartmentalization and merger are higher complexity because they require attending to multiple cross-cutting aspects of identity simultaneously. Having a higher degree of social identity complexity is correlated with increased tolerance and positive attitudes toward outgroups (Brewer & Pierce, 2005). Social identity complexity and increased outgroup tolerance are bidirectional, as people who live in more diverse neighborhoods are more likely to have more socially complex ways of understanding their identities (Schmid et al., 2013)

Future work should focus on the discrepancies between how a target understands their identities and how others view their identities. For example, a Black woman can see her race and her gender through a dominance lens in most situations, while others can perceive her as though she integrates her identities, compartmentalizes them, or merges them. It is currently unclear how such discrepancies can impact perceptions and expressions of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. While Roccas and Brewer (2002, p. 90) called for this exact work to be done over two decades ago, there has been little progress.

**Double Jeopardy.** Double Jeopardy (DJ) is one of the oldest intersectional theories (Beale, 1990) and has a simple premise. Those with multiply marginalized identities (e.g., Black women who are marginalized based on race *and* gender) experience more discrimination than those with a singular marginalized identity (e.g., Black men and White women) or no marginalized identities (e.g., White men). DJ does not compare the experiences of those with

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different single marginalized identities — for example, the theory does not explicate whether Black men and White women experience comparable amounts of discrimination. Furthermore, the interaction between racial and gender discrimination can be either additive or multiplicative. A Black woman's experience with discrimination can be determined by the additive experience of being racially minoritized and a woman or there can be a unique combinatorial process that causes even greater experienced discrimination when racism and sexism are combined.

Examining the lived experiences of minority women, researchers often report additional racialized negative experiences on top of their womanhood that are quite distinct from what White women face. In a study of women of color in the sciences, participants often reported feeling demeaned, dehumanized, and disrespected by their environment which occurred both separately (additively) and interdependently (multiplicative) because of their race and gender (J. C. Williams, 2014). Berdahl and Moore found that Black women reported experiencing the highest levels of combined ethnic and sexual harassment in an additive manner, with racially minoritized men and White women reporting lower levels of combined harassment, and White men reporting the least harassment (2006). The level of combined harassment for Black women has consequences, as it uniquely predicts organizational outcomes such as satisfaction with one's supervisor (Buchanan & Fitzgerald, 2008; for evidence of the interactive nature of race and gender harassment, see Buchanan et al., 2009).

Evidence for DJ is not restricted to harassment or discrimination; Black women are also uniquely vulnerable to increased levels of punishment after mistakes in the workplace. Under situations of organizational failure, Black women were seen as the least effective leaders compared to Black men and White women (Rosette & Livingston, 2012), and this effect was mediated by leader typicality. The authors theorize that Black women were penalized more than

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the others because Black women aren't prototypic of a leader based on stereotypes of both their race and their gender. When "finger pointing" for blame happens, Black women are doubly at fault. DJ is particularly supported in the health domain, with double-, or even triple-marginalized targets having worse outcomes, be it on self-reported health (Cummings & Braboy Jackson, 2008) or disability likelihood (D. F. Warner & Brown, 2011).

Although DJ is one of the oldest intersectional theories, much of its evidence is rhetorical. Scholars have written extensively about the double burden of race and gender stigmatization, but there are very few experimental papers addressing the theory. Future research needs to empirically elucidate the boundaries of when and where DJ applies. DJ might be most relevant to situations in which racism and sexism have similar outcomes but proceed along different mechanisms. This arrangement allows for racism and sexism to have additive or multiplicative effects without counteracting each other. For example, harassment often stems from a desire for power over others. With every additional marginalized identity, the pool of people who are societally sanctioned to act on such a desire for power increases, leading to additive or multiplicative negative experiences. In this sense, situations that result in DJ patterns might be modular in their design, where the relationship between the inputs and outcomes is orthogonal in nature.

### **Conclusions**

Intersectionality matters. Put simply, our science is better when intersectional approaches are adopted. Beyond making our work more precise, it has the capacity to contribute to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of the human experience both for our research participants as well as ourselves. To facilitate this goal, this primer focused on defining intersectionality for social psychological researchers as well as reviewing the main empirical models within the field.

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The future research areas discussed after each model do not even scratch the surface of the potential next steps within intersectional research, as each model offers unique benefits when used as a guide for hypotheses, analyses, and interpretations.

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