

Social Stigma and Disadvantage: Current Themes and Future Prospects

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Research on social stigma and disadvantage has flourished in the past two decades. The authors highlight the theoretical and methodological advancements that have been made, such as how experience sampling procedures and neuroscience have shed light on processes associated with social stigma. Finally, the authors discuss policy implications of historical and contemporary research on social stigma and disadvantage, as well as address ideas for future research that may be useful in creating policies and programs that promote social equality.

Understanding the causes and consequences of prejudice, as well as improving the lives of stigmatized individuals, has a long history in social psychological research. Throughout the course of this history, the orientation from which social psychologists studied prejudice and stigma has shifted over time, ranging from representing prejudice and stigma as psychopathology to involving normal processes that are a consequence of one's social context (see Dovidio, 2001). Regardless of the orientation, this body of research has always been, and continues to be, instrumental in creating social policies and programs implemented to promote the values of equality. For example, in the United States social scientists' findings about prejudice and stigma played a significant role in the 1954 Supreme Court decision regarding *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, which outlawed racial segregation in schools. Similarly, research about gender discrimination has been used in court cases to settle employee–employer disputes about gender differences in wages and mistreatment in the workplace (Fiske & Krieger, in press). The articles in this volume of *Journal of Social Issues (JSI)* represent a diverse set of theoretical ideas and empirical findings that show the advancements that have been made in the field of social stigma.

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In this article, we offer commentary on the articles in this special volume of the *JSI*, while highlighting conceptual and methodological contributions that have paved the way for a nuanced understanding of social stigma and disadvantage. In addition, we offer suggestions for ways to build upon our current knowledge and to further advance our understanding of social stigma and disadvantage. Finally, we discuss policy implications of the research presented in this volume, as well as address how our ideas for future research may be useful in additional policies and programs that promote social equality.

Historical and Contemporary Views of Social Stigma

Research on social stigma and disadvantage, as the work presented in this issue of *JSI* attests, has come a long way. The contemporary line of research deviates from earlier work in several important ways. We focus on two of those ways in this article. First, we highlight how there has been a notable shift from a near exclusive focus on stigmatized individuals from a deficit perspective to one that emphasizes the resilient nature of stigmatized individuals. Second, we highlight the shift from making assumptions about the lives of stigmatized individuals based on their nonstigmatized counterparts' experiences to the inclusion of the phenomenological perspective of stigmatized individuals.

Classic research viewed stigma as a social construction that involves the recognition of difference, accompanied by severe devaluation because of that difference. Goffman (1963), for example, described stigmatized individuals as being "marked" and "spoiled" and less human than "normal" individuals. Given that they are not entitled to full humanity, stigmatized individuals are by default socially disadvantaged in society. This classic view of stigma implied that there was something inherently flawed with people who were different from "normals." Even when researchers recognized the important influence of situational factors on stigma, it was still implied that stigmatized individuals lacked important characteristics. For example, given the social conditions of the United States in the 1950s, it was assumed that being a member of a racial minority carried negative consequences for a person's self-concept. Indeed, the majority of research on Blacks was geared toward demonstrating that their experiences with discrimination resulted in a damaged self-concept (Allport, 1954). This self-hatred perspective was based on the concept of reflected appraisals, which posits that individuals' identities are developed through social interactions and are a reflection of other people's appraisals (Schrauger & Schoeneman, 1979). Given that American society devalued Blacks, it was assumed that Blacks would internalize that devaluation, resulting in self-hatred and low self-esteem.

Evidence of Black self-hatred was suggested by Kenneth Clark's infamous doll studies (Clark & Clark, 1939). In the basic paradigm for this research, researchers presented Black children with white and black dolls. The researchers

asked the children which doll they preferred to play with and/or observed the children playing with the dolls. Across a series of studies, the findings revealed that Black children demonstrated a preference for playing with white dolls, which researchers interpreted as meaning that Blacks hated themselves and had low self-esteem. In the 1960s and 1970s, researchers challenged this interpretation of the “doll studies” and argued that Black children’s preference for a white doll was not equivalent to low self-esteem (e.g., Brand, Ruiz, & Padilla, 1974). One argument as to why a preference for the white doll was not indicative of self-hatred was that the Black children simply preferred the doll that was most familiar to them. At that point in history, there were very few black dolls available. As a result, most Black children were more familiar with white dolls than black dolls; thus, they preferred the white dolls. Interestingly, similar to the reflected self-appraisal explanation for Black self-hatred, the familiarity explanation regarding the doll preference also demonstrates the power of the social context in shaping individuals’ identities. That is, the lack of Black cultural representation in American culture at the time resulted in Black children preferring the doll representative of the out-group over the in-group.

In essence, the classic view of social stigma captured a deficit approach of understanding difference because it suggests the person is born with a flaw or is a product of a social environment that discredits them from humanity. This deficit approach was not limited to the study of racial stigma. Indeed, members of other stigmatized groups, such as the physically disabled and mentally ill, were also seen through such a lens (Goffman, 1963; Jones et al., 1984).

Taking the Stigma out of Social Stigmas

More contemporary analysis of social stigma continues to acknowledge that stigma is a social construction, but the emphasis has been placed on showing that stigmatized individuals engage in the same motivational and cognitive processes as “normals” (Crocker, Major, & Steele, 1998). The focus of the contemporary analysis of stigma has been to show that stigmatized people are not different; instead, they are very similar to nonstigmatized people. In doing so, it takes the “stigma” out of social stigmas. This is quite interesting when compared to the study of cultural psychology, an area that shares some similarities with the social stigma literature in the field of social psychology, in the sense that both areas focus on comparing a subset of groups to the more mainstream group. Whereas researchers who study culture highlight how groups are different, stigma researchers highlight how groups are similar (see Markus, 2008). This emphasis on similarities is profound and fundamental because it helps take the stigma out of being a socially stigmatized person. Researchers have shown, for example, that stigmatized individuals cope with negative treatment toward their group in

a similar manner to “normals” who encounter negative feedback about the self (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002).

Moreover, the contemporary analysis of stigma illustrates how stigmatized individuals are resilient despite their negative social context, and that there are other people in their context who may protect them from the general society’s negative views of their group. For example, contemporary research on racial identity has emphasized that Blacks have a positive self-concept, instead of a negative self-concept as expected from classic research (Crocker & Major, 1989). In many ways, still embedded in a reflected self-appraisal perspective, contemporary research is based on the belief that Blacks’ self-concept is derived from other Blacks who are not likely to devalue them because of their race (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001). That is, instead of being a reflection of how members of the out-group perceive their group, Blacks’ self-concept is a reflection of how other in-group members view their group. Thus, in general, the norm has turned from perceiving stigmatized individuals through the lens of psychopathology to perceiving them as being able to flourish despite others’ negative perceptions (e.g., Crabtree, Haslam, Postmes, & Haslam, this issue; Jahoda, Wilson, Stalker, & Cairney, this issue; Leach, Rodriguez Mosquera, Vliek, & Hirt, this issue; Van Laar, Derks, Ellemers, & Bleeker, this issue).

Supported by the recent research in which stigmatized individuals were not viewed through a deficit lens, researchers in this volume underscore the ways in which stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals are similar and different, highlighting the fact that differences do not have to be interpreted as deficits. In fact, researchers in this volume illustrate that when differences exist between groups, perhaps we can learn more from stigmatized individuals as we seek ways to improve our social world, rather than from their nonstigmatized counterparts. Specifically, Leach and his colleagues (this issue) note that researchers have argued that Blacks’ tendency not to show an in-group bias on implicit measures of racial bias, in contrast to Whites’ tendency to display an in-group bias, is a sign that Blacks do not have positive evaluations of their group. Leach and colleagues (this issue) argue that instead of interpreting this difference between the groups as odd and assuming that Blacks are inherently flawed, it is fruitful to think of the benefits of not demonstrating an in-group bias. Similarly, Ashburn-Nardo (this issue) shows that stigmatized individuals learn to dissociate their self-view from their devalued groups.

The destigmatization of social stigma can be seen not just in the content of the material on social stigma but also in the way in which the research on social stigma has been integrated into social psychological research. For example, a chapter on social stigma was not included in *The Handbook of Social Psychology*, one of the most premier outlets in social psychology, until the fourth edition in 1998. The next edition of *The Handbook*, which is currently in progress, is reported not to have a chapter on stigma. Although it is possible that the editors no longer

feel that the topic is worthwhile, we suspect it is because the editors recognize that understanding and addressing issues of social stigma is so important that one cannot discuss any topic in social psychology without addressing social stigma. It is practically impossible, for example, to discuss a topic such as the self without addressing stigma research. Likewise, it is difficult to discuss basic processes such as self-regulation without referring to the growing body of research on stigma and self-control (Kang, Inzlicht, & Derks, this issue). Thus, stigma has become a central topic in mainstream social psychological research.

Although the contemporary view of social stigma is less “stigmatizing” and pathological in nature, one must be cautious about the potential implications of this view. Although stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals use similar motivational and cognitive processes to understand their social worlds, this does not mean that their social worlds are identical. It is important to keep in mind the historical and contemporary factors that contribute to members of these groups having vastly different social experiences. King, Knight, and Hebl’s (this issue) work on economic threat, for example, illustrates the importance of contextual factors in understanding social stigma. King et al. (this issue) found that stigmatized job applicants are selected less often for jobs than their nonstigmatized counterparts primarily during an economic downturn. That is, when the situation is threatening because jobs are scarce, stigmatized individuals’ qualifications are scrutinized more harshly than those of nonstigmatized individuals, even when the qualifications are the same. When the situation is less threatening, stigmatized individuals are less likely to be disadvantaged. Thus, context matters; it determines how people are treated, and even if stigmatized and nonstigmatized job applicants use the same motivational processes in this example to understand their situation, the ultimate consequence—not having a job—is likely to have serious repercussions for their life experiences.

A Phenomenological Perspective of Stigmatized Individuals

In the classic work on social stigma, researchers often excluded stigmatized individuals from participating in their studies, even when the focus was on how stigmatized individuals react to how others treat them. Instead, researchers designed studies in which nonstigmatized individuals played the role of stigmatized individuals. For example, nonstigmatized individuals played the role of someone who was mentally disabled (Farina & Ring, 1965), homosexual (Farina, Allen, & Saul, 1968), had a facial scar (Kleck & Strenta, 1980), or Black (Chidester, 1986). Researchers have highlighted the problems with this approach (Shelton & Richeson, 2006), most notably that playing the role of someone in a lab for an hour is not the same as “walking in the shoes” of a stigmatized individual in reality. Likewise, playing the role of a nonstigmatized individual or perpetrator of prejudice is not the same as actually being in that role in the real world.

In the contemporary analysis of social stigma, researchers tend to take a more phenomenological perspective of social stigma, exploring the perceptions of actual stigmatized individuals. At a very basic level, this involves including stigmatized individuals as participants in studies, as all of the researchers in this volume do. When this is done, the issues that are most important to stigmatized individuals become clear, as opposed to issues that one might assume to be important when only the nonstigmatized person's perspective is taken. This can be seen in recent findings on confronting perpetrators of prejudice. The focus of research on confronting prejudice from the perspective of nonstigmatized individuals has been on how people perceive targets of prejudice who confront perpetrators of prejudice. Across several studies, people (e.g., Whites and men) negatively evaluated targets (e.g., Blacks and women) who confronted perpetrators of prejudice (e.g., Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). When explored from the perspective of targets of prejudice, however, it becomes clear that their focus is less on how they are perceived by out-group members but more on how they are perceived by in-group members. Specifically, Salvatore and Shelton (2009) found that members of stigmatized groups (i.e., Blacks and women) are more concerned with how other in-group members will perceive them when they do not confront perpetrators of prejudice than they are with how out-group members (i.e., Whites and men) will perceive them when they do confront perpetrators of prejudice. This research suggests that members of stigmatized groups may be more concerned with how they are perceived by in-group members than out-group members. If stigmatized individuals had not been included as participants in this area of research, then researchers might have assumed that these individuals are most concerned with how they are perceived by nonstigmatized individuals.

As the work featured in this special issue demonstrates, the trajectory of research in social stigma and disadvantage has shifted considerably from classic frameworks that characterized stigma as a deficit that is harmful to the self-concept. Contemporary research emphasizes the resilience with which stigmatized individuals cope with their social worlds. In addition, this work calls attention to the similarities in underlying psychological processes used by stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals to understand their social worlds. Moreover, research in this area has shifted from inferring the experiences of stigmatized individuals from the experiences of nonstigmatized individuals, to actually including stigmatized individuals as participants in this area of research, thereby capturing real differences in their phenomenological perspectives.

Methodological Advancements in Studying Social Stigma and Disadvantage

The conceptual changes in research on stigma and disadvantage have been accompanied by sophisticated methodologies to explore research questions of

interest. In addition, the advancements in the tools used to study social stigma and disadvantage have shed light on topics that could not have been addressed previously. In this section, we discuss these advancements, highlighting how the chapters in this volume contribute to them.

Physiological Tools

As research on stigma flourishes, researchers have started to ask questions that are difficult to answer using self-report and behavioral measures. As a result, they have turned to physiological markers to provide a more complex understanding of stigma. This has involved assessing outcomes as wide ranging as cardiovascular activity to assess anxiety and threat in interactions between stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals (Mendes, Blascovich, Hunter, Lickel, & Jost, 2007) to neural activation to understand the effects of stigma on self-control (Kang et al., this issue). As Prentice and Eberhardt (2008) noted, these measures have allowed researchers to obtain a fine-grained understanding of social processes.

The benefits of using physiological tools in social stigma research are evident when one examines the body of work on stereotype threat. In the initial wave of research on stereotype threat, researchers lamented a lack of empirical evidence corroborating the belief that arousal accompanied—and perhaps even caused—the performance decrements observed during stereotype threat situations. Empirical evidence from self-report measures failed to provide supporting evidence. Blascovich, Spencer, Quinn, and Steele (2001) turned to blood pressure reactivity to explore the idea that members of stigmatized groups facing stereotype threat may experience physiological arousal. Indeed, they found that Blacks under stereotype threat, compared to those not under threat, exhibited larger increases in mean arterial blood pressure while taking an academic test. This work shed light on potential long-term consequences associated with stereotype threat among Blacks (i.e., increased rates of hypertension) that would not have been evident if researchers had relied exclusively on self-report data.

Additional research on stereotype threat and neural processes has illuminated the advantages of moving beyond self-report and behavioral measures in studying processes related to social stigma and disadvantage. It has been shown, for example, that the performance decrements associated with stereotype threat result from the interplay of emotional and cognitive processes (Krendl, Richeson, Kelley, & Heatherton, 2008; Richeson, Todd, Trawalter, & Baird, 2008). Previously, research had suggested that working memory and performance anxiety play roles in the performance decrements associated with stereotype threat; however, the connection between the two was unclear. Specifically, researchers had suggested that stereotype threat causes performance anxiety, which triggers negative math-related thoughts; in turn, efforts to self-regulate these negative thoughts and emotions through suppression processes consume working memory (Schmader,

Johns, & Forbes, 2008). Richeson and colleagues extended this work to show that these emotional and cognitive processes are interconnected. The only way to do so was to rely on neuroimaging procedures. They found that women who experienced stereotype threat simultaneously showed high levels of recruitment of neural regions associated with emotion regulation and lower levels of recruitment of neural regions associated with mathematical learning.

Results from studies involving physiological measures can be alluring and seductive. Indeed, Weisberg, Keil, Goodstein, Rawson, and Gray (2008) illustrated that people, including scientists, can be more persuaded by research involving physiological findings than self-report findings, even when the findings are identical or when the physiological findings are problematic. As a result, although we acknowledge the advancements that have been made in the social stigma literature as a result of using physiological measures, similar to others (Dovidio, Pearson, & Orr, 2008; Kang et al., this issue), we caution researchers against treating this research as more important than research involving self-report or behavioral measures. This is especially important given that policy makers might make ill-informed decisions based on their misunderstandings of physiological findings, resulting in decisions that might ultimately harm the lives of stigmatized individuals.

Experience Sampling Methods

Social psychologists are fond of experimental studies conducted in the laboratory. Indeed, a lot can be garnered from manipulating the social-contextual factors of a laboratory and examining how people respond to that manipulation. There are, of course, limitations to this type of methodology. Given these limitations, researchers studying social stigma and disadvantage have begun to move outside of the confines of experimental work in the lab, which has opened the door for an array of new research questions to be explored. As seen in this volume, for example, researchers have relied on experience sampling and diary studies to capture the “up-close-and-personal” view of stigma. By having women record their daily experiences, Swim, Eyssell, Murdoch, and Ferguson (this issue) explored the types of sexist events women encounter in their daily lives and how women respond to these events. Similarly, Jahoda et al. (this issue) literally captured snapshots of the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by having participants carry a disposable camera and create a photo diary of their lives. This is a particularly innovative way to capture the daily lives of individuals who might not have the cognitive abilities to answer a battery of questionnaires. Both self-report diary studies and photo diary studies capture the live experiences of individuals that cannot be examined in a laboratory.

In sum, the contributors to this issue have utilized diverse methodologies to address complex questions that could not have been explored through traditional

self-report and behavioral measures alone. Physiological measures enable closer examination of the internal processes involved in coping with a devalued identity, and diary methods offer ecological validity by examining the actual experiences of stigmatized individuals outside of the laboratory. These advancements yield a more nuanced understanding of social stigma and disadvantage.

Future Prospects: Ideas for Future Research on Social Stigmas

As the field of social stigma grows in exciting ways, there are numerous directions in which it may go. Below we offer commentary on four future directions for research on social stigmas and disadvantage that were sparked by the articles in this issue.

Consider the Biases in Studying Bias and Social Stigma

To understand social stigma and disadvantage, it is important to study both stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals. Indeed, there has been a concerted effort in the field to take into consideration the perspective of members of both groups. Although more research is being conducted from both sides, there is a bias in the way the issues are explored. This bias is subtle but has the potential to thwart our understanding of bias and social stigma. A great portion of the research on perpetrators of prejudice has focused on their attitudes and behaviors toward targets. For example, decades of research has been focused on understanding Whites' racial attitudes and behavior toward Blacks. Beginning in the late 1990s there was a shift in the field from emphasizing perpetrators' negative attitudes and prejudice to examining their motivation not to be prejudiced. Researchers started to investigate the extent to which well-meaning individuals may display behaviors that would make them appear that they are biased against a group when in reality they are actually motivated not to be biased. Meanwhile, the focus of social stigma research remains to be on the consequences of stigma, with an emphasis on how stigmatized individuals are vigilant about perceiving bias, high in rejection sensitivity, and quite conscious about their stigma. To our knowledge, there has been very little research on the ways in which stigmatized individuals are motivated not to see bias and are instead motivated to see the good in others. Moreover, there is a paucity of research examining how stigmatized group members may be concerned with appearing prejudiced.

In making these observations, our intention is not to point the finger at investigators for approaching research in this manner. In fact, the focus of a majority of our own work has been on Whites' concerns with appearing prejudiced and ethnic minorities' concerns with being the target of prejudice. Thus, we too have contributed to the bias in the ways that bias and social stigma are studied. However, we suggest that stepping outside of this tradition to examine how stigmatized

individuals are motivated not to be prejudiced, for example, may provide important insights into the complexities of intergroup relations.

Relational and Cross-Cultural Perspectives

As Jones et al. (1984) noted in *Social Stigma: The Psychology of Marked Relationships*, social stigma is relational. The articles in this volume of *JSI* provide fresh insight into the importance of recognizing this idea. Kaiser and Wilkins (this issue), for example, show that to understand the relationship between ethnic identification and discrimination it is essential to take into consideration the attitudes of the perpetrator of the discrimination. Previous accounts suggest that understanding the relationship between group identification and discrimination involves focusing solely on the target of discrimination—the target either sees more than what is there or the target's identification is influenced by what is there. Kaiser and Wilkins (this issue) suggest that we are likely to gain a deeper understanding of this relationship if we take into consideration the other person—the perpetrator of discrimination—involved in the situation. In their objective experience account, they show that it is not just about what is happening in the stigmatized person's head; instead, it is about the relationship between stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals. Specifically, Whites who strongly endorse the Protestant work ethic are more likely to discriminate against highly identified ethnic minorities, compared to Whites who do not endorse the work ethic. If researchers had continued to take an individualistic approach to this issue (i.e., examining either the target or the perpetrator for an explanation but not both), then we might not have the insight that the processes involve the interplay between the target and the perpetrator. We encourage researchers to continue taking a relational approach to understanding stigma.

The relational processes associated with the relationship between stigmatized and nonstigmatized individuals are likely to be influenced by cultural factors. Social psychological research on social stigma, however, has been dominated by a Western view. Social stigma researchers need to turn to cultural psychologists to gain a better understanding of how the processes associated with social stigma may not be universal but instead operate differently across cultures. One primary distinction that has been made from research on cultural psychology is that some cultures endorse an independent view of the self whereas others endorse an interdependent view of the self. This view of the self may have consequences for understanding various topics related to social stigma. For example, Swim et al. (this issue) argue that some women, and perhaps members of stigmatized groups more generally, may decide not to confront prejudice against their group because of a desire to maintain harmonious relationships. It is possible that women from cultures that emphasize interdependence are more likely than women from cultures that emphasize independence to self-silence in the face of sexism. Although

self-silencing may deter problems in social relationships, there are likely to be negative intrapersonal consequences (e.g., depression) that may be costly for women, as suggested by Swim et al. (this issue) If this is the case, perhaps women from cultures with an interdependent view of the self are more likely to suffer from intrapersonal consequences of sexism.

Moreover, exploring the extent to which culture influences the way stigmatized individuals behave is likely to offer important contributions to the understanding of social processes. It would be worthwhile, for example, to examine how culture shapes the process of disclosing an invisible stigma. Chaudoir and Quinn (this issue) found that 98% of American students had disclosed their concealed stigma to someone, and that most disclosed to a friend (44%), parent (18%), or romantic partner (17%). Moreover, they found that students who disclosed their concealed stigma to a friend reported that the disclosure was associated with positive experiences than those who disclosed their stigma to a parent. Given that some cultures are characterized by an interdependent view of the self with close others while others are characterized by an independent view of self and other, the specific relationship that a stigmatized individual has with the target of disclosure might be more or less important depending on the culture in which one is embedded.

In summary, the contributors to this volume have begun to explore the relational influences on members of stigmatized groups. Expanding on this work, we believe that research on social stigma that considers cross-cultural influences will generate new points of inquiry and cultivate a richer understanding of the nature of social stigma and disadvantage.

Multiple Stigmas

People are not members of one social group; instead they are members of multiple groups—race, gender, work, etc. For some people the groups they belong to make them members of two stigmatized groups. To date, however, there has been very little research on how being a member of multiple stigmatized groups influences people's social realities as well as the processes involved in how doubly stigmatized individuals navigate their social worlds. For example, it is not clear if the effects and processes found in the literature involving members of one stigmatized group generalize to people who are members of multiple stigmatized groups.

Consider the research on attributional ambiguity and social stigma. Members of stigmatized groups often attribute negative events in their lives to prejudice against their group (Major, Quinton, & McCoy, 2002). For example, Crocker et al. (1991) found that women who received a negative evaluation on an essay from a male who they believed held conservative attitudes toward women were more likely to attribute the feedback to gender discrimination than women who believed

the male held liberal attitudes towards women. Similarly, Crocker et al. (1991) found that Black students were more likely than White students to attribute negative feedback from a White same-sex evaluator to racial prejudice. In addition, of the students who believed that the evaluator was aware of his/her race, Black students were more likely than White students to attribute the negative feedback to racial prejudice. As the researchers noted, however, neither women nor Blacks made the attributions with complete certainty. Both groups tended to use the midpoints on the prejudice scales, providing support for the notion that, although members of stigmatized groups attribute negative social interactions to their stigma, there is some degree of ambiguity about the true cause of the outcomes. Moreover, women and Blacks who attributed the negative outcomes to prejudice had higher self-esteem and less depressed affect than those who attributed the outcomes to personal shortcomings.

At first glance, it may appear that one can generalize the above findings to individuals who possess two stigmas. A closer look, however, reveals that doing so may be problematic. Previous researchers designed their studies such that only one stigma (e.g., race or gender) could be used as a causal attribution. Situations often vary, however, in the degree to which they are open for interpretation, and there may be nothing inherent in the situation that makes one interpretation more plausible than another. For Asian women, for example, being both Asian and female adds to the degree of variation in interpretation because the outcome may be based on race or gender. Research is needed to explore what factors influence the process whereby individuals with multiple stigmas “decide” on which devalued social identity to attribute discrimination. Moreover, the ambiguity created by having two devalued identities may influence mental health differently than having one devalued identity. People who are members of two stigmatized groups are the target of prejudice not only from members of nonstigmatized groups, but also from members of other stigmatized groups. Hispanic women, for example, are the target of gender prejudice from Hispanic males and the target of ethnic prejudice from White females. Experiencing prejudicial treatment from someone with whom a person has a common heritage may not have the same self-protecting benefits as experiencing prejudice from members of nonstigmatized groups. Individuals who have common characteristics share a sense of ingroup belonging and loyalty. When people are treated in a negative manner by members of their stigmatized group based on the nonshared stigma, the treatment may be taken more personally, preventing a self-protecting effect from occurring.

In sum, because people belong to many social groups, it is likely that people are members of multiple stigmatized groups. Consequently, future research needs to examine the effects of having more than one stigmatized identity. Much of the current research has focused on a single stigmatized identity, such as exclusively being an ethnic minority or a woman, but few studies have examined the consequences of having more than one stigmatized identity. It is possible that the extant

research focusing on one stigmatized identity may not replicate when examining multiple stigmatized identities, therefore yielding an exciting new area of research to explore.

Exploring Processes over Time

Research is needed on how effects and processes associated with social stigma change over time. Chaudoir and Quinn (this issue) explored the psychological consequences of disclosing a concealed stigma. As noted previously, they found that students who disclosed their concealed stigma to a friend reported that the disclosure was associated with more positive experiences than those who disclosed their stigma to a parent. Future research might explore how first-time disclosure experiences influence subsequent disclosure experiences. It is possible, for example, that disclosing to parents may be as positive as disclosing to friends if people disclose their stigma to friends before they disclose to their parents. To examine this issue, researchers would need to explore the psychological process of disclosing concealed stigmas over time.

In addition, more developmental work is needed on how children become aware of their social stigmas, and how their self-identities evolve over time to accommodate or reject what they learn about what others think about their stigmatized identity. Ashburn-Nardo (this issue) found that one-time exposure to stigmatizing information about participants' novel ingroup did not attenuate participants' implicit self-esteem or in-group bias, but long-term exposure to such information may alter people's views about themselves and their in-groups, especially for children. Exposure to negative views about one's in-group over time may have a differential impact on adults and young children because compared to adults, children's self-perceptions and views about their social world are more dynamic and formative.

Social Stigmas and Policy Issues

Consistent with previous research on social stigma, the research in this volume has serious implications for social policies and programs designed to improve the lives of the disadvantaged. The research in this volume makes it clear that businesses and organizations need to be cognizant of the biases that people may express and experiences that could deter the life chances of members of stigmatized groups. King et al. (this issue), for example, demonstrated that in a bad economy members of stigmatized groups are more likely to be treated unfairly, and Kaiser and Wilkins' (this issue) research suggests that this might be especially the case for members of stigmatized groups who strongly identify with their group. Armed with this evidence, researchers could encourage organizations to develop policies that would prevent this from occurring. Specifically, organizations might make an

extra effort to hire qualified members of stigmatized groups especially during times of economic distress because these individuals are likely to face more difficulties in finding employment compared to their nonstigmatized counterparts. Similarly, Crabtree et al.'s (this issue) findings may be useful for mental health support group organizers. Their research suggests that organizers of mental health support groups need to make sure that members feel identified with the group because group identification increases perceptions of social support and stigma resistance, which in turn increases group members' self-esteem. Finally, Van Laar et al.'s (this issue) research suggests ways to improve the motivation and performance of stigmatized individuals in integrated and segregated settings. Their work suggests that policy makers should consider the implications of contexts, such as all-female and predominately ethnic minority universities, on the lives of members of stigmatized groups and develop policies that will positively influence all people.

Social scientists' research has positively shaped court cases and policies in the past, contributing to ameliorating disparities in academic institutions and the workplace. Current research on social stigmas, however, demonstrates that members of stigmatized groups continue to face unequal economic and social opportunities compared to members of nonstigmatized groups. Consequently, it is necessary to translate research findings into actual policies that will further ameliorate the disadvantages that members of stigmatized groups may encounter.

Concluding Thoughts

The articles in this *JSI* volume highlight the many ways research on social stigma and disadvantage continues to flourish, revealing the complexities of the lives of stigmatized individuals. These articles attest to the growing body of work making the case that members of stigmatized groups are not inherently flawed but are influenced by social-contextual factors as are members of nonstigmatized groups. Furthermore, the work in this volume highlights how the advancements in technology have allowed researchers to gain a more complex understanding of processes related to social stigma. We are hopeful that this body of work will spark additional research ideas, some of which we have discussed in this article, that will continue to illuminate ways in which we can improve the lives of members of stigmatized groups.

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