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“We” Are Not All Alike: Consequences of Neglecting National Origin Identities Among Asians and Latinos

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Abstract

Two studies investigated the experiences U.S. Asians and Latinos have with national origin identity neglect, which occurs when others fail to recognize distinctions among national origin groups that comprise the shared, pan-ethnic category. Participants considered situations in which another individual (1) failed to acknowledge or (2) appropriately acknowledged their national origin identity. Individuals in the neglect condition reported stronger negative emotions and partner evaluations. Conversely, participants in the recognition condition reported stronger positive emotions and partner evaluations. These effects generalized such that those who experienced neglect rated the partner's ethnic group more negatively. The effects were stronger among those highly identified with their national origin group. Nearly all participants (91%) reported having experienced national origin identity neglect in daily life. These findings suggest that treating members of distinct social groups as interchangeable parts of a broader category, though seemingly benign, can elicit negative emotional responses and adversely affect intergroup relations.

Keywords

social identity, diversity, threat, Asian, Latino

Someone commented that I must be proud because Jennifer Lopez won an award. I asked why. They said b/c she's Puerto Rican. I was angry and hurt.—Mexican-American participant

Some people asked me where I came from. When I told them, “I'm from Taiwan,” then they usually say, “Oh, Thailand.” I feel kind of bad and I usually repeat again that I'm from Taiwan, not Thailand.—Taiwanese participant

The descriptions above capture situations in which a valued and distinct social identity (in this case, national origin) is either overlooked or treated as interchangeable with other social identities that comprise a broader category (e.g., U.S. Asians, Latinos). While these experiences can be easily dismissed as social gaffes and relatively benign, the excerpts suggest that such oversights do not go unnoticed by individuals for whom the identity is self-relevant. Moreover, as research on contemporary race relations shows, “benign” actions can have insidious effects on individuals and their relationships with out-group members (Pearson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2009). In this article, we seek to understand how experiencing national origin identity neglect affects individuals and their relationships with others.

National Origin Identity Neglect

Acculturation research has long contended that a discrepancy between how individuals see themselves and the way host

society members see them can adversely affect intergroup relations (Bourhis, Moïse, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997). While previous research has focused on the tension between host society identity and pan-ethnic attachments (Huo & Molina, 2006; Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997), the current work highlights a new layer of tension—that between pan-ethnic categories and the myriad national origin groups housed within them. In particular, we focus on the phenomenon of national origin identity neglect that emerges when politically expedient pan-ethnic labels (e.g., Asian or Latino) along with shared physical traits create a facade of uniformity among culturally distinct groups. By grouping national origin identities into broader, pan-ethnic categories, fundamental differences in language, religion, cultural practices and beliefs are overlooked. As a result, the categorization of a heterogeneous population into a single category creates the illusion that national origin groups are similar and thus interchangeable.

While past research has focused on race-based identity threat among African Americans (Postmes & Branscombe,

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2002) and Whites in the United States (Plaut, Garnet, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011), only recently has research begun to address experiences of individuals from immigrant families and the meaning they assign to their national origin identity (Gonzalez, Sirlopu, & Kessler, 2010; Tormala & Deaux, 2006). For such individuals, a recent national survey suggests that the pan-ethnic category, while instrumental in political mobilization, takes a back seat to the psychological importance of national origin identities (Schildkraut, 2011). Additionally, research on adolescents from immigrant families found that they were more likely to identify with their national origin group than the pan-ethnic category (Fulgini, Witkow, & Garcia, 2005). Whites, however, were more likely to identify with their pan-ethnic category (see also Waters, 1990). Together, the evidence suggests that national origin identity is a psychologically meaningful part of immigrants' self-concept. In the current research, we examine the emotional and behavioral consequences of when national origin distinctions are neglected and individuals, within a pan-ethnic category, are treated as interchangeable members of different national origin groups.

Consequences of National Origin Identity Neglect

To understand the psychological impact of national origin identity neglect, we look to work on social identity threat (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). This body of work suggests that adverse, unexpected consequences may occur when individuals feel that their social identities have not been acknowledged in a manner that is consistent with their self-view (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten, & Smith, 2010; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Such experiences threaten the individual's identity and lead to assertion of the neglected identity (Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Cheryan & Monin, 2005) and negative intergroup attitudes (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Huo, Molina, Sawahata, & Deang, 2005).

Research on miscategorization and identity denial has focused on the external imposition of a contextually inappropriate identity (e.g., treating an individual as Asian when his or her American identity is salient or more important; Barreto & Ellemers, 2002; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). In these situations, the imposed and the chosen identity are both held identities. In contrast, for national origin identity neglect, there is no context in which it is appropriate to categorize someone who, for example, is of Chinese origin (and identifies as such) as being of Korean origin, since these are mutually exclusive categories. Thus, national origin identity neglect extends external categorization research by examining a new experience in which individuals are categorized into a non-self-relevant social category.

The experience of national origin identity neglect is a potentially marginalizing one. Neglect of national origin identities is problematic to the extent that individuals (1) view their national origin group as distinct from others (distinctiveness threat); (2) have a strong attachment to their national origin group and want it to be perceived appropriately (categorization

threat); and (3) view national origin identity neglect as undermining the value of a self-relevant group (value threat). Following work on social identity threat, each of these threats is likely to be present with national origin identity neglect (Branscombe et al., 1999). Existing research suggests that these experiences will lead to negative emotional responses and negative evaluations of the source of threat (Ellemers & Barreto, 2006). In addition, intergroup contact research suggests that positive interpersonal experiences can generalize to the partner's group as a whole (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Thus, we examine the possibility that negative interpersonal evaluations can also be generalized. In fact, intergroup attribution research suggests that individuals are more likely to extend negative attributions from the individual to the group (Taylor & Jaggi, 1974). If negative experiences with the source of identity neglect generalize to the group, then interpersonal interactions may lay the foundations for intergroup conflicts.

Finally, research shows that individuals who identify strongly with a minority group are more likely to internalize negative feedback and perceive greater prejudice (Operario & Fiske, 2001). These findings suggest that high identifiers relative to low identifiers may be more sensitive to negative feedback from others (Branscombe et al., 1999). Additional work indicates that strong in-group ties moderate responses to distinctiveness threat (Wohl, Giguère, Branscombe, & McVicar, 2011). Thus, we expect similar findings with the experience of national origin identity neglect. Specifically, those highly identified with their national origin groups will react more strongly to threat.

Overview of Studies

The goal of this research is to examine the consequences of national origin identity neglect. We do so by focusing on the experiences of Asians and Latinos who form the bulk of the most recent wave of immigration to the United States. Because they are recent immigrants, they are more likely than other minority groups (e.g., African Americans) to have stronger attachments to their national origin identities (Deaux, 2006; Sears, Fu, Henry, & Bui, 2003). We hypothesize that individuals who experience national origin identity neglect will report stronger negative emotions and evaluations of interaction partners (people with whom individuals have social exchanges) relative to those who do not have this experience. In contrast, those who are treated in a manner consistent with their national origin group membership will report stronger positive emotions and evaluations of their interaction partners. Furthermore, we predict that group identification will moderate these relationships such that they will be stronger among high identifiers.

Across the two studies, participants were presented with situations in which an individual's national origin identity was either neglected or recognized. They were given examples to prime thoughts about a similar situation. Participants were then asked for their affective response and evaluations of person who either neglected or recognized their national origin identity. In Study 2, we sought to replicate Study 1 findings and

further explore the effect of national origin identity neglect by examining whether interpersonal evaluations generalize to the partner's ethnic group. Thus, the main predictions were examined across three outcome variables: emotional responses, evaluations of interaction partner, and perceptions of partner's ethnic group. Lastly, we examined the naturalistic prevalence of national origin identity neglect in Study 1.

Method

The two studies share a general framework. For efficiency, we will present the methodological details that apply to both studies while pointing out key differences.

Participants

Study 1. In 2008, Asian and Latino participants ($N = 224$) were recruited from (1) public university students in California who participated in partial fulfillment of course requirements (37%) and (2) research volunteers through websites (63%), from major metropolitan areas (e.g., Los Angeles, New York) and smaller cities (e.g., Milwaukee, Atlanta) across 26 U.S. states. We recruited widely to include participants from different locations (and different levels of diversity).

In the final sample, 11 participants were excluded (1) 2 chose a European country as their national origin group; (2) 5 were identified as statistical outliers based on studentized deleted residuals; and (3) 4 failed to confirm that they read the experimental prompt. The resulting sample consisted of 57% Asians and 43% Latinos, and 57% U.S. born. Age ranged from 18 to 65 (88% in the 18–35 category); 81% were female and 85% had at least some college education. Political orientation was distributed as liberal (49%), moderate (41%), and conservative (10%).

Study 2. Participants ($N = 184$) were recruited entirely from public websites in 2009, using a similar approach. Four participants were identified as outliers indicated by studentized deleted residuals and excluded from subsequent analyses. The resulting sample consisted of 43% Asians and 57% Latinos, and 57% U.S. born. Age ranged from 18 to 65 (62% in the 18–35 category); 60% were female and 88% had at least some college education. Political orientation was distributed as liberal (44%), moderate (46%), and conservative (10%).

Procedures and Design

Participants were recruited into a study of ethnic identity. Individuals were asked to select the pan-ethnic category that best describes them: African American, Asian, Latino, White, or other. Next, they were prompted by an open-ended question to indicate their national origin group. They were asked their identification with that group on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale, indicating agreement with the items: "I am proud of being [a member of my national origin group]" and "Being [a member of my national origin group] is an

important part of my self-image." (Study 1: $r = .419$, and Study 2: $r = .531$). Overall participants were highly identified with their national origin group (Study 1: $M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.15$; Study 2: $M = 5.3$, $SD = 1.41$). However, Study 2 sample (general population) had a lower mean level of identification and greater variance. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions: neglect or recognition of their national origin group. Finally, they completed a set of questions assessing the dependent variables.

Experimental prompts. The only content that differed across conditions was the prompt exposing participants to national origin identity neglect or recognition. Participants were presented with a situation in which someone they just met at a social gathering treated them either as if they were members of an incorrect national origin group or members of a correct national origin group.¹ They were asked to *vividly* imagine what it would feel like if something like this happened to them. If the situation had already happened to them, they were asked to describe it. If not, they were asked to describe what it would be like and how they would feel if it were to occur. Postexperimental probing confirmed that this task was understood and easily undertaken by participants.

Two ways in which the experience of national origin identity neglect/recognition can occur are (1) failure to acknowledge group distinctions or (2) treating individuals as interchangeable members of different groups. Examples of each were provided. Examples of national origin identity neglect were selected to represent situations in which an interaction partner treated one's national origin group as interchangeable with another or treated the individuals as if they were member of a different national origin group. Underlying the experiences is the assumption of similarity among the national origin groups within the pan-ethnic category. Examples given to prompt national origin identity neglect include *a friend asking about your plans to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, which is a Mexican holiday, when you are actually from El Salvador; and someone hears you speaking Vietnamese and asks you if you are from Japan*. In the identity recognition condition, examples were provided to convey recognition of the uniqueness of each national origin group and treatment of individuals as members of an appropriate national origin group. Prompts included the following: *You tell someone that your family is from Mexico, and they ask you if you have ever visited or know anything about the Day of the Dead (a Mexican holiday); and A person overhears you talking in Korean and asks you if you or your family is from Korea*.

Dependent variables. After processing the stimuli, participants reported their affective reactions and evaluations of their interaction partner (Study 1 and Study 2) as well as their perceptions of the partner's ethnic group (Study 2). All items were assessed on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*). Because measures of the dependent variables differed across studies, we present Study 1 variables first and then Study 2 variables.

Study 1

Emotions and partner evaluations. Participants were asked about the extent to which they would experience a set of emotions. In Study 1, positive emotions included happy, satisfied, respected, and proud ($\alpha = .94$); and negative emotions included angry, frustrated, hurt, sad, uncomfortable, and annoyed ($\alpha = .85$). Next, participants were asked to rate the interaction partner on a number of traits. Positive traits included likable and someone you would like to know better ($\alpha = .79$). Negative traits included naive, elitist, arrogant, ignorant, and insensitive ($\alpha = .86$).

National origin identity neglect in everyday life. To assess the prevalence of experiences with national origin identity neglect, we asked participants whether they have ever encountered a real-life situation in which their national origin identity was neglected, and if so, how frequently it occurs. Examples along with a description of the general phenomenon were provided. The frequency of national origin identity neglect encounters would give us insight on the extent to which Asian and Latinos experience this often overlooked form of identity threat.

Study 2

Emotions and partner evaluations. In Study 2, additional items were added to emotions and partner evaluations. Positive emotions included happy, respected, proud, inspired, and good ($\alpha = .91$), whereas negative emotions included sad, uncomfortable, frustrated, insulted, upset, annoyed, angry, hurt, and hostile ($\alpha = .94$). Positive partner traits included intelligent, likable, engaging, open-minded, and friendly ($\alpha = .90$); and negative partner traits included annoying, naive, insensitive, elitist, ignorant, arrogant, prejudiced, and uneducated ($\alpha = .93$).

Intergroup perceptions. Individuals were asked to evaluate how they would feel about their interaction partner's ethnic group after the interaction occurred. Intergroup evaluations included the same descriptors used to evaluate the interaction partner (positive intergroup perceptions; $\alpha = .91$ and negative intergroup perceptions; $\alpha = .94$).²

Results

For ease of presentation, Study 1 results will be described followed by Study 2 results. To test the main predictions, between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted separately for each dependent variable.³ We also examined whether national origin identification moderated these relationships. To do so, we conducted hierarchical regression analyses in which identity treatment and group identification were entered in the first step and their interaction term was entered in the second step to predict dependent variables. In all analyses, ethnicity, age, gender, immigration status, and political ideology were controlled for.⁴

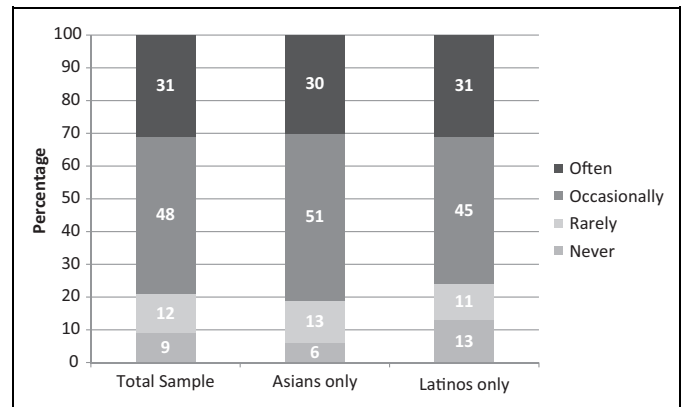


Figure 1. Frequency of everyday experiences with national origin identity neglect.

Study 1

We begin by presenting data on participants' reported experiences with national origin identity neglect in everyday life. Then, we evaluated whether identity treatment affects emotional responses and partner evaluations, accompanied by an examination of whether national origin identification moderates the observed relationships.

National origin identity neglect in everyday life. After completing the main section of the study, participants were asked about their daily experiences with national origin identity neglect. They were presented with examples of national origin identity neglect and asked to estimate how often they encounter such experiences. Only 9% of participants stated that they have never encountered such situation. In contrast, 31% reported that they encountered national origin identity neglect at least once a month. Nearly half (48%) indicated at least a few times a year, and 12% recalled it happening sometimes but rarely. As Figure 1 shows, the distribution of responses was consistent among Asians and Latinos.

Effects of Identity Treatment and Group Identification

Affect. First, we focus on the effect of national origin identity neglect/recognition on affective responses. Between-subjects ANOVAs showed main effects of treatment on positive and negative emotions (Figure 2A). Participants in the recognition condition reported stronger positive emotions than those in the neglect condition: $M = 2.86$, standard error of the mean (SEM) = .08 vs. $M = 1.22$, $SEM = .08$, $F(1, 205) = 207.21$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .50$. In contrast, participants reported stronger negative emotions in the neglect condition than in the recognition condition: $M = 1.90$, $SEM = .06$ vs. $M = 1.31$, $SEM = .06$, $F(1, 205) = 46.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. There was a marginally significant interaction between Group Identification and Identity Treatment for positive emotions ($\beta = .43$, $p = .086$). Decomposition of the interaction at 1 SD above and below the mean of national origin identification revealed that the effect of identity treatment tended to be stronger among high identifiers than low identifiers ($\beta = .76$, $p < .001$ vs. $\beta = .58$, $p < .001$). The

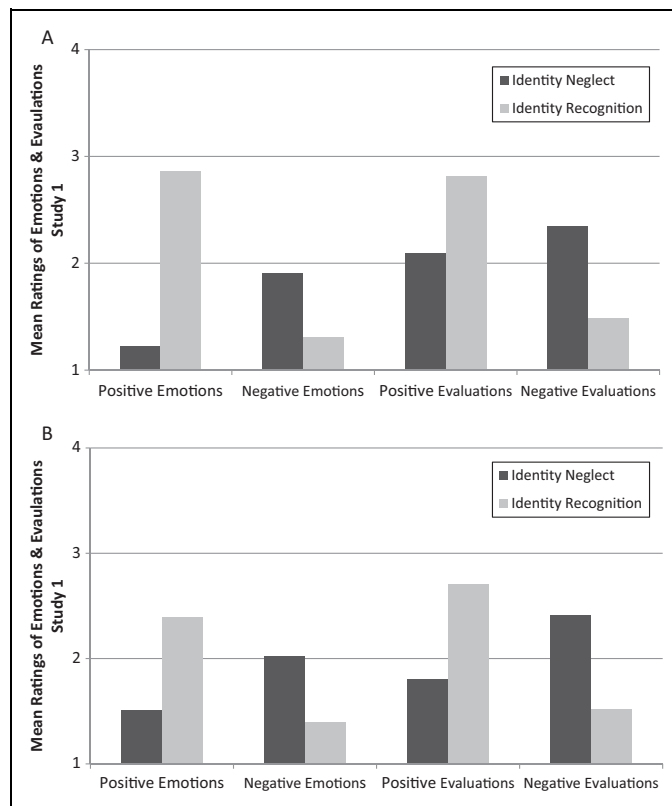


Figure 2. A, Effect of identity treatment on affect and partner evaluations (Study 1). B, Effect of identity treatment on affect and partner evaluations (Study 2).

interaction between Treatment and Group Identification was not significant for negative emotions ($\beta = -.20, p = .530$).

Partner evaluations. Next, we examined the effect of treatment on interaction partner evaluations. Participants reported stronger positive evaluations in the recognition condition than in the neglect condition: $M = 2.81, SEM = .09$ vs. $M = 2.10, SEM = .09, F(1, 205) = 34.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$ (Figure 2A). In contrast, they reported stronger negative evaluations in the neglect than in the recognition condition: $M = 2.34, SEM = .08$ vs. $M = 1.48, SEM = .08, F(1, 205) = 61.54, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$. The interaction between Group Identification and Identity Treatment was marginally significant in predicting positive evaluations of the partner, ($\beta = .55, p = .099$). The effect of identity treatment on positive evaluations of the interaction partner tended to be stronger among high identifiers than low identifiers ($\beta = .49, p < .001$ vs. $\beta = .21, p = .027$). In contrast, the interaction between treatment and group identification was not significant in predicting negative evaluations of the partner ($\beta = .11, p = .732$).

Study 2

Study 1 findings demonstrated that national origin identity neglect is an ecologically valid phenomenon, commonly experienced by Asian and Latino participants alike. Moreover, national origin identity neglect leads to adverse responses—both in terms

of individual affect and evaluations of the source (interaction partner). In contrast, identity recognition leads to stronger positive responses. Lastly, the effect of identity treatment on positive affect and partner evaluations tended to be stronger among those more highly identified with their national origin group. However, because these interactions were marginally significant, it suggests the need for additional research.

In Study 2, our goals are to replicate the observed effects of identity treatment on affective responses and partner evaluations and further examine the possible moderating effects of group identification. We do so using a wider array of indicators. In addition, we extend these findings by evaluating whether the effects generalize beyond the immediate context to evaluations of the partner's ethnic group.

Effects of Identity Treatment and Group Identification

Affect. We begin with analysis of the effect of identity treatment on affective responses. Participants reported stronger positive emotions in the recognition condition than in the neglect condition: $M = 2.39, SEM = .09$ vs. $M = 1.51, SEM = .09, F(1, 167) = 43.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ (Figure 2B). In contrast, they reported stronger negative emotions in the neglect condition than in the recognition condition: $M = 2.02, SEM = .09$ vs. $M = 1.39, SEM = .09, F(1, 167) = 22.51, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. The interaction between Identity Treatment and Group Identification was significant in predicting positive emotions, ($\beta = .97, p < .001$). The effect of identity treatment was stronger among high identifiers relative to low identifiers ($\beta = .77, p < .001$ vs. $\beta = .20, p = .028$). The interaction of Group Identification and Identity Treatment was also significant in predicting negative emotions ($\beta = -.84, p = .004$). The effect of identity treatment on negative emotions was stronger among high identifiers than low identifiers ($\beta = -.53, p < .001$ vs. $\beta = -.10, p = .305$).

Partner evaluations. As in Study 1, participants reported stronger positive evaluations in the recognition condition than in the neglect condition: $M = 2.69, SEM = .09$ vs. $M = 1.82, SEM = .10, F(1, 166) = 42.82, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ (Figure 2B). In contrast, they reported stronger negative evaluations in the neglect condition than in the recognition condition: $M = 2.41, SEM = .10$ vs. $M = 1.51, SEM = .10, F(1, 166) = 39.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$. The interaction between Identity Treatment and Group Identification was marginally significant in predicting positive evaluations of the interaction partner ($\beta = .47, p = .096$). The effect of identity treatment on positive evaluations of the interaction partner tended to be stronger among high identifiers than among low identifiers ($\beta = .57, p < .001$ vs. $\beta = .32, p = .002$). The interaction was significant in predicting negative evaluations of the partner ($\beta = -.63, p = .024$). The effect of treatment on negative partner evaluations was stronger among high identifiers than among low identifiers ($\beta = -.57, p < .001$ vs. $\beta = -.25, p = .011$).

Intergroup perceptions. Evaluations of the partner's ethnic group were assessed in Study 2, allowing us to evaluate the effect of identity treatment on intergroup perceptions.

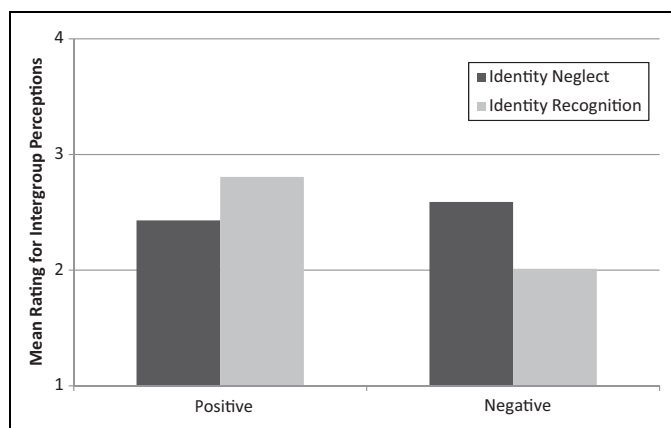


Figure 3. Effect of identity treatment on positive and negative group perceptions (Study 2).

Participants reported stronger positive group evaluations in the recognition condition than in the neglect condition: $M = 2.81$, $SEM = .12$ vs. $M = 2.43$, $SEM = .12$, $F(1, 122) = 4.82$, $p = .030$, $\eta^2 = .04$ (Figure 3). In contrast, they reported stronger negative group evaluations in the neglect condition than in the recognition condition: $M = 2.60$, $SEM = .13$ vs. $M = 2.01$, $SEM = .14$, $F(1, 121) = 9.15$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .07$. The interaction between treatment condition and group identification was not significant for positive intergroup perceptions ($\beta = -.16$, $p = .660$). However, the interaction was significant in predicting negative intergroup perceptions ($\beta = -.89$, $p = .011$). The effect of identity treatment on negative intergroup perceptions was stronger among high identifiers than among low identifiers ($\beta = -.48$, $p < .001$ vs. $\beta = -.04$, $p = .716$).

Discussion

The findings presented highlight a predicament faced by individuals of culturally distinct national origin groups that comprise a shared pan-ethnic category. The convergence of shared phenotypical features and political expediency produces a potential vulnerability for these individuals. They are at risk of being treated as a member of a group to which they do not belong. As our findings demonstrate, this failure to recognize the distinctiveness and value of national origin identities may have potential adverse effects on the targets and their relationships with others. In contrast, efforts to recognize and acknowledge the distinctiveness and value of national origin identities can help forge more positive exchanges across ethnic lines. We find that these effects are generally stronger among those more highly identified with their national origin group. This latter finding is consistent with the notion that the observed effects originate from the neglect of a psychologically meaningful social identity.

Importantly, the effect of national origin identity neglect extends beyond the immediate context to evaluations of the interaction partners' ethnic group. Thus, not only can national origin identity neglect lead to potential interpersonal conflict, such "bad feelings" can generalize to the social category that

person represents. Although our findings indicate that identity recognition can elicit positive intergroup perceptions, this effect is attenuated relative to the observed effect for negative intergroup perceptions and is not moderated by group identification. While a large body of research highlights the benefits of contact on intergroup relations (Wright, 2009), the findings remind us that negative outcomes can also occur. What began as a one-on-one interaction may evolve into persistent negative evaluations of entire groups. Awareness of the importance of national origin identities in the psychology of individuals would address a potential source of intergroup tension.

Limitations and Future Directions

We approached our research question with an eye toward maximizing our ability to make causal inferences while capitalizing on an ecologically valid and meaningful phenomenon. In doing so, our experimental instructions provided examples of the phenomenon in question and asked participants to consider a congruent situation. Thus although the paradigm can be described as reflecting a hypothetical experience, additional query into the frequency of real-life experiences of our participants indicate that national origin identity neglect is anything but hypothetical. National origin identity neglect is not a novel experience and is, in fact, quite common for the majority of our participants. Additionally, our studies drew from two samples, which represented Asians and Latinos across a wide swath of cultural and geographic landscapes, from traditional immigrant receiving cities of Asians and Latinos (e.g., New York) to smaller cities in the Midwest (e.g., Milwaukee). This feature of the study attests to the robustness of the demonstrated effects.

The goal of the current research is to demonstrate the potential impact of national origin identity neglect on individuals and their relationships with others. Future research is needed to identify the contextual variables that attenuate or exacerbate reactions to national origin identity neglect. For example, individuals may be more willing to accept categorization into a higher status national origin group than a lower status one (Deaux, 2006). In contrast, categorization into a national group with which one's in-group has a history of conflict may heighten the subsequent tension (Comez-Diaz, 2001). Even though experiences for Asians and Latinos may differ based on the valence of the group categorizations, research suggests that negative reactions occur regardless of whether the "miscategorized" group is perceived positively or negatively by others (Ellemers & Barreto, 2006). Another variable to consider in future research is the group membership of the source of national origin identity neglect. When national origin identity neglect comes at the hands of someone who shares the pan-ethnic group membership, individuals may respond by distancing themselves from the shared identity. In contrast, if the partner is from a pan-ethnic out-group, individuals may respond by limiting future interactions with that out-group. Finally, we note that the majority of both of our samples have some college education or more. Although we have no a priori predictions about the role of education, it may be a potential

moderator of the observed effects. For example, the effect may be attenuated among those with less education in contrast to those who are more educated and expect their peers to “know better.” Research that examines these moderating factors would help further understanding of the basis for potential conflicts among two of the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States—Asians and Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

Lastly, while the current work focused on national origin identities, our findings can potentially shed light on the experiences of a number of other social groups and contexts. For example, in nations where social divisions are organized around religious differences, individuals who share phenotypic and other similarities with members of religious out-groups may also face identity neglect and its consequences. It is our hope that this work will motivate future research on the general phenomenon of identity neglect that occurs in situation where overarching similarities overshadow important group-based distinctions.

Conclusion

Past research indicates that discrepancies between how individuals view themselves and how others view them can lead to negative psychological responses. The current work highlights a previously overlooked but important source of identity threat—one in which key distinctions among valued social categories go unacknowledged and individuals within these otherwise mutually exclusive groups are treated interchangeably. In the United States and other immigrant-receiving nations, the pan-ethnic categories that individuals are grouped into, oftentimes, encompass a heterogeneous population that varies on multiple factors including national origin, language, status, and history. Yet, this very form of neglect perpetuates the belief that all pan-ethnic group members are “one and the same.” Recognition of diversity *within* pan-ethnic categories together with awareness of the importance and self-relevance of national origin identity to individuals will be critical to promoting positive intergroup interactions in the 21st century.

Authors' Notes

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Notes

1. For the complete stimuli, please contact the author.

2. Approximately 90% of the participants who volunteered the partner's ethnic group reported an ethnic out-group. Of those who selected an out-group, 74% reported thinking about Whites/Caucasians and 8% reported “Americans.” For those who reported an “in-group,” four participants reported the same national origin group and seven reported the same pan-ethnic group or another national origin group.
3. There was no interaction between recruitment method and condition.
4. Main effects of covariates for both studies are available in the online supplementary materials (see Online Supplemental Material found at <http://spps.sagepub.com/supplemental>). In Study 1, there was a significant interaction between ethnicity and condition on positive emotions; however, the direction of the effect was similar for Asians and Latinos. In Study 2, there was a significant interaction between age and condition on negative group evaluations. Again, the direction of the effect was similar for the age ranges.

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