

Perceptions of racial essentialism and social identity threat

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Abstract

While past research documents essentialist beliefs' (i.e., believing social groups have inherent, unchangeable traits) impact on prejudice, no research has explored if stigmatized groups perceive essentialism as indicative of bias. With a sample of participants diverse in race and sexual orientation, we document that endorsers of racial essentialism were perceived as more likely to be racist and also as more likely to be sexist and heterosexist, relative to nonendorsers (Studies 1–2). As some essentialist beliefs about sexual orientation are associated with progay attitudes, another experiment parsed out dimensions of racial essentialism (i.e., natural kind and entitative beliefs) and examined differences in White sexual minorities' expectations of bias from this race-based cue. Findings indicate that both essentialism dimensions elicited identity threat with potential consequences for sexual minorities' desire to conceal their sexual orientation; thus, we broaden conceptualizations of cues that elicit identity threat while exploring nuances of the impact of perceiver identity and essentialism type.

Keywords

essentialism, identity concealment, identity threat, prejudice, sexual minorities, stigma

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Beliefs about the inborn and unchangeable nature of race form early in life (Gaither et al., 2014; Pauker et al., 2010) and are prevalent in adulthood with direct consequences for racial stereotyping (for reviews, see Haslam & Whelan, 2008; Rhodes & Mandalaywala, 2017). For instance, in 2016, about 50% of a sample of medical students and residents held false beliefs about biological differences between Black and White people (e.g., “Whites have larger brains than Blacks”; Hoffman et al., 2016). When encountering these beliefs about group differences, we may be reminded of the historical oppression of Black people due to false beliefs that they were biologically inferior (Bobo & Smith, 1998;

Gould, 1981; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Tucker, 1994). However, for other social groups, such biological difference beliefs may remind us of positive social movements; for example, to promote viewing

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sexual orientation as an inborn genetic difference to improve attitudes towards sexual minorities (Garretson & Suhay, 2016; Henry, 1993).

The present work examines stigmatized (i.e., socially devalued, stereotyped, and derogated) group members' perceptions of individuals who endorse beliefs about the biological and informative nature of race. Specifically, we examine whether individuals with diverse racial identities and sexual orientations perceive racial essentialism endorsement as indicative of prejudice towards racial minorities (i.e., the group targeted by the essentialist belief) and also as indicative of prejudice towards other social groups (e.g., gender and sexual minorities). Further, the present work examines how these expectations of prejudice are formed, specifically exploring how others' endorsement of varied racial essentialism beliefs elicits expectations of essentialist beliefs about other social groups. Lastly, to document the potential negative outcomes of exposure to race essentialist beliefs, we examine participants' expectations of identity-based devaluation from individuals who endorse varied types of essentialist beliefs.

Dimensions of Essentialism and Prejudice

Endorsers of essentialist beliefs posit that social group members have stable, inborn underlying "essences" that are responsible for within-group homogeneity and distinct between-group differences (Haslam et al., 2000, 2002; Karasawa et al., 2019). Essentialist beliefs have long been discussed as a belief system that underlies attitudes towards social ingroup and outgroup members (i.e., others who share or do not share a social identity with the individual). For instance, research has considered how beliefs that members of a social group share an inborn essence influence attitudes towards interacting with stigmatized groups (Bastian & Haslam, 2008; M. Williams & Eberhardt, 2008), stereotyping of outgroup members (Bastian & Haslam, 2006; Keller, 2005), and equitable policy preferences (Bastian & Haslam, 2008; Soylu Yalcinkaya et al., 2017). Generally, such work demonstrates that endorsement of essentialism is associated with

harboring prejudicial attitudes (Hodson & Skorska, 2015; Hoyt et al., 2019; Roets & van Hiel, 2011). Essentialist beliefs are also employed to justify and perpetuate social inequalities (Hanson-Easey et al., 2014; Keller, 2005; Morton et al., 2009; Verkuyten, 2003; Zeromskytte & Wagner, 2017). For example, beliefs that racial groups have inborn differences have been used to justify discriminatory policies as well as racial oppression and eugenics (Bobo & Smith, 1998; Gould, 1981; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Phelan et al., 2013; Tucker, 1994).

Importantly, some research delineates two dimensions of essentialism—entitative and natural kind beliefs (Haslam et al., 2000, 2002; Karasawa et al., 2019). Entitative essentialism (EE) refers to the extent to which social groups are perceived as cohesive such that knowledge of group membership is informative of the uniform features that group members share (Haslam et al., 2000; Roets & van Hiel, 2011). Natural kind essentialism (NKE) emphasizes the unalterable fixed nature of group members' characteristics that determine distinct group boundaries (e.g., the idea that there are biological differences between racial group members; Haslam et al., 2000). While EE beliefs are associated with prejudice towards minoritized racial groups (e.g., Mandalaywala et al., 2018; Roets & van Hiel, 2011), women (e.g., Skewes et al., 2018), and sexual minorities (e.g., Haslam & Levy, 2006; Hodson & Skorska, 2015), NKE beliefs are not always associated with prejudice (Haslam et al., 2002; Ryazanov & Christenfeld, 2018). For example, while NKE beliefs about race are ubiquitously associated with prejudice (Condit et al., 2004; Jayaratne et al., 2006; Keller, 2005), certain NKE beliefs about sexual minorities or the origin of sexual orientation are associated with lower prejudice, such as believing sexual orientation is inborn is associated with progay attitudes and behaviors (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Horn & Heinze, 2011; Morton & Postmes, 2009).

Encountering Racial Essentialist Beliefs

Despite possible limitations of social desirability in reporting, racial natural kind essentialist beliefs (i.e., RNKE) are pervasive, such that about one

fifth of non-Black American samples endorsed biological beliefs about racial differences between White and Black people (Jayaratne et al., 2006; Morning et al., 2019). Racial entitative essentialist beliefs (i.e., REE) have been found to be prevalent in media outlets and educational settings (e.g., jokes that members of a racial group share similar dispositions; Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Donovan, 2015; Morning, 2008). Racial essentialism is the most widely examined essentialist belief in the psychological literature, with robust and clear relationships to prejudice (e.g., Mandalaywala et al., 2018; Roets & van Hiel, 2011).

Cues of prejudice directed at one's social group (e.g., race essentialist beliefs for racial minorities) can elicit heightened expectations of being devalued because of one's stigmatized identity (i.e., social identity threat; see Major & O'Brien, 2005; Murphy et al., 2007; Steele et al., 2002). Of note, prejudice cues directed towards one social group can elicit social identity threat for members of other (or non-targeted) stigmatized groups; for example, when encountering a racist evaluator, White women expected gender-based devaluation; men of color, similarly, anticipated racism from a sexist evaluator (Sanchez et al., 2017). This perceived transfer of prejudice and consequent social identity threat is proposed to occur due to the perceived overlapping nature of prejudice, such that individuals who harbor prejudice towards one stigmatized group are perceived to harbor prejudicial attitudes towards other stigmatized groups (Chaney et al., 2020; Sanchez et al., 2018). Importantly, perceptions about the overlap of prejudices directed at multiple groups may be accurate (Cipollina et al., 2022), as prejudices towards marginalized groups do indeed often overlap (Akrami et al., 2011; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). Due to underlying components of prejudice (e.g., preference for social hierarchies), individuals that hold racist attitudes are likely to hold negative attitudes towards other stigmatized groups like women and sexual minorities. Altogether, the literature suggests that exposure to outgroup-directed prejudice can signal identity threat for individuals not targeted by that prejudice (e.g., Sanchez et al., 2017), and that this expectation is based on the real nature of prejudice (see Duckitt & Sibley, 2007).

Current Research

Study 1 examined if endorsement of racial essentialist beliefs elicited heightened expectations of prejudice among a sample of individuals with a stigmatized race, gender, or sexual identity. We anticipated that participants would be aware of the relationship between racial essentialism endorsement and racism, and we further anticipated that racial essentialism endorsement would indicate a general preference for social hierarchy (i.e., social dominance orientation) and also negative attitudes towards women and sexual minorities. We tested a proposed mediation model linking a racial essentialism endorser to participants' expectations of sexism and heterosexism through heightened expectations of racism, relative to a nonendorser of racial essentialism. Such examination adds to the essentialism and social identity threat literature by documenting that racial essentialist beliefs are used as indicators of prejudice towards varied social groups.

Study 2 sought to replicate and expand Study 1 with a sample of people of color who varied in sexual identity. Specifically, this extended replication explored if perceptions of sexual orientation essentialist beliefs mediated the relationship between exposure to racial essentialism and expectations of heterosexism, whilst examining differences in the perceptions of individuals who are directly affected by racism (i.e., heterosexual people of color) and those who are directly affected by racism and heterosexism (i.e., sexual minorities of color).

Finally, Study 3 examined if and how encounters with racial essentialism elicit social identity threat for individuals even if they are not directly targeted by the essentialist belief. We anticipated that White sexual minority participants exposed to an individual endorsing racial essentialism would report greater expectations of identity-based devaluation (i.e., social identity threat) from that individual, compared to a no-information control condition target. Further, we examined the downstream effect of exposure to varied race essentialism dimensions on sexual minorities' desired sexual orientation concealment, which has been linked to negative biopsychosocial consequences

for sexual minorities (e.g., poorer well-being; see Pachankis, 2007).

Study 1

Methods

Participants. Participants were recruited on the Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) survey platform. A G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) power analysis suggested a necessary sample size of 200 participants to detect a small to medium effect ($d = 0.40$) at 80% power, and we slightly oversampled to account for participants with failed attention checks. Participants were eligible to participate if they (a) had one stigmatized race, gender, or sexual orientation identity; (b) were over the age of 18; (c) resided within the US; and (d) were comfortable answering survey questions in English. Survey respondents who failed two or more attention check questions were rejected and not compensated, as per Rutgers University institutional review board (IRB) approval. Participants who met the previous criteria and did not fail two or more attention checks were compensated US\$1.00 for completing our 10-minute survey. All experiments were conducted in accordance with protocols approved by the IRB.

Our analytic sample consisted of 215 MTurk workers ($M_{\text{age}} = 38.93$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.30$) who identified as non-Hispanic White ($n = 124$; 57.7%), Black/African American ($n = 49$; 22.8%), South or East Asian ($n = 18$; 8.4%), Hispanic/Latino ($n = 11$; 5.1%), bi/multiracial ($n = 8$; 3.7%), and Native American/Alaskan Native ($n = 5$; 2.3%). The sample was composed predominately of women ($n = 149$; 69.3%), with 66 people identifying as men (30.7%). Participants identified as heterosexual/straight ($n = 158$; 73.5%), bisexual ($n = 48$; 22.3%), gay/lesbian ($n = 8$; 3.7%), and one participant did not disclose.

Procedures. Participants on MTurk were invited to participate in a 5-minute survey on impressions of social groups and were told that they would view another respondent's answers to survey questions, to form an impression of the person. After consent, participants read the ostensible

other participant's survey responses, which consisted of demographic information, filler personality scales (e.g., the Big Five Inventory; John et al., 1991), and the respondent's answers to items assessing essentialist beliefs (though they were not labeled as such). The use of questionnaire packets ostensibly completed by a previous participant has been a feature of previous work (see Piel, 2002; Sawyer et al., 2012) and has been utilized to elicit social identity threat (e.g., Sanchez et al., 2017).

Participants were randomly exposed to one of two conditions wherein the individual either agreed with racial essentialist beliefs (i.e., endorser) or disagreed with racial essentialist beliefs (i.e., nonendorser). After reading the target's responses, participants were given a manipulation check, which asked them to correctly select the target's response to one essentialism scale item among filler questions (e.g., what was the individual's response to a Big Five item). If they failed this manipulation check ($n = 19$), they were supplied with the target's profile information once more and they repeated the manipulation check. No participant failed the check twice. Participants completed measures assessing their perceptions of the target's attitudes toward different social groups before completing other scales included to be explored for future research (e.g., participants' own essentialist beliefs; full materials are available on the Open Science Framework [OSF] website). Upon completion of the main survey, participants reported their demographics and were debriefed.

Materials

Condition materials. The target's information was controlled across all conditions such that all participants viewed responses from a White heterosexual male of 33 years of age, with conditions varying solely by his responses to racial essentialism items. The utilized essentialism items (eight) were derived from Mandalaywala et al.'s (2018) essentialism Scale (e.g., "Race is an all-or-none category, people are either White or Black, there is nothing in between"). The eight racial essentialism statements included both NKE and

Table 1. Measure descriptive statistics across Studies 1 and 2.

	Item	Range	Study 1, $N = 215$			Study 2, $N = 263$		
			M	SD	α	M	SD	α
Perceived SDO	8	1–7	3.28	1.49	.92	3.53	1.58	.93
Perceived racism	3	1–7	3.51	2.09	.95	3.24	2.00	.97
Perceived sexism	3	1–7	3.30	1.92	.95	2.99	1.78	.97
Perceived heterosexism	3	1–7	3.41	2.00	.96	3.16	1.89	.97
Perceived SOEE	3	1–5	-	-	-	3.02	1.43	.90
Perceived SONKE	2	1–5	-	-	-	3.41	1.14	

Note. SDO = social dominance orientation; SOEE = sexual orientation entitative essentialism; SONKE = sexual orientation natural kind essentialism.

EE items. In the nonendorser condition, the individual disagreed with racial essentialism statements (i.e., low REE and low RNKE), while in the endorser condition, the individual agreed with the statements (i.e., high REE and high RNKE).¹

Outcome measures. See Table 1 for measure descriptive statistics across Studies 1 and 2.

Perceived social dominance orientation. Participants reported their perceptions of the target's social dominance orientation (SDO) answering eight items as they believed the individual would (e.g., "Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups"; Ho et al., 2015) on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly oppose*, 7 = *strongly favor*). Items were reversed if needed and averaged such that higher values indicate greater perceived preference for social hierarchies.

Perceived racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Participants reported their perceptions of the target's prejudice towards racial minorities, women, and sexual minorities. The three examined prejudices were rated with three items each (e.g., "How likely it is that. . ." "this person is racist," "this person has negative attitudes towards women," and "this person treats sexual minorities unfairly"; items adapted from Sanchez et al., 2017) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *very likely*). The scales of perceived racism, sexism, and heterosexism were reliable and were averaged such that high values indicate higher perceived likeli-

hood of each prejudice.²

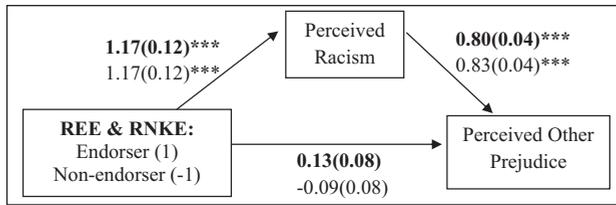
Results

A series of independent samples t tests were conducted to examine the influence of racial essentialism endorsement condition (i.e., endorser vs. nonendorser) on each outcome.

Perceived social dominance orientation. The racial essentialism endorser was rated as significantly higher in SDO ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.53$) than the nonendorser ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.21$), $t(213) = 5.85$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.80$.

Perceived racism, sexism, and heterosexism. As expected, the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as significantly more likely to be racist ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.85$) compared to the nonendorser ($M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.60$), $t(209.15) = 9.93$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.36$. Importantly, the racial essentialism endorser was also perceived to harbor greater prejudice towards other social groups, such that the racial essentialism endorser was rated as more likely to be sexist ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 1.88$) when compared to the nonendorser ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.51$), $t(213) = 7.61$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.04$, and as more likely to be heterosexist ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 1.86$) than the nonendorser ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 1.53$), $t(213) = 9.16$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.25$.

Proposed mediation. A series of proposed mediation analyses using Hayes's (2017) PROCESS

Figure 1. Mediation analyses: Study 1.

Note. Mediation analysis highlighting the unstandardized relationships (with standard errors) between racial essentialism endorsement and perceptions of prejudice towards sexual minorities (bolded coefficients) and women (nonbolded coefficients) through perceived racism. The direct effect is displayed on the c path.

*** $p < .001$.

macro revealed significant indirect effects of condition on perceptions of sexism (Mediation 1) and heterosexism (Mediation 2) through perceived racism, such that the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as more likely to be racist when compared to the nonendorser, which in turn was associated with being perceived as more likely to be sexist (indirect effect: $B = 0.97$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI [0.77, 1.19]) and heterosexist (indirect effect: $B = 0.94$, $SE = 0.11$, 95% CI [0.83, 1.29]). Figure 1 displays mediation paths for both perceived group prejudice outcomes.

Discussion

Study 1 examined if stigmatized group members perceived an individual who endorsed racial essentialist beliefs as more likely to harbor prejudicial attitudes when compared to an individual that did not endorse such beliefs. We found that the racial essentialism endorser (i.e., high RNKE and high REE) was perceived as more likely to endorse SDO and as more likely to be racist, sexist, and heterosexist, relative to the nonendorser (i.e., low RNKE and low REE). Mediation analyses suggest that perceptions of the target's prejudice towards other social groups (i.e., sexism, heterosexism) were cued by participants' awareness of the links between racism and other prejudices in society.

Study 2

Study 2 sought to replicate the findings of Study 1 and recruited a sample of racial and ethnic

minorities with varied sexual identities, given that the majority in Study 1 identified as non-Hispanic White and as heterosexual. This study expanded on Study 1 by utilizing the same materials while also examining perceptions of the target's sexual orientation essentialist beliefs. Drawing on past literature detailing the unique experiences of people with varied minoritized intersectional identities (see Jackson et al., 2020; S. L. Williams & Fredrick, 2015), we sought to examine whether lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual minority (i.e., LGB+) people of color (POC) would be more attuned to the interconnectedness of essentialist beliefs towards racial and sexual minorities, compared to heterosexual POC. In other words, we examined if participants' sexual orientation moderated the influence of exposure to racial essentialist beliefs on expectations of heterosexism through expectations of endorsed sexual orientation essentialism. Some nascent work identifies that individuals with multiple stigmatized identities are more likely to view prejudice directed at one social group as indicative of prejudice towards other stigmatized groups (Pham et al., 2022), so it is plausible that individuals with intersecting minority racial and sexual orientation identities would be most attuned to the outcomes and correspondence of racial and sexual orientation essentialism.

Participants

An a priori power analysis recommended a minimum sample size of 244 participants for a 2 (racial

essentialism: endorser vs. nonendorser) x 2 (sexual orientation: LGB+ vs. heterosexual) ANOVA ($d = 0.40$, 80% power). Participants who identified with a racial identity other than non-Hispanic White were recruited on Prolific and were paid US\$1.00 for completing our 5-minute survey. After following the same data cleaning protocol listed in Study 1, our analytic sample consisted of 263 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.62$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.88$), 52.5% of whom identified as belonging to the LGB+ community (i.e., 13.3% gay or lesbian; 31.9% bisexual; 7% pansexual, asexual, or other not listed sexual orientation), while the remaining 47.5% identified as heterosexual. The majority of participants identified as Asian (31.9%); 28.1% of the sample identified as bi/multiracial or selected two or more racial identities; 22.1% identified as Black/Caribbean/African American; 14.8% as Latino or Hispanic; 1.9% as Native American; and one participant identified as Middle Eastern/Northern African. The final sample was relatively evenly split between participants who identified as women (47.13%) and men (46.8%), while an additional 4.5% of the sample identified as gender queer, gender fluid, gender nonbinary, or with another not listed gender identity.

Procedures

Participants were recruited to participate on a survey on impressions of social groups. After consent, participants viewed the same profile materials utilized in Study 1, such that they were randomly assigned to view the racial essentialism endorser ($n = 129$) or nonendorser ($n = 134$). As in Study 1, participants who failed the critical manipulation check ($n = 2$) were prompted to read the respondent's materials once more before answering the check question again. No participant failed the check twice. Participants answered survey measures assessing their perceptions of the respondent before reporting their demographics and being debriefed.

Materials

Condition materials. Across all conditions, participants read responses from a White 33-year-old

heterosexual male. As in Study 1, conditions varied solely by the individual's responses to eight racial essentialism items. The racial essentialism endorser agreed with the essentialism statements (i.e., high REE and high RNKE); the nonendorser disagreed with the statements (i.e., low REE and low RNKE).

Measures

Outcome measures. All measures' descriptive statistics are provided in Table 1.

Perceived SDO, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Participants responded to identical measures to those in Study 1 to assess their perceptions of the target's SDO, racism, sexism, and heterosexism.

Perceived sexual orientation essentialism. Perceived sexual orientation essentialism items were added to Study 2, such that participants responded to three items providing their beliefs about the individual's endorsement of sexual orientation entitative essentialism (SOEE; e.g., "Knowing someone is homosexual tells you a lot about them") and three items assessing their perceptions of the individual's sexual orientation natural kind essentialism (SONKE; e.g., "Gay and lesbian people are fundamentally different from heterosexual people"). Items were reported on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all likely*, 5 = *very likely*) following the prompt, "How likely is it that this person believes each of the following?" Because the two essentialism dimensions are noted to have differential relationships with attitudes towards sexual minorities, we subjected the six items to an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) utilizing principal axis factoring and oblimin rotation. The EFA revealed, as expected, two subscales, and suggested that one intended SONKE item did not load onto either factor (i.e., factor loading below .40). A measure of perceived SOEE beliefs was created by averaging the three reliable items (adapted from Roets & van Hiel, 2011) wherein higher scores indicate higher entitative essentialism (associated with heterosexist atti-

tudes in past literature); and a measure of perceived SONKE was created by averaging the two natural kind items (adapted from Haslam & Levy, 2006), which were reverse-coded such that higher values on this scale indicate stronger endorsement of sexual orientation as a natural/biological factor (associated with progay attitudes in past literature); two-item correlation: $r(263) = .46, p < .001$. The perceived SONKE and SOEE measures were placed immediately after profile packet materials and before other dependent variable measures.

Results

To replicate our findings from Study 1 while examining the influence of sexual orientation on perceptions of heterosexism from race essentialism cues, we conducted a series of 2 (racial essentialism: endorser vs. nonendorser) \times 2 (sexual orientation: heterosexual vs. LGB+) between-subjects ANOVAs.

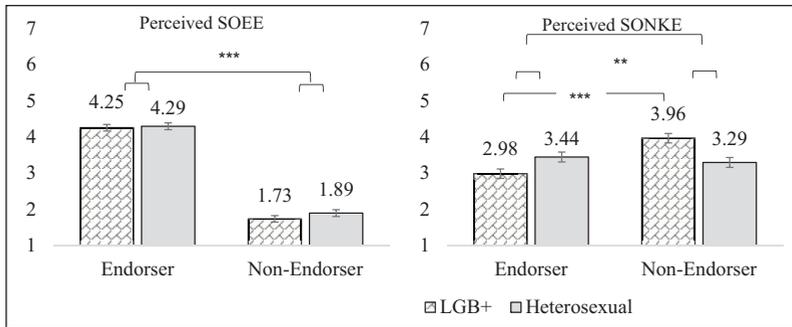
Perceived social dominance orientation. As in Study 1, there was a significant effect of condition on perceived SDO, $F(1, 259) = 158.39, p < .001, d = 1.56$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as significantly higher in SDO ($M = 4.52, SD = 1.36$) than the nonendorser ($M = 2.58, SD = 1.13$). Participant sexual orientation did not have a significant effect on SDO, $F(1, 259) = 0.17, p = .68, d = 0.06$, and the Condition \times Sexual Orientation interaction was not significant, $F(1, 259) = 0.42, p = .52, d = 0.09$.

Perceived racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Replicating Study 1, there was a significant effect of condition on perceived racism, $F(1, 259) = 190.92, p < .001, d = 1.72$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as more likely to be racist ($M = 4.57, SD = 1.80$) than the nonendorser ($M = 1.96, SD = 1.33$). Participant sexual orientation did not have a significant effect on perceived racism, $F(1, 259) = 0.02, p = .90, d < 0.001$, and the Condition \times Sexual Orientation interaction was not significant, $F(1, 259) = 0.46, p = .50, d = 0.09$.

There was a significant effect of condition on perceived sexism, $F(1, 259) = 133.01, p < .001, d = 1.43$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as more likely to be sexist ($M = 4.05, SD = 1.71$) than the nonendorser ($M = 1.97, SD = 1.15$). Participant sexual orientation did not have a significant effect on perceived sexism, $F(1, 259) = 0.37, p = .55, d = 0.06$, and the Condition \times Sexual Orientation interaction was not significant, $F(1, 259) = 0.15, p = .70, d = 0.06$. Further, the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as more likely to be heterosexist ($M = 4.39, SD = 1.69$) than the nonendorser ($M = 1.97, SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 259) = 176.10, p < .001, d = 1.67$. There was not a significant effect of participant sexual orientation on perceived heterosexism, $F(1, 259) = 0.27, p = .61, d = 0.06$, nor was there a significant interaction, $F(1, 259) = 0.30, p = .59, d = 0.06$.

A series of mediation analyses was conducted to replicate the findings of Study 1. There was a significant indirect effect of condition on perceptions of sexism through perceptions of racism, $B = 1.05, SE = 0.09, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.87, 1.23]$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was rated as more likely to be racist ($B = 1.30, SE = 0.09, p < .001$), which, in turn, was associated with higher expectations of the target's sexism ($B = 0.81, SE = 0.03, p < .001$). As in Study 1, there was also a significant indirect effect of condition on perceptions of heterosexism through perceptions of racism, $B = 1.07, SE = 0.10, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.89, 1.26]$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was rated as more likely to be racist, which, in turn, was associated with higher expectations of the target's heterosexism ($B = 0.82, SE = 0.03, p < .001$).

Perceived sexual orientation essentialism beliefs. There was a significant effect of condition on perceived SOEE, $F(1, 259) = 728.07, p < .001, d = 3.37$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as a stronger endorser of SOEE, compared to the nonendorser. There was not a significant sexual orientation effect on perceived SOEE, $F(1, 259) = 1.25, p = .27, d = 0.005$, and the Condition \times Sexual Orientation interaction was also not significant, $F(1, 259) = 0.40, p =$

Figure 2. Racial essentialism endorsement by participant sexual orientation ANOVA results: Study 2.

Note. Racial essentialism endorser was depicted as high in REE and high in RNKE; the nonendorser was low in both dimensions. Standard errors depicted alongside means for each condition.

*** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$.

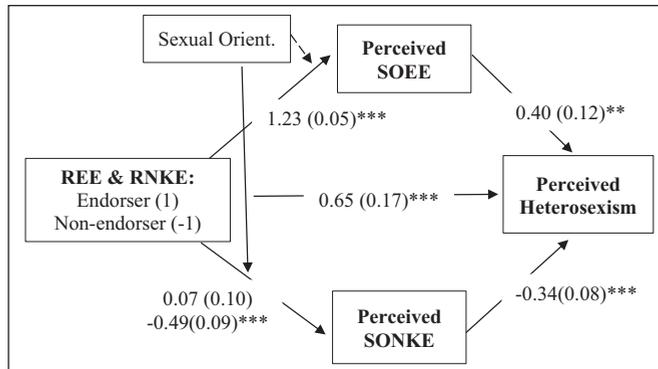
.53, $d = 0.14$. There was a significant condition effect on perceived SONKE, $F(1, 259) = 728.07$, $p < .001$, $d = 3.37$, such that the racial essentialism nonendorser was perceived as a stronger endorser of SONKE, compared to the endorser. In other words, the individual who did not endorse racial essentialism was rated as more likely to believe sexual orientation has natural/immutable characteristics. There was not a significant sexual orientation effect on perceived SONKE, $F(1, 259) = 0.57$, $p = .45$, $d = 0.09$, but the Sexual Orientation \times Condition interaction was significant, $F(1, 259) = 17.56$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.52$. Split file contrasts revealed that the significant condition effect was driven by LGB+ participants, $t(131.84) = 5.29$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.90$, such that LGB+ participants reported higher expected SONKE in the racial essentialism nonendorser condition relative to the endorser condition, while there was not a significant condition effect among heterosexual participants, $t(123) = 0.76$, $p = .45$, $d = 0.14$. See Figure 2 for condition means with standard errors.

Proposed moderated mediation. A moderated mediation with participant sexual orientation as the moderating variable was conducted to examine how racial essentialism endorsement influences expectations of heterosexism through perceived sexual orientation essentialism dimensions (i.e., SONKE and SOEE). As depicted in Figure 3, analyses of indirect

effects indicate that perceived SOEE served as a significant mediator of the relationship between racial essentialism endorsement and perceived heterosexism, such that the racial essentialism endorser elicited higher perceptions of SOEE among our sample of racial/ethnic minorities, which, in turn, was associated with higher expected heterosexism. This indirect effect was not moderated by participant sexual orientation (index of moderated mediation: $B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.04$, 95% CI $[-0.11, 0.05]$). As described in the 2 \times 2 ANOVA results, the effect of racial essentialism endorsement condition on perceived SONKE was moderated by sexual orientation, which contributed to a significant moderated mediation (index: $B = -0.18$, $SE = 0.07$, 95% CI $[-0.33, -0.06]$). Among heterosexual participants, perceived SONKE did not serve as a significant mediator of the relationship between racial essentialism endorsement and perceived heterosexism, $B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI $[-0.10, 0.04]$. Among LGB+ participants, perceived SONKE was a significant mechanism, $B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI $[0.06, 0.28]$, such that the racial essentialism endorser was perceived as significantly lower in perceived SONKE, which, in turn, was associated with greater expectations of heterosexism.

Discussion

Study 2 replicated the findings of Study 1 utilizing a sample of LGB+ and heterosexual POC.

Figure 3. Moderated indirect effect of essentialism and sexual orientation on heterosexism: Study 2.

Note. The indirect effect of condition on heterosexism through SOE was significant for heterosexual, $B = 0.48$, $SE = 0.20$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.90], and LGB+ participants, $B = 0.50$, $SE = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.12, 0.93]. The indirect effect of condition through SONKE was significant among LGB+ participants, $B = 0.15$, $SE = 0.06$, 95% CI [0.06, 0.28], but not significant among heterosexual participants, $B = -0.02$, $SE = 0.03$, 95% CI [-0.10, 0.04]. The direct effect of x on y is displayed on the c path. Standardized weights are presented. Dashed paths are not significant. *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .01$.

Specifically, an endorser of racial essentialism was rated as more likely to endorse SDO and as more likely to be racist, sexist, and heterosexist, compared to an individual that did not endorse racial essentialism. Further, analyses suggest that racial essentialism endorsement signaled greater endorsement of SOEE but lower endorsement of SONKE. Interestingly, perceptions of SOEE were not affected by participants' sexual orientation, such that both heterosexual and LGB+ participants viewed racial essentialism endorsement as cueing SOEE endorsement, while only LGB+ participants viewed the racial essentialism endorser as less likely to endorse SONKE. This suggests that heterosexual participants may be less aware of the relationship of SONKE endorsement with more positive attitudes towards sexual minorities, compared to LGB+ participants.

Study 3

While Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated participants' awareness of the association between racial essentialism and prejudicial attitudes, they did not parse apart the impact of the two race essentialism dimensions on perceptions of prejudice and perceptions of sexual orientation essentialism. To

expand the findings of Studies 1 and 2 and to examine potential downstream effects of encountering racial essentialism, Study 3 recruited a sample of sexual minorities who were exposed to an individual that reported high RNKE beliefs, high REE beliefs, or no essentialist beliefs (i.e., control). In parsing out the effects of RNKE and REE beliefs, we sought to examine potential differences in anticipated identity-based devaluation by essentialism type, which may be likely given that EE and NKE dimensions are associated with different prejudice levels (e.g., EE and subtle prejudice; Hodson & Skorska, 2015; Roets & van Hiel, 2011).

As the literature has not yet examined perceptions of heterosexism from racial essentialism endorsement (and broadly how essentialism statements directed at one social group may impact members of nontargeted social groups), we tested a series of competing hypotheses:

1. That RNKE and REE beliefs would similarly indicate bias given the conceptual overlap of both racial essentialism dimensions (Demoulin et al., 2006; Hodson & Skorska, 2015).
2. That RNKE beliefs would be associated with greater bias expectations, compared

to REE, given the historical association of RNKE beliefs with overt racist attitudes (e.g., the application of science to justify inequality; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Tucker, 1994).

3. That RNKE beliefs may be perceived as less threatening to sexual minorities not targeted by racism when compared to REE beliefs, given that NKE beliefs about sexual orientation are associated with supportive attitudes towards sexual minorities (Morandini et al., 2017; Morton & Postmes, 2009). In other words, White sexual minorities may be less attuned to the negative impacts of RNKE.

Broadly, we anticipated that racial essentialism endorsement would signal the target's essentialism beliefs about sexual orientation (as first explored in Study 2), which, in turn, would elicit expectations of identity-based devaluation among White sexual minorities. Anticipating identity-based devaluation or the experience of social identity threat has been demonstrated to elicit concealment of one's identity, which is associated with low quality of life and poor well-being amongst sexual minorities (e.g., Camacho et al., 2020; Newheiser et al., 2017; Quinn et al., 2017; Reinka et al., 2020). Together, we explored potential differences in perceived SOEE and SONKE beliefs amongst targets that either endorsed REE or RNKE, and we anticipated that both racial essentialism endorsers would be perceived as endorsing higher SOEE and lower NKE beliefs about sexual orientation, relative to the control, which together would be associated with anticipating identity-based devaluation and with heightened identity concealment.

Participants

Non-Hispanic White/Caucasian identified sexual minorities were recruited using screening questions on Prolific survey platform. We recruited only non-Hispanic White participants, as exposure to racial essentialist statements would serve as a direct identity threat cue for racial minorities

and we were interested in exploring the impact of outgroup-directed essentialism on expectations of bias to demonstrate the breadth of racial essentialism's impact. Eligible participants were over the age of 18, identified as American and as LGB+. Survey respondents who failed two or more attention check questions (e.g., "Select strongly agree for this question") were rejected and not compensated, as per IRB approval. Retained participants were compensated US\$1.00. A power analysis using a medium effect size suggested a minimum sample size of 246 participants ($d = 0.40$ at 80% power).

Our final sample consisted of 251 participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.84$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 11.24$) who predominately identified as bisexual ($n = 155$; 61.8%), followed by gay or lesbian ($n = 64$; 25.5%), with 32 participants who identified with another sexual orientation (e.g., pansexual, asexual; 12.7%). All participants identified as White/Caucasian except one participant who identified as White Hispanic. Our sample consisted of 142 women (56.6%), 76 men (30.3%), 17 gender nonconforming/gender queer/gender fluid people (6.8%), 12 transgender participants (4.8%), and four participants who identified as nonbinary or with another gender identity (1.6%).

Procedures

Participants were recruited to participate in our "Group Beliefs" and were informed that the research goal was to learn more about how people form impressions of other employees. We chose to utilize a workplace context because sexual minorities who anticipate identity-based devaluation in the workplace are more likely to actively conceal their identity (for review, see Beatty & Kirby, 2006). The created vignette aimed to form a situation that participants could imagine themselves engaging in while maintaining a method for learning about another employee's essentialist beliefs. Participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (described in what follows) and were instructed to imagine they were starting a new job with another employee. Participants were told to imagine that they were viewing the other employee's intake survey

responses to form impressions about them. After viewing the employee's materials, participants answered manipulation checks hidden among filler questions to ensure that all participants read the manipulation text. If participants failed the critical manipulation check ($n = 3$), they were asked to repeat all check questions. No participant failed the check twice.

Participants reported on perceptions of the other employee's essentialist beliefs about sexual minorities, followed by questions assessing how the "other employee" would treat them if their sexual orientation was known; lastly, participants answered questions assessing if they would try to conceal their sexual orientation in this workplace. Nonfocal measures of perceptions of the employee's attitudes about discrimination and stereotypes of sexual minorities were also assessed and are presented in the supplemental material. Afterwards, participants answered demographic questions and were debriefed.

Materials

Condition materials. Across the three conditions, participants were given the employee's demographic information (i.e., a White 33-year-old heterosexual male) along with the employee's responses to personality and attribution style measures that have been used as control condition text in past work (Sanchez et al., 2017). In the two racial essentialism conditions, participants also saw the employee's responses to racial essentialism items. In the RNKE endorser condition, the employee agreed with essentialism items assessing immutability (e.g., "Race is something that cannot be changed much"; adapted from the Lay Theory of Race Scale; No et al., 2008) and biological discreteness (e.g., "Differences between White and Black people can be attributed to differences in genetic predispositions"; adapted from the Biological Essentialism Scale; Soylu Yalcinkaya et al., 2017) constituting two documented components of RNKE. The employee in the REE endorser condition agreed with items assessing group informativeness (e.g., "Knowing someone's race gives you some useful

information about a person") and uniformity (e.g., "Members of a racial group are very similar"; items adapted from the Entitative Essentialism Scale; Roets & van Hiel, 2011) constituting two documented components of REE. See the Appendix for complete manipulation materials. The decision to utilize a no-information control condition was made to further discern the directionality of our effect. We chose against using low racial essentialism conditions (or nonendorser conditions) in the present study as low essentialist beliefs may serve as an identity safety cue (i.e., eliciting protection from identity-based devaluation), which was not the focus of the present research. Instead, comparisons to a no-information control provide comparisons of endorsed essentialist beliefs to a baseline.

Measures

Outcome measures. See Table 2 for measure descriptive statistics and correlations between outcome variables.

Perceived sexual orientation essentialism. Participants answered the same Perceived Sexual Orientation Essentialism Scale items as utilized in Study 2 on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *very likely*), using the prompt "How likely is it that the new employee would believe that. . ." The items were separated into perceived SOEE and perceived SONKE scales, and items were reverse-coded and averaged to indicate a higher level of each respective construct. The three SOEE items were reliable as a scale ($\alpha = .89$), and the two SONKE items were also reliable, $r(251) = .72, p < .001$.

Anticipated identity-based devaluation. Participants answered four items assessing how they would anticipate being treated by the other employee if the employee knew about their sexual orientation. The items were adapted from past research on anticipated identity-based treatment from outgroup prejudice cues (Cipollina & Sanchez, 2020). The questions (e.g., "This employee would be disrespectful towards me because of my sex-

Table 2. Measure descriptive statistics and correlations: Study 3.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4
1. Perceived SOEE	4.71	1.47	-.82***	.60***	.17***
2. Perceived SONKE	4.26	1.56	-	-.48***	-.16*
3. Identity-based devaluation	4.14	1.51		-	.31***
4. Identity concealment	3.78	1.58			-

Note. SOEE = sexual orientation entitative essentialism; SONKE = sexual orientation natural kind essentialism. *** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

ual orientation”) were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *very likely*). The items were reliable and were averaged such that higher values indicate greater anticipated identity-based devaluation ($\alpha = .93$).

Anticipated identity concealment. Participants answered four items examining the extent they would actively try to conceal their sexual orientation at the imagined workplace, with items adapted from Quinn et al.’s Quinn Active Concealment Scale (2017). The items (e.g., “I would try not to behave in ways that are typical of people with my sexual orientation”) were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all likely*, 7 = *very likely*). The items were reliable and were averaged such that higher scores indicate greater anticipated identity concealment ($\alpha = .85$).

Proposed Analysis Strategy

The hypotheses for Study 3 were preregistered on the OSF (<https://archive.org/details/osf-registrations-f4n5k-v1>). The only deviation from the preregistration occurred to more clearly delineate the impact of racial essentialism endorsement on perceived SOEE and SONKE as separate scales rather than as a combined measure of perceived essentialism; however, expected findings and analytic approaches remained consistent with the preregistration document. Specifically, a series of one-way between-subjects ANOVAs was conducted to examine differences in participants’ expectations of SOEE and SONKE from individuals who endorsed REE, RNKE, or no essentialist beliefs. ANOVAs were also utilized to test

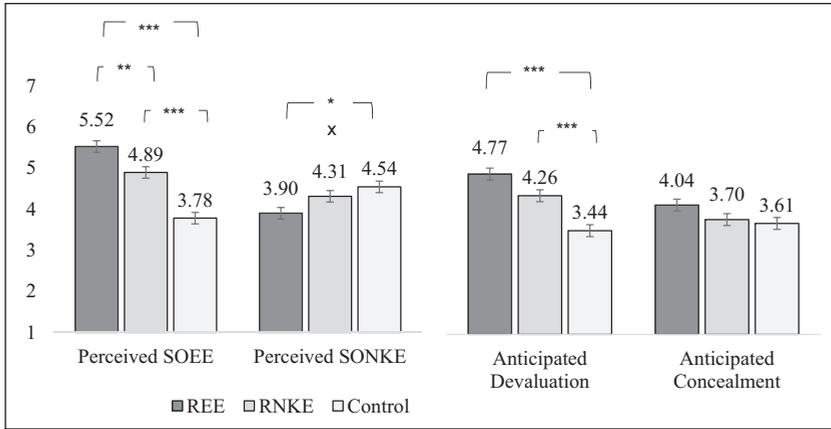
our hypotheses that participants in the racial essentialism endorser conditions would anticipate greater identity-based devaluation and heightened concealment when compared to participants in the control condition.

After examining condition comparisons with one-way ANOVAs, mediation analyses were conducted to examine the mechanisms through which exposure to racial essentialism dimensions evokes anticipated identity-based devaluation and identity concealment for White sexual minorities. Due to the multicategorical nature of our independent variable, we conducted a multicategorical path (serial mediation) analysis using Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 2017). The multicategorical analysis was comprised of contrasts between the REE condition and the control, and a contrast comparing the RNKE condition to the control. Indirect effects were obtained utilizing 10,000 bootstrapped samples. Path model fit was determined by null chi-square values, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) $< .06$, comparative fit index (CFI) $\geq .95$, and standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) $< .08$, following best practices (see Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2016).

Results

Perceived sexual orientation essentialism. A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect of condition on perceived SOEE, $F(2, 248) = 38.95, p < .001, d = 1.12$. Bonferroni post hoc analyses revealed that the RNKE endorser and the REE endorser elicited greater perceived SOEE compared to the control ($ps < .001$). Further, the

Figure 4. Perceived essentialism dimensions and anticipated outcomes by condition: Study 3.



Note. Means and standardized errors depicted for each condition. Asterisks indicate Bonferroni post hoc contrast *p* values. ****p* < .001. **p* < .05.

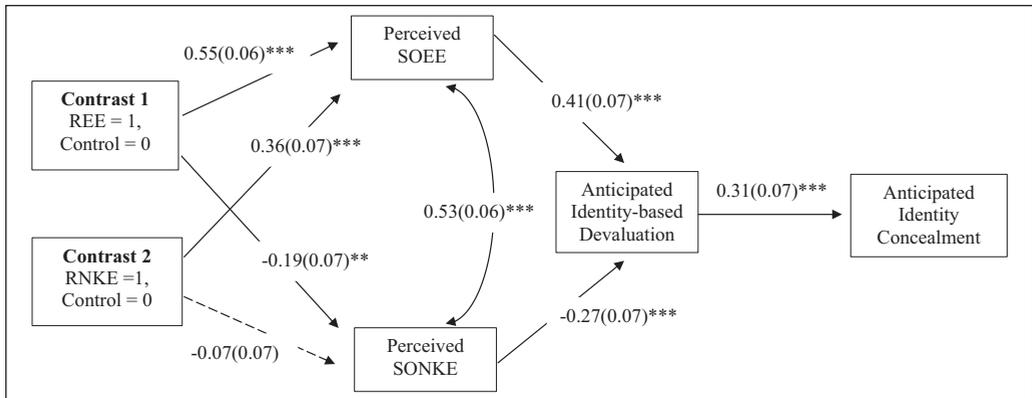
REE endorser was rated as higher in SOEE compared to the RNKE endorser (*p* = .005). There was also a significant effect of condition on perceived SONKE, $F(2, 248) = 3.66, p = .027, d = 0.35$. Bonferroni post hoc analyses unexpectedly revealed that the RNKE endorser was not perceived as lower in SONKE when compared to the REE endorser (*p* = .25), or when compared to the control employee (*p* = .10). However, the REE endorser was perceived as higher in SONKE when compared to the control (*p* = .024). See Figure 4 for descriptive statistics.

Anticipated identity-based devaluation and identity concealment. As expected, there was a significant effect of condition on anticipated identity-based devaluation, $F(2, 248) = 18.78, p < .001, d = 0.78$, such that the RNKE endorser and the REE endorser elicited greater expectations of identity-based devaluation relative to the control (*ps* < .001). There was no significant difference in expected treatment between the RNKE and REE conditions (*p* = .066). Unexpectedly, there was not a significant main effect of condition on anticipated identity concealment, $F(2, 248) = 1.67, p = .19, d = 0.23$.

The tested path serial mediation model (condition contrasts → perceived sexual orientation essentialism dimensions [in parallel] → anticipated

identity-based devaluation → anticipated identity concealment) was an excellent fit to the data, $\chi^2 = 7.47, df = 6, p = .25$, scaling correction 1.11, RMSEA = .03, CFI = .99, SRMR = .03. See Figure 5 for standardized path betas and standardized errors.

Relative to the control, the REE endorser was perceived as more likely to harbor SOEE, which, in turn, was associated with participants' higher expectations of identity-based devaluation and identity concealment (serial indirect effect: $B = 0.07, SE = 0.02, p = .001, 95\% CI [0.10, 0.38]$). Relative to the control, the REE endorser was also perceived as likely to endorse lower SONKE, but the serial indirect effect to identity concealment was not significant when accounting for perceived SOEE as a parallel mediator ($B = 0.02, SE = 0.01, p = .058, 95\% CI [-0.002, 0.11]$). Likewise, perceived SONKE did not serve as a significant mediator between the RNKE condition and identity concealment ($B = 0.01, SE = 0.01, p = .36, 95\% CI [-0.02, 0.06]$). However, like in the REE to control condition contrast, relative to the control, the RNKE endorser was perceived as more likely to endorse SOEE, which, in turn, was associated with greater anticipation of identity-based devaluation and identity concealment ($B = 0.05, SE = 0.02, p = .003, 95\% CI [0.05, 0.25]$). Thus, both racial essentialism dimensions cued perceptions of

Figure 5. Serial indirect effect of race essentialism dimension endorsement on identity concealment: Study 3.

Note. Standardized betas with standard errors in parentheses are presented.
 *** $p < .001$. ** $p < .05$.

SOEE, which were associated with expectations of identity-based devaluation and anticipated identity concealment.

Discussion

When exposed to information about an imagined colleague who endorsed either RNKE or REE, White sexual minorities perceived the individual as endorsing prejudiced essentialist beliefs about their ingroup (i.e., greater SOEE), compared to the control (no essentialism information) condition. Mediation analyses revealed potential downstream effects of encounters with racial essentialism, such that exposure to both racial essentialism dimensions signaled prejudiced SOEE beliefs, which, in turn, were associated with greater anticipated identity-based devaluation and anticipated identity concealment. Thus, expectations of identity devaluation and concealment occurred from exposure to both racial essentialism dimensions, suggesting racial essentialism can elicit social identity threat for individuals not directly targeted by the essentialist belief. Importantly, compared to the RNKE endorser, the REE endorser was perceived as more likely to harbor prejudiced essentialist beliefs about sexual orientation (i.e., that sexual orientation is informative but changeable), suggesting that exposure to REE beliefs may be more threatening than RNKE beliefs. Further,

perceived SONKE did not serve as a mechanism in Study 3, highlighting that perceptions of SONKE from racial essentialism cues vary.

General Discussion

A vast literature has examined the effect of essentialist belief endorsement on prejudicial attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Soylu Yalcinkaya et al., 2017) but has yet to address how essentialism endorsement is viewed by stigmatized group members with varied social identities. The present work manipulated endorsement of racial essentialism and documented among majority White (Study 1) and POC samples (Study 2) that racial essentialism endorsement is perceived as indicating preference for social hierarchies (i.e., SDO), racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Further, the present work demonstrated that racial essentialism endorsement cued participants' heightened expectations of the endorser's heterosexist beliefs by shifting perceptions of the endorser's essentialist beliefs about sexual orientation (Studies 2 and 3). Finally, analyses revealed differences in sexual minorities' expectations of identity-based devaluation and identity concealment from racial essentialism endorsers espousing either REE or RNKE beliefs. Specifically, documenting that REE endorsement may be a clearer indicator of perceived likelihood of encountering bias to sexual minorities.

Importantly, perceivers' social identities play a role in how racial essentialism endorsement is viewed. Drawing on past literature detailing the unique experiences of people with varied marginalized intersectional identities (see Jackson et al., 2020; Pham et al., 2022; S. L. Williams & Fredrick, 2015), we hypothesized that LGB+ people of color (POC) would be more attuned to the interconnectedness of essentialist beliefs towards racial and sexual minorities, compared to heterosexual POC. Among an online sample of POC (Study 2), we found that while perceptions of SOEE did not differ by sexual identity, only LGB+ participants viewed racial essentialism endorsement as indicative of SONKE. This provides suggestive evidence that heterosexual participants may be less aware of the relationship of SONKE endorsement with more positive attitudes towards sexual minorities, compared to LGB+ participants. Similarly, in our sample of White sexual minorities (Study 3), perceptions of the target's SOEE beliefs were more clearly ascertained from the target's racial essentialism endorsement, while perceptions of the target's SONKE were inconsistent across racial essentialism conditions, such that differences in perceived SONKE were only present in the REE to control contrast.

By highlighting participants' accuracy in viewing positive relationships between racial essentialism and prejudicial attitudes, the present work expands on past literature suggesting that lay (i.e., nonexpert) beliefs about how prejudice operates are in line with social psychological theories (Albuja et al., 2022; Cipollina et al., 2022; Sommers & Norton, 2006). In documenting that essentialist beliefs are generally perceived as co-occurring (e.g., racial essentialism endorsers perceived as higher endorsers of entitative beliefs about sexual orientation across our two samples), the present work includes a novel perspective to view the literature on stigma-transfer (e.g., Chaney et al., 2018; Sanchez et al., 2017). Specifically, outgroup-directed prejudice cues may also signal the target's essentialist beliefs about one's ingroup, which cue social identity threat.

The present work is also the first to examine ways in which outgroup-directed essentialist beliefs elicit expectations of identity-based devaluation and identity concealment. The present work documents that

encountering natural kind and entitative racial essentialism indirectly predicted White sexual minorities' expectations of identity-based devaluation and desire to conceal their sexual identity through shifting expectations of the target's entitative essentialist beliefs about sexual orientation. Specifically, both racial essentialism endorsers were viewed as more likely to believe that sexual orientation is entitative, which was associated with heightened identity-based mistreatment expectations and heightened identity concealment desire. Identity concealment has been extensively discussed as detrimental to the health and well-being of sexual minorities (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009; Quinn et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2008) and the present work suggests that exposure to outgroup essentialist beliefs may promote these negative consequences. Together, our results highlight a novel indicator of prejudice that sexual minorities may use to gauge whether a context will be safe for identity disclosure, which can have important effects on sexual minorities' disclosure rates, health, job satisfaction, and overall quality of life.

Limitations and Future Directions

Future research should consider the influence of varied perceiver factors, such as their own endorsement of essentialist beliefs, to determine who is most perceptive of the links between essentialist beliefs and prejudice. For instance, sexual minorities who believe that their sexual orientation is innate or biologically based (see Morandini et al., 2015, 2017) may not see RNKE statements as indicative of prejudice, compared to sexual minorities that believe sexual orientation is fluid and can change throughout the lifespan (i.e., low SONKE; see Diamond, 2006, 2008). Literature documenting the strategic value of essentialism highlights that stigmatized groups are likely to endorse essentialist beliefs about their ingroup in response to majority group mistreatment (e.g., using essentialism to highlight positive ingroup characteristics that majority groups deny; Morton & Postmes, 2009; Soylu Yalcinkaya et al., 2017; Verkuyten, 2003). Indeed, research suggests causal evidence that after identity denial, sexual minorities were more likely to endorse NKE beliefs about their

sexual orientation (Morton & Postmes, 2009). Essentialist thinking is thereby not always detrimental to stigmatized groups and is even associated with lower internalized stigma in some cases (Morandini et al., 2015, 2017). Future work should consider how intersecting minority identities may shape perceptions of the benefits of certain dimensions of essentialist beliefs.

The literature suggests that experts and nonexperts alike believe there is a degree to which genetic differences exist amongst racial groups (Condit et al., 2004; Dar-Nimrod & Heine, 2011; Hoffman et al., 2016; Morning et al., 2019). Without education on how race operates as a social construct and how systemic disparities influence the life outcomes and health of racial groups (see Gannon, 2016; Graves & Goodman, 2021; Smedley & Smedley, 2005), natural kind essentialist beliefs about race (e.g., “Differences between White and Black people can be attributed to differences in genetic predispositions”) may be poorer indicators of prejudice when compared to entitative racial beliefs (e.g., “Members of a racial group are very similar”), perhaps particularly among White samples. In the present work, using a White sample (Study 3), the RNKE endorser was not viewed differently than the control on SONKE endorsement, while the REE endorser was viewed as less likely to endorse SONKE than the control. Further, the REE endorser was viewed as more likely to endorse SOEE than the RNKE endorser, together suggesting both complexity in perceptions of SONKE and also in the perceived relationships between RNKE and SONKE. Indeed, RNKE may not be as clear of an indicator of bias when compared to REE; data from Study 3 suggest larger effects of REE, relative to RNKE, on anticipated devaluation.

Future research should continue to explore outcomes of encounters with natural kind essentialist beliefs directed at varied stigmatized groups and recruit additional perceiver samples. For example, may groups that similarly benefit from NKE beliefs about their social group (e.g., people with congenital disability or people who are obese; Bogart et al., 2019; Lebowitz et al., 2016; Peretz-Lange, 2021) also perceive RNKE as less

threatening than REE beliefs? Such future research should explore the extent to which lay individuals are aware of the positive and negative outcomes of essentialist beliefs depending on the group to which they are targeted; this research may find that low REE endorsement promotes feelings of safety to individuals from social groups that share similar stereotypes (see Chaney et al., 2018).

Both studies utilized a cross-sectional profile packet design wherein participants’ perceptions and expectations of an individual were formed through reading the individual’s responses to questionnaire measures. While this method has been used in past research (Pinel, 2002; Sanchez et al., 2017; Sawyer et al., 2012), and has used a White male target as the benchmark, interpersonal interactions or field research may best examine perceptions of essentialist beliefs in an ecologically valid context with more diverse endorsers. Such research could address moderator variables like perceived intentions of the individual making the statement or other psychosocial outcomes (e.g., avoidance behaviors or coping strategies employed by people with varied stigmatized identities). Further, this research can examine downstream outcomes like feelings of belonging in certain contexts (e.g., academic, interpersonal) for individuals with varied stigmatized identities (e.g., those with disabilities) utilizing longitudinal designs. Such design would address the limitations of conducting mediation analyses with cross-sectional data and improve causal claims about the impact of exposure to racial essentialism on social identity threat. Indeed, other individual differences like identity centrality, or the importance of one’s stigmatized identity to their self-concept, may influence anticipated threat from essentialist statements as they have been shown to influence attributions to discrimination and coping with identity-based stressors in other contexts (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009; Quinn & Earnshaw, 2011; Sellers et al., 2003).

Conclusion

The present work importantly expands upon essentialism literature by investigating stigmatized group

members' perceptions of prejudice from racial essentialism endorsement, indicating that stigmatized group members are generally privy to the association of racial essentialist beliefs with prejudicial attitudes. White stigmatized group members (e.g., women and sexual minorities) and POC perceived racial essentialism endorsers as prejudicial toward both the targeted group (i.e., more likely to be racist) and nontargeted groups (i.e., more likely to be sexist and heterosexist), relative to nonendorsers. The present work documented some potential downstream effects of encountering outgroup-directed racial essentialism in an imagined workplace setting wherein both dimensions of racial essentialism (i.e., natural kind and entitative) elicited expectations of the target's sexual orientation essentialist beliefs, which was associated with expectations of encountering identity-based devaluation and with desire to conceal one's minority sexual orientation. Together, these studies demonstrate that racial essentialism endorsement signals prejudice towards both targeted and nontargeted stigmatized groups, provide evidence of lay individuals' perceptions of the co-occurrence of natural kind and entitative essentialist beliefs about race and sexual orientation, and consider the importance of perceivers' social identities in shaping these perceptions.

Author note

Participants in this research provided online consent and were treated according to IRB protocols. The authors would like to thank Dr. Kimberly Chaney for her feedback on the design and analysis of Study 1. The authors have no conflict of interests to declare.

Data availability

All study data, materials, and supplemental analyses are provided on the Open Science Framework (OSF; https://osf.io/ysz7h/?view_only=4f3997219c834bb29bd70a5314f7a4dd). Study 3 design and analyses were preregistered (<https://archive.org/details/osf-registrations-f4n5k-v1>).

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. The original data collection included two conditions for an honor's thesis wherein sexual orientation essentialism was manipulated but the manipulation was not perfectly aligned with the racial essentialism conditions presented here. Specifically, additional participants ($N = 212$) were exposed to a target that held high EE and low NKE beliefs about sexual orientation or a target that held low EE and high NKE beliefs about sexual orientation; such pairings were made to reflect more prejudicial versus less prejudicial beliefs about sexual minorities (Haslam & Levy, 2006; Jayaratne et al., 2006), making direct comparisons with the racial essentialism conditions inconclusive. See supplemental material for analyses that mirror findings in this manuscript.
2. Participants also reported on perceived heterosexism using the Attitudes Towards Lesbians and Gay Men Scale (ATLG; Herek & McLemore, 1998). Findings remain consistent with the effects found using the perceived heterosexism items and are presented in the supplemental material.

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Appendix

Study 3 Manipulated Text

Racial entitative essentialism (REE) condition

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
1. Knowing someone's race gives you some useful information about the person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. People belonging to the same race are usually identical in many aspects.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Members of a racial group are very similar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Racial natural kind essentialism (RNKE) condition

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree nor disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
1. Race is something that cannot be changed much.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
2. Differences between White and Black people can be attributed to differences in genetic predispositions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. There are biological differences that make members from one race distinct from members belonging to a separate race.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>