

## Impact of Collective Gender Identity on Relationship Quality: When Men Feel Devalued

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Although heterosexual men typically hold positions of dominance in society, negative aspects of masculinity could lead some men to feel that their gender group is not valued by others (D. A. Prentice & E. Carranza, 2002). Previous research has largely overlooked the impact of men's own perceptions of their gender group membership on their relationship outcomes. To address this gap, we posited that when heterosexual men feel that their gender identity is devalued, they may relate better to close others who have devalued identities (e.g., their female romantic partners). Specifically, we predicted that heterosexual men who view their masculine gender identity as important but devalued would more successfully take the perspective of their female partner. Results confirmed predictions, such that for undergraduate men whose gender identity was important, lower levels of perceived group value predicted greater ability to take perspective with their romantic partners. Implications for men's relationships and identity research are discussed.

*Keywords:* male gender identity, relationship quality, partner's perspective taking, identity devaluation

Heterosexual romantic relationship partners face unique challenges, in that men and women are differentially valued by society and yet depend upon each other for closeness and intimacy (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Across cultures, men tend to be dominant and occupy high-status positions of power and authority, while women are typically considered subordinate and occupy lower-status roles (Catalyst, 2007). This type of identity devaluation (i.e., the perception that a given social group is generally evaluated poorly by society; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) can be associated with a host of negative outcomes for members of devalued groups (Crocker & Major, 1989). These include lower self-esteem (Miller & Downey, 1999), poorer cognitive performance (O'Brien & Cran-

dall, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995), and higher levels of depression (Katz, Joiner, & Kwon, 2002) in relation to valued group members.

In contrast, one positive outcome of identity devaluation may come in the form of heightened empathic connections with members of other devalued groups. Indeed, evidence suggests that individuals with devalued social identities may be able to connect well with each other through heightened levels of perspective taking, or empathizing (Acitelli, Douvan & Veroff, 1993, 1997; Davis, 1980, 1983; Gaines, 2001). Consistent with this argument, couples in which both members are from one or more devalued social group (such as lesbian couples) evidence fewer power inequities and greater relationship cohesion than do couples with only one devalued member (Falbo & Peplau, 1980; Pearlman, 1989).

And yet, what happens if a typically valued group member perceives his or her group to be devalued, and finds this group membership to be important to his or her self-concept? To our knowledge, research has yet to examine the impact of men's perceived gender identity value on their romantic relationships. That is, when the typically valued feel devalued, are they better able to take the perspective of devalued

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others? To address this question, we tested whether (typically valued) men might demonstrate a heightened ability to take the perspective of their (typically devalued) female relationship partners if they perceive their group to be devalued by society and personally important. In this way, men and women may be able to address the inherent identity value differentiation within the context of close heterosexual relationships through perspective taking. In the face of increasing divorce rates (Bramlett & Moscher, 2002) and persistently greater levels of relationship dissatisfaction among heterosexual women in relation to their male partners (Buunk & Van Yperen, 2005; Gaines, 2001), it is critical to examine factors that may enhance men's propensity to empathically connect.

### **The Upside of Social Devaluation: Relating to Others From Devalued Groups**

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, 1982) posits that an individual's self-concept is comprised of two separate components; *personal identity* (the qualities, traits, skills, and weaknesses possessed by the individual) and *social/collective identity* (an individual's awareness of membership in different social groups, and the value placed upon these memberships; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992; Tajfel, 1981). While traditional self-esteem measures assess perceptions of personal identity (e.g., the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; Rosenberg, 1965), the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSE) measures perceptions of one's social or collective identity by using four distinct subscales (see Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992, for more information on the CSE). For our purposes, the Public Collective Self-Esteem subscale was used to measure individuals' perceptions of the societal value of their social groups. It is important to note that this variable is conceptually distinct from an individual's personal valuing of their social group (which is assessed by the Private Collective Self-Esteem subscale) and instead captures how positively an individual believes general society views his or her given group. Thus, low public collective esteem reflects perceived cultural devaluation of one's social group and is often associated with negative consequences for the self (Crocker & Major, 1989; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Indeed, while stigmatized group mem-

bers may develop coping strategies to manage this public devaluation, low public esteem remains potentially problematic.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, one potential positive outcome of identity devaluation is an enhanced ability to take the perspective of others from devalued social groups. Perspective taking (or spontaneous attempts to adopt the psychological point of view of others in everyday life) is a specific type of empathy centered around the ability to understand another person's position or "walk in their shoes" (Davis, 1980). Putting oneself in another's shoes through perspective taking has consistently been shown to predict heightened relationship adjustment and stability (Davis & Oathout, 1987; Long, 1993; Long & Andrews, 1990). Yet, men are typically less likely to demonstrate perspective taking (as well as general empathy) than are women (Davis, 1980, 1983; and see Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983, for a review). Because empathy strengthens relationships, it is critical to examine the factors that impede men's perspective-taking ability.

One possible hindrance to men's empathy may be a perceived lack of similarity to their relationship partners. Individuals from devalued groups often demonstrate a heightened ability to take each other's perspective, likely due to a sense of similarity stemming from their shared experience (Mohr & Fassinger, 2006). Typically, people are more successful at taking the perspective of a partner who is perceived to be similar to them rather than of a partner with a drastically different social experience (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). For example, devalued group members (with concealable stigmata such

<sup>1</sup> We are not suggesting that members of devalued groups necessarily experience negative outcomes linked to their group membership. For example, past research has demonstrated that societally devalued group members may preserve their self-esteem through protective socialization processes that foster resilience, by attributing negative feedback to prejudice directed toward their group, by using ingroup (instead of outgroup) members as a reference point, or by selectively devaluing domains in which their group is perceived to be weak (Crocker & Major, 1989; Rosenberg & Simmons, 1971). Indeed, the CSE scale incorporates the potential differentiation between public group value and individual members' perceptions of value by including both the Public and Private Collective Self-Esteem subscales. Yet, when group members do perceive low collective public regard, negative outcomes may often ensue (Katz et al., 2002; Miller & Downey, 1999; O'Brien & Crandall, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

as poverty and bulimia) evidenced elevated mood and personal self-esteem after contact with other stigmatized individuals, as a result of empathic connections related to their shared experience (Frable, Platt, & Hoey, 1998). In the context of romantic relationships, stigmatized individuals are most likely to empathize with (and receive their socioemotional support from) other stigmatized individuals (Gaines, 2001). Thus, individuals from devalued social groups likely find it easier to empathize with each other because of perceived similarity stemming from shared devalued group membership (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Mohr & Fassinger, 2006).

Indirect support of heightened empathy among devalued individuals lies in some research suggesting that devalued group members are sometimes less likely to exhibit prejudice toward other devalued outgroups (Allport, 1954; Shapiro & Neuberg, 2008). For example, Hispanics (a typically devalued group) evidence lower levels of implicit prejudice against Blacks (another devalued group) than do Whites (a typically valued group; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). Additionally, White women are generally less prejudiced against other social groups than are White men (Altemeyer, 1988; Sidanius, Cling, & Pratto, 1991; Whitley, 1999). Specifically, women report high levels of sympathy and lower prejudice toward other devalued groups, such as gay men and lesbians (Herek, 2003; Ratcliff, Lassiter, Markman, & Snyder, 2006) and immigrants (Ekehammar, Akrami, & Araya, 2003), in relation to men.

It is important to clarify that research on this topic has generated a range of results, with some studies finding that low-status group members may still discriminate against others, potentially to serve a self-protective function (see Perlmutter, 2002, for a summary, and also Willis, 1981, for a discussion of downward social comparison). While we acknowledge the mixed nature of these findings, they do demonstrate that under certain circumstances, devalued group members may exhibit relatively low levels of discrimination toward other devalued individuals. Thus, evidence suggests that devalued group members may experience some benefits stemming from their stigmatization, in that they are able to connect well with others who are similarly stigmatized. Additionally, previous mixed results highlight a need for more

research clarifying when perceived group devaluation predicts greater empathic concern. We propose that these findings extend to men's relationships, such that typically valued individuals (e.g., men) will relate well to their devalued relationship partners (e.g., women) via heightened perspective taking when they perceive their group to be devalued.

### Men as a Devalued Group

Men and masculinity are generally ascribed greater value in American society than are women and femininity. For example, masculine traits (agentic qualities such as ambition and independence) are more synonymous with the ideal person's traits than are feminine traits (communal qualities such as modesty and interdependence; Basow, 1986; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Additionally, men tend to hold the highest positions of power in most societies and make reliably more money than do their female counterparts (Catalyst, 2007). Not only are women economically disadvantaged in society, but they are also the targets of sexism, negative stereotypes, and sexual harassment (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) and thus are considered a devalued group.

Although masculinity is typically more valued than is femininity, some men may feel that their gender group (or at least, certain aspects of it) is publicly devalued. One reason that men may not believe that society views their gender group positively is the existence of negative masculine stereotypes. These include undesirable traits that are more likely to be ascribed to men than to women, including self-righteousness, stubbornness, coldness, ruthlessness, arrogance, and so forth (Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman, Phelan, Moss-Racusin, & Nauts, 2009). Also, men are viewed as less socially sensitive and less skilled at managing relationships and decoding nonverbal cues than are women, so much so that they exhibit stereotype threat effects in these domains (Koenig & Eagly, 2005).

In fact, research on the "women are wonderful" effect demonstrates that most people report greater liking for women than for men (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1994), likely in part because men are viewed as more threatening than are women (Rudman & Goodwin, 2004). For example, men tend to be

perceived as more violent than women (Cicone & Ruble, 1978), likely because they are more frequently the perpetrators of serious crimes such as physical assault, rape, and murder (for a review, see Myers, 2008). Additionally, as is mentioned above, men are viewed as more prejudiced than are women (Inman & Baron, 1996), a perception that has some degree of empirical support. For example, administering Implicit Association Tests of automatic attitudes to a very large, geographically diverse Internet sample ( $N = 600,000$ , 62% women, 55% ages 23–50 years, 77% White, and 23% ethnic minority), Nosek et al. (2002) found that men were slightly more likely than women to hold negative implicit attitudes toward African Americans and the elderly. While it is certainly true that not all men act in accordance with negative implicit racial attitudes or commit violent crimes, these data suggest that perceptions of men as potentially prejudiced or aggressive may be rooted in some measure of empirical reality.

It is possible that men who perceive these negative aspects of masculinity may actually view their male gender group to be publicly devalued. When this occurs, identity devaluation should be associated with greater ability to take the perspective of a female relationship partner, who is also a member of a devalued group. Simply put, if shared devalued group membership status enhances perspective taking (as is suggested by previous research; Davis, 1980, 1983; Gaines, 2001), men should show enhanced perspective taking with their female partners when they perceive their masculine gender identity to be publicly devalued.

### **The Role of Identity Importance**

However, identity devaluation may not impact perspective taking if a man's gender identity is a relatively inconsequential component of his self-concept. In other words, feeling devalued may not be linked to other outcomes if an individual does not perceive this devalued identity to be important (Ployhart, Ziegert, & McFarland, 2003; Schmader, 2002). The Identity Importance subscale of the CSE addresses this component of social identity by measuring how critical one's social group membership is to one's overall self-concept (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The existence of this subscale underscores the necessity of assessing both the

valence and importance of collective identity, because the former may not be linked to consequences for the self without the latter. Thus, in addition to examining perceived group devaluation, it is also critical to consider the role of perceived importance of this group membership to one's self-concept.

Previous research has generated empirical support for the powerful role of perceived identity importance. For example, in a series of studies, Sellers and colleagues have measured the impact of the perceived importance of African Americans' racial identity on a variety of outcomes (Sellers, Rowley, Chavous, Shelton, & Smith, 1997). Racial centrality (or identity importance) was shown to moderate the relationship between African American students' collective and personal self-esteem, such that low collective esteem for the African American racial group had negative consequences for personal self-esteem and academic achievement only if racial identity was important (Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998). Similarly, African Americans were more likely to perceive discrimination if they viewed their racial identity as important (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Thus, evidence suggests that a given social identity must first be important to an individual in order for it to have meaningful consequences for the self.

Some previous research has examined the effect of devalued racial identity on relationship quality but has confounded feelings of identity importance and perceptions of group value (Kelley & Floyd, 2001). In the present study, we separated the two constructs in order to measure and examine the interplay between perceptions of group devaluation, importance of group identity, and men's perspective taking with their female relationship partner.

### **The Current Study**

Our aim was to examine the impact of perceived value and importance of one's gender identity on self-reported ability to take the perspective of others with devalued identities. Specifically, we predicted that men's identity value and identity importance would interact to predict partner's perspective taking, such that the following hypotheses would hold true:

*Hypothesis 1:* It was expected that for men whose gender identity is highly important, perceiving this gender identity to be devalued would predict higher female partner's perspective taking.

*Hypothesis 2:* It was expected that for men with lower levels of gender identity importance, perceiving this gender identity to be devalued would not predict perspective taking of a female partner.

## Method

**Participants.** A total of 155 heterosexual male college students at a large public university participated in exchange for partial credit toward their General Psychology course requirement. Participants were recruited through the Human Subjects Pool website and were brought into the lab individually to complete the study. Participants were 49% White, 32% Asian, 7% Black, 7% Hispanic, 2% multiracial, and 3% another ethnicity. Participants ranged from 18 to 35 years old, with a mean age of 19.23 years ( $SD = 1.89$ ). At the time of the study, the majority of participants (72%) were in a romantic relationship, a percentage slightly greater than those obtained in previous work that examined relationship outcomes with individual partners rather than couples (Boucai & Karniol, 2008; Kiefer & Sanchez, 2007). The average length of participants' romantic relationships was 18.74 months ( $SD = 17.42$ ). Additionally, all participants indicated that they had recently (within the past year) been in a romantic relationship, even if they were currently single.

## Materials

**Identity value.** The four-item public regard subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale—Gender version (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) measured how much participants believed that their gender group is valued by others (“Overall, my gender group is considered good by others”; “Most people consider my gender group, on the average, to be more ineffective than the other gender group” [reverse coded]; “In general, others respect my gender group”; and “In general, others think that the gender group I am a member of is unworthy” [reversed

coded]). Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) and were averaged to form the identity value measure ( $\alpha = .73$  for the current study). Past public regard subscale reliability alpha coefficients have been found to range from .78 to .80 across three studies (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). The CSE scale is a well-validated and reliable instrument for evaluating beliefs about one's collective or group identities. Test-retest reliability over 6 weeks is acceptable ( $r = .68$  for the full scale). In support of the scale's validity, both the full measure and all subscales are significantly correlated (with  $r$ s ranging from .12 to .42) with the related (yet conceptually distinct) Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). Additionally, the public regard subscale has been found to negatively correlate with belief in discrimination based on both race and gender. Finally, the CSE scale is not associated with measures of social desirability (see Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992, for a thorough discussion of the creation and validation of the CSE scale).

**Identity importance.** The importance of the identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale—Gender version (CSE; Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) was used to measure gender identity importance. The subscale consists of four items measuring perceived importance of one's gender identity to the overall self-concept (“Overall, my gender group has very little to do with how I feel about myself” [reverse coded]; “My gender group is an important reflection of who I am”; “The gender group I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of a person I am” [reverse coded]; and “In general, belonging to my gender is an important part of my self-image”). Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) and were averaged to create the identity importance measure ( $\alpha = .76$  for the current study). Identity subscale reliability alpha coefficients have been found to range from .73 to .86 across three studies (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992).

**Perspective taking.** To measure partner perspective taking, we reworded the seven-item perspective-taking subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980, 1983) to refer specifically to the romantic partner instead of any other individual. This scale assesses the extent to which individuals are able to assume

someone else's psychological point of view (e.g., "I sometimes try to understand my partner better by imagining how things look from their perspective"; "When I am upset at my partner, I usually try to 'put myself in their shoes' for a while"; and "I sometimes find it hard to see things from my partner's point of view" [reverse coded]). Responses were indicated on a scale of 1 (*does not describe me well*) to 5 (*describes me very well*) and were averaged to form the perspective-taking measure ( $\alpha = .73$  for the current study). The IRI has been shown to have high internal reliability, with alpha coefficients ranging from .71 to .75 across two studies and adequate test-retest reliability after 60 days,  $r(56) = .61$  (Davis, 1980). Participants who were not currently involved in a romantic relationship completed the questionnaire on the basis of their most recent relationship.

**Demographics.** Participants reported their age, ethnic background, sexual orientation, relationship status, and relationship length. Because our hypotheses involved heterosexual relationship outcomes, the data from 6 nonheterosexual participants were not included in the analysis (and are not referenced in the Participants section above).

**Procedure.** Participants were recruited for a study on "personality traits." They were greeted in the laboratory by one of two female experimenters, who explained that we were interested in studying "how individual differences impact communication styles" and that participation would entail completing a short battery of questionnaires. After giving informed consent, participants completed the battery of questionnaires in one of two counterbalanced orders. In Order 1, participants completed the identity value and identity importance subscales and then the perspective-taking measure. In Order 2, participants first completed the perspective-taking measure and then the Identity Value and Identity Importance subscales.<sup>2</sup> After finishing the questionnaires, participants were fully debriefed, thanked for their time, and awarded course credit.

## Results

**Preliminary analysis.** We began by determining whether participants' responses differed as a function of their relationship status (currently involved or reflecting upon a previous relationship). To examine this possibility, we

ran a hierarchical linear regression with perspective taking as the dependent variable, including relationship status (coded 0 = currently in a relationship, 1 = not currently in a relationship), standardized identity value and standardized identity importance as independent variables entered in Step 1, all two-way interactions in Step 2, and the three-way interaction in Step 3. No effects associated with relationship status were significant (all  $ps > .16$ ), suggesting that the responses of participants currently in a relationship did not meaningfully differ from those who were single and reflecting upon their most recent relationship. To further examine the impact of relationship status, we conducted another analysis substituting relationship length for relationship status, using only participants who were currently in a romantic relationship. Again, no effects associated with relationship length were significant (all  $ps > .14$ ), suggesting that the amount of time that participants had been in their current relationship also did not significantly impact their perspective taking. Finally, to rule out racial differences, identical analyses substituting dummy-coded participant race (coded 0 = White, 1 = Asian, 2 = Black, 3 = Hispanic, 4 = multiracial, and 5 = other) for relationship status using the full sample were similarly non-significant (all  $ps > .09$ ), suggesting that participant race also did not meaningfully impact results. The data were thus collapsed across relationship status and participant race for the remaining analyses.

We next examined the means and standard deviations for the variables of interest (see Table 1). In keeping with past research (Davis, 1980), our sample reported levels of perceived gender identity value that were significantly higher than was the scale midpoint,  $t(153) = 21.15, p < .001$ . Although not explicitly hypothesized, this finding is consistent with our expectation that men's gender identities are typically publicly valued.

<sup>2</sup> No effects of order of the questionnaires were found (all  $ps > .56$ ), both when order was entered as an independent predictor and as an interaction term with the other predictors. Additionally, the results did not differ as a function of experimenter ( $ps > .84$ ). Results were thus collapsed across order conditions and experimenter for all analyses.

Table 1  
Means and Standard Deviations for Variables of Interest

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Identity Importance	4.58	1.32
Public Regard	5.25	1.02
Perspective Taking	3.31	.72

Note. Responses to the identity importance and public regard measures were indicated on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), while the perspective-taking scale ranged from 1 (*does not describe me well*) to 5 (*describes me very well*).

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Hypothesis testing.** To test our hypotheses regarding the impact of identity importance and value on perspective taking, a hierarchical linear regression was conducted with both standardized continuous predictors (identity importance and value) entered at Step 1 and their two-way interaction entered at Step 2 (see Table 2). No main effects were significant at either step (all  $ps > .13$ ). However, as was predicted, a significant interaction between identity importance and public regard emerged at Step 2 ( $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ ).

To interpret the two-way interaction and determine how the interplay of gender identity value and importance functions for men, we followed the procedures for calculating simple slopes recommended by Aiken and West (1991; see Figure 1). Results supported Hypothesis 1, which predicted that for men with high levels of gender identity importance, a lower perceived identity value was associated with heightened abilities to take on a perspective ( $\beta = -.40, p < .01$ ). On the contrary, supporting Hypothesis 2, for men whose gender identity was not

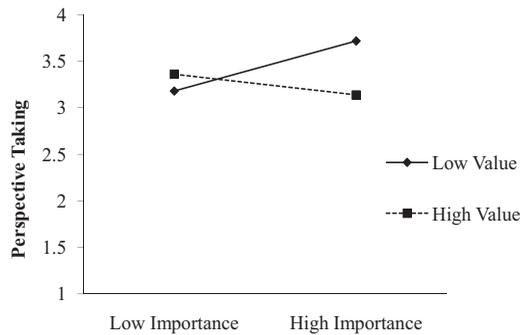


Figure 1. Interaction of men's gender identity importance and identity value on perspective taking.

important, public regard was unrelated to perspective taking ( $\beta = .12, p > .05$ ). This is consistent with our expectation that men who personally find their gender identity to be important are likely to demonstrate increased partner's perspective taking when they also view their identity to be publicly devalued.

## Discussion

As was predicted, results indicated that for men who place importance on their gender identity, perceiving this identity to be publicly devalued was associated with increased partner perspective taking. This finding is in keeping with past work demonstrating that individuals from both valued and devalued groups are better able to empathize with others who they perceive as similar to themselves (Clore & Jeffery, 1972). Yet, to our knowledge, these results represent a novel examination of the impact of men's collective gender identity on their relationships. Interestingly, men reported generally high levels

Table 2  
Predictors of Men's Perspective Taking

Measure	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1					.01
Identity Value	-.06	.07	-.08	-.86	
Identity Importance	-.01	.06	-.02	-.19	
Step 2					.08**
Identity Value	-.11	.07	-.15	-1.51	
Identity Importance	.08	.07	.12	1.15	
Identity Value $\times$ Identity Importance	-.19	.07	-.30**	-2.82**	

Note.  $n = 155$ .

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

of perceived identity value, suggesting that men do typically possess valued identities. However, when men perceived their identity to be devalued (and also important to their self-concept), they showed increased relational abilities in the form of perspective taking of their female relationship partner.

Importantly, our research clarifies past work (Kelley & Floyd, 2001) by distinguishing between identity importance and perceived value. In keeping with the pattern established by Sellers and colleagues (Sellers & Shelton, 2003), we found that perceived identity importance played a moderating role. If masculine identity is not perceived to be important, then its public value has no impact on perspective taking. Although some men may view their gender group as devalued by society, this perception of value only enhances perspective taking if gender identity is viewed as central to the self-concept.

It is important to clarify that we are not suggesting that typically valued group members should be encouraged to view their group as devalued. Rather, we argue that a greater understanding of the interplay of identity importance and value (for men as well as for other groups) can shed light on complex relationship processes to the benefit of both genders. Indeed, the current research has important implications for men's romantic relationships and other social interactions. Although empathy strengthens relationships, men tend to express less empathic concern overall (including perspective taking) than do women, likely to the detriment of their female partner's relationship satisfaction (Davis, 1980, 1983; Davis & Oathout, 1987; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Thus, gaining a better understanding of the factors that impact men's perspective-taking tendencies could benefit their romantic (and platonic) relationships, as well as other social contexts in which the ability to stand in someone else's shoes is valuable. For example, increasing male manager's abilities to take the perspective of their female or minority employees could benefit employee satisfaction and workplace productivity.

Although results supported our predictions, only 8% of the variance in perspective taking was accounted for. Thus, despite the importance of providing a novel examination of the effects of men's gender identity on their capacities to take on a perspective, our results imply that other factors are also at play in men's perspec-

tive taking. For example, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) would suggest that our college-aged participants may have been particularly influenced by the example of perspective taking set by their fathers and other respected male role models. Along these lines, men who were raised primarily by female caretakers, or who grew up with female siblings, may exhibit generally heightened levels of perspective taking. Additionally, participants may be aware of stereotypical expectations that men be independent and unemotional (Prentice & Carranza, 2002), to the detriment of their empathic interpersonal connections and perspective-taking tendencies. Despite the fact that other factors are certainly influential, the novel examination of identity value and importance sheds important light on men's perspective-taking tendencies.

A limitation of the current research is that our procedure involved measuring existing levels of identity importance, value, and perspective taking, rather than manipulating the predictors experimentally. Thus, we cannot draw causal conclusions from the current correlational research. Although the data supported our proposal that the interaction of identity importance and value predict perspective taking for men, overall personality traits (such as conscientiousness and introspection) may be responsible for both men's perspective taking and their ability to acknowledge the ways in which their gender group may be publicly devalued. Additionally, the reverse causal direction is also possible (such that men's ability to take the perspective of their female partners is actually what drives their perceptions of their own devalued identity). While this seems less logical than the causal relationship we have posited here, future research should test this possibility by manipulating the predictors directly. Also, although past research suggests that perceived identity similarity and shared experience may be driving the relationship between identity value and importance and perspective taking (Clare & Jeffery, 1972; Mohr & Fassinger, 2006), we did not assess this supposition directly. Therefore, future research should examine perceived similarity as well as other possible process variables, in order to clarify why the interplay of identity value and importance is associated with perspective taking for men.

Identifying the specific factors that lead men to be view their gender identity as devalued is

also a task for future research. It would be useful to gain a better understanding of when and why men view their identity to be devalued and whether these perceptions are stable across time or subject to situational variations. Previous work has suggested that devalued group members place greater value on their identity in the face of discrimination or social threat (Shelton & Sellers, 2000) when in the presence of other group members and during participation in group-related activities (Yip, 2005). However, to our knowledge, examinations of the factors impacting men's perceived gender identity value have been scant. Future research should investigate the antecedents of men's perceived identity value and their interplay with importance.

Future research should also measure the effect of identity value and importance on relationships more directly by including both members of romantic couples. Because past work has largely overlooked the impact of men's gender identity on their relationships, the current study only focused on men. However, future assessments of both relationship partners would provide additional insight and clarify the impact of gender value and importance on both partners' perspective taking. This may be particularly important in light of women's lower reported levels of relationship satisfaction (Buunk & Van Yperen, 2005; Gaines, 2001), particularly if enhanced perspective taking could enhance feelings of equity within heterosexual relationships. Because the present study utilized an undergraduate sample, future research is needed to determine whether these effects exist in older samples of men as well. Additionally, it would be useful to measure relationship type (marriage, cohabitation, etc.) in order to examine any related effects. Further studies could also examine whether men's enhanced perspective taking generalizes beyond female romantic partners to additional close devalued others (such as family members and friends) for men who view their gender identity to be important but devalued, or whether it is a process unique to romantic relationships.

### Conclusions

In summary, our findings suggest that for men, perceiving an important identity to be publicly devalued is associated with heightened

abilities to take the perspective of similarly stigmatized relationship partners. In one sense, feeling that an important group is publicly devalued may be linked to negative outcomes, even for those with typically valued identities. However, the current research demonstrated a benefit in the context of close relationships, in that perceptions of important identity devaluation can help men put themselves in women's shoes. Although men's attitudes about their group's value are often overlooked because of their relatively advantaged societal position, we argue that a thorough understanding of gender relations (and close relationships) is incomplete without examining the perspective of men in addition to that of women. To that end, the current study demonstrates how men's own perceptions of the value of their gender identity have important implications for their romantic relationships.

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