

Compensatory Strategies for Reducing Interpersonal Discrimination: The Effectiveness of Acknowledgments, Increased Positivity, and Individuating Information

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Previous research has revealed, across a number of contexts, that stigmatized individuals are the recipients of interpersonal discrimination (e.g., M. R. Hebl, J. B. Foster, L. M. Mannix, & J. F. Dovidio, 2002). Such discrimination has been linked to a number of negative outcomes in the workplace, both for stigmatized individuals and for organizations as a whole (see, e.g., E. B. King, J. L. Shapiro, M. R. Hebl, S. L. Singletary, & S. Turner, 2006; C. O. Word, M. P. Zanna, & J. Cooper, 1974). The current research examines 3 individual-level compensatory strategies aimed at reducing interpersonal discrimination. Results reveal that compensatory strategies are successful in reducing interpersonal discrimination in job application contexts and that such strategies uniquely benefit stigmatized individuals.

Keywords: interpersonal discrimination, diversity, discrimination reduction

Recent research has shown that discrimination continues to be pervasive in the lives of stigmatized individuals but that such discrimination has become more subtle and interpersonal in nature (Frazer & Wiersma, 2001; Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002; Hebl, King, Glick, Singletary, & Kazama, 2007; Heilman, Martell, & Simon, 1988). Such discrimination is linked with pernicious effects. For example, early work by Word, Zanna, and Cooper (1974) found that White interviewers exhibited more negative interpersonal displays toward Black than White applicants in an interview setting and that these negative displays were reciprocated and used as the basis for subsequent hiring decisions. Such biases may help explain the inequities that continue to exist within organizations. For instance, women are more likely to be promoted than hired into management positions (Lyness & Judiesch, 1998), and women are less likely to be promoted than are men, even when controlling for performance (i.e., women require higher performance ratings to be promoted; Lyness & Heilman, 2006). Perhaps of most interest to organizations is the potential for interpersonal discrimination to have an impact on an organization's bottom line (i.e., customer purchases). That is, customers are less likely to return to a store or recommend a store to others, or are less likely to spend money than originally intended, when they experience (vs. do not experience) interpersonal discrimination from employees (King, Shapiro, Hebl, Singletary, & Turner, 2006).

Since the effects of discrimination (e.g., formal, interpersonal) influence both stigmatized individuals (e.g., lower evaluations) and organizations (e.g., fewer sales), it is important to examine methods that might reduce the display of such biases. One potential line of research might examine the extent to which stigmatized individuals themselves are able to thwart such displays, which is the focus of the current research. It is important to note that we do not believe stigmatized individuals should be solely responsible for remedying the display of discrimination; instead, organizations should also take such responsibility. However, we do realize the unfortunate reality that encountering prejudice and discrimination are persistent occurrences for stigmatized individuals (Deitch et al., 2003). As such, they may benefit interpersonally and professionally from engaging in compensatory strategies (see Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Kessler, Mickelson, & Williams, 1999).

In this article, we discuss the changing nature of discrimination and focus specifically on research pertaining to subtle displays of discrimination in the workplace. Then, we consider three specific compensatory strategies that targets might adopt and examine the efficacy of these strategies for reducing the display of interpersonal discrimination.

The Changing Nature of Discrimination

Over the past few decades, overt displays of prejudice and discrimination have decreased (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; McConahay, 1983; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995). Hebl et al. (2002) attempted to capture such differences in behavioral displays by distinguishing between "formal discrimination" (i.e., often illegal, overt biases) and "interpersonal discrimination" (i.e., subtle, interpersonal biases). Hebl et al. (2002) proposed that interpersonal discrimination, which may or may not be volitional, typically involves behaviors that are not illegal (e.g., lack of smiling, lack of eye contact) or are not required by a job (e.g., completely disregarding one customer while helping another) and

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may consist of verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal behaviors (e.g., decreases in friendliness, shortened interactions, increased hostility) within an interaction. Other researchers have also shown the consistent display of subtle biases within ongoing social interactions (Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hudson, 2002; Shelton & Richeson, 2006).

Moreover, a series of recent studies (Hebl et al., 2002, 2007; King et al., 2006) has found the substantial presence of interpersonal discrimination. For instance, confederates posing as stigmatized individuals did not experience formal biases (e.g., they were allowed to complete job applications, they were offered assistance, they were called back for job interviews), but they consistently experienced more negative interpersonal treatment from store personnel when compared with nonstigmatized individuals. So, for instance, customer service personnel terminated interactions sooner, displayed decreased amounts of eye contact, and were less helpful to obese customers compared with nonobese counterparts (King et al., 2006). Similar sets of results emerged with pregnant versus nonpregnant job applicants (Hebl et al., 2007) and gay/lesbian job applicants (who wore hats labeled *Gay and Proud*) versus assumed heterosexual job applicants (who wore hats labeled *Texan and Proud*; Hebl et al., 2002). Across these studies, incidences of interpersonal discrimination were reported with consistency from the applicants themselves; observers, who unobtrusively watched the interactions; and independent raters, who listened to audiotapes of the interactions and remained naive to participant condition. Thus, the experience of interpersonal discrimination is a reliably perceived phenomenon across targets and perceivers, and Hebl et al.'s (2002) research shows that interpersonal discrimination is a general phenomenon that influences a wide array of stigmatized individuals.

As in Hebl et al. (2002), the current research also examines the interpersonal treatment that gay men and lesbians receive when applying for jobs. As such, it straightforwardly replicates Hebl et al.'s (2002) study, and we therefore anticipate the following:

Hypothesis 1: Applicants portrayed as gay and lesbian will receive greater amounts of interpersonal discrimination than will their heterosexual counterparts.

Repercussions of the Changing Nature of Prejudice and Discrimination

While we are optimistic about the absence of overt forms of discrimination (i.e., equal likelihoods of stigmatized vs. nonstigmatized individuals being hired), the strong display of covert forms of discrimination is disturbing. That is, a growing body of research has shown that the more subtle, interpersonal discrimination also has deleterious outcomes for its targets. Research by Martel, Lane, and Willis (1996) shows that seemingly small and subtle behavioral differences may have enormous impact in the workplace when compounded over time (see also Shapiro, King, & Quiñones, 2007; Stauffer & Buckley, 2005; Valian, 1998). Given such potentially critical consequences, it is important to consider strategies by which interpersonal discrimination may be reduced or avoided.

Compensation by Targets

In the current research, we define *compensatory strategies* as behaviors that are adopted in an attempt to reduce or altogether eliminate interpersonal discrimination displayed toward stigmatized individuals. The current study focuses on examining the extent to which compensatory strategies are effective in reducing interpersonal discrimination. Although such strategies and their underlying mechanisms have not been conceptualized as such in previous research, it is clear that stigmatized individuals do engage in compensatory strategies. For instance, when female students believe that a sexist man will be grading a written essay, they write essays that distance themselves from traditional gender stereotypes (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Similarly, unattractive boys and girls utilize different strategies in order to persuade their peers (Dion & Stein, 1978). In addition, Black individuals who believe they will be interacting with a prejudiced individual engage in different behaviors from what those interacting with a nonprejudiced individual engage in (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005). Furthermore, when heavyweight women believe they can be seen, they enact different sets of behaviors from what they do when they do not believe that their interaction partners will see them (Miller, Rothblum, Felicio, & Brand, 1995). In sum, stigmatized individuals clearly utilize compensatory strategies to gain desired outcomes in social interactions. The current research begins to articulate some of these strategies as well as to examine how they might operate in a workplace context. In particular, we examine three strategies that stigmatized individuals might adopt—acknowledgment, individuating information, and increased positivity—in an effort to reduce interpersonal discrimination. We certainly do not believe these three are exhaustive (see Goffman, 1963, for an overview of other strategies), but we focus on these as a starting point for our investigation because we wanted to look at strategies that (a) could be enacted by targets (and not perceivers), (b) have actually been used by targets in interactions, (c) could be enacted during a short interaction period, (d) have been shown in previous research (which we briefly review) to be effective methods for reducing prejudicial attitudes, and (e) might alter the expressions of both formal and interpersonal types of discrimination.

Strategies for Remediation

Acknowledgment

The strategy of acknowledgment refers to openly addressing one's stigma. Previous research has shown this strategy can be beneficial in altering perceptions of the stigmatized individual (Hebl & Kleck, 2002; Hebl & Skorinko, 2005). For instance, in one of the earliest known studies on acknowledgment, Davis (1961) found that when individuals made explicit statements about their physical disabilities, others were less likely to view them with disdain, pity, or contempt. Researchers have posited that acknowledgments ease interactions because they address, and do not ignore, underlying tension and discomfort in an interaction (Hebl, Tickle, & Heatherton, 2000). Furthermore, acknowledgments may be successful to the extent that they depict stigmatized individuals as well adjusted (Hebl & Skorinko, 2005) and that they reduce stigma-related thought suppression on the part of perceivers

(Madera, 2008). Although previous research has not examined the extent to which acknowledgments reduce discriminatory behavior, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 2: Applicants portrayed as gay and lesbian will report less interpersonal discrimination when they acknowledge their stigma than when they do not.

Individuating Information

This strategy occurs when stigmatized individuals divulge information that enables others to see them as individuals rather than as representatives of a stigma. When perceivers lack information about an individual, they tend to rely on stereotypes. For example, when asked to select a leader, both men and women are more likely to select a man than a woman because they rely upon gender stereotypes. But once perceivers have additional information about targets, they are much less likely to use gender as the deciding factor in choosing a leader (Eagly & Karau, 1991). The strategy of individuating information seems particularly effective in reducing stereotyping when perceivers have the cognitive resources and motivation necessary to specifically attend to the stigmatized targets (see Fiske, Lin, & Neuberg, 1999, for a review). Although evidence reveals that individuating information reduces reliance upon stereotypes, no research has examined whether individuating information is effective in also reducing interpersonal discrimination. We anticipate the following:

Hypothesis 3: Applicants portrayed as gay and lesbian will report less interpersonal discrimination when they divulge individuating information than when they do not.

Increased Positivity

The strategy of increased positivity occurs when stigmatized individuals alter their behaviors (verbal, paraverbal, and/or non-verbal) in ways that increase the positivity (and their likability ratings) within an interaction. For example, Shelton et al. (2005) found that Black students who were primed to expect racial prejudice were rated by their interaction partners as being more engaging and likable than were those not primed to expect racial prejudice. Thus, it seems likely that Black students increased their displays of positivity so that they could obviate negative perceptions by others. Similar findings have been shown with overweight individuals, such that those who anticipate they may be stereotyped (vs. those who do not) alter their behaviors in a way that makes others judge them as more socially adept and likable (Miller et al., 1995). Although no research has yet examined how targets' increased positivity influences behavior in the workplace, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 4: Applicants portrayed as gay and lesbian will report less interpersonal discrimination when they exhibit increased amounts of positivity than when they do not.

The Current Research

The current research focuses on how the three aforementioned compensatory strategies potentially reduce interpersonal discrimination for gay and lesbian job applicants. Surprisingly little re-

search has been conducted on this stigmatized group of individuals, which may constitute up to 17% of the workforce (Gonsiorek & Weinrich, 1991). As the numbers of gay and lesbian employees coming out in the workforce increase, it is important to understand what strategies reduce discrimination and make them feel included and valued in organizations (Ragins & Cotton, 2001). An inclusive organizational culture is more likely to develop when discrimination, in all of its forms, ceases to exist (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2004). Thus, the current research attempts to address individual strategies that might be effective in reducing the display of interpersonal discrimination.

Method

Applicants, Observers, and Coders

Eight undergraduate research assistants (5 women) served as job applicants and applied for jobs in retail stores. As in Hebl et al. (2002), gay/lesbian job applicants wore hats labeled *Gay and Proud*, and assumed heterosexual job applicants wore hats labeled *Texan and Proud*. Six additional undergraduate research assistants (4 women) served as observers and witnessed the interactions that applicants had with store managers. Two additional undergraduate researchers (both women), who were unaware of the nature of the study, served as independent coders who listened to audiotaped recordings of the interactions. All applicants, observers, and independent coders remained blind to the hypotheses of the study until its conclusion.

Participating Stores

The applicants' role was to interact with a prospective employer in an attempt to gain employment; thus, only stores that were actively hiring were included in the current study. Personnel from a total of 232 stores located in five shopping malls of a major metropolitan area indicated that they were hiring. A total of 16 stores were removed from the final analyses because confederates at these stores discovered their stigmatized status during the trial (e.g., they saw their hat in a mirror, store personnel commented about their hat). Thus, the final analyses are based upon a sample of 216 participating stores.

Materials

In order to standardize physical appearance, applicants wore jeans and a matching pullover jacket. In the pocket of the jacket, applicants carried minicassette recorders that they used to audiotape the conversations, which could later be rated by the independent coders.

Training

Because the nature of this study involved some deception (e.g., audiotaped conversations, potentially inaccurate portrayal of sexuality), we took great care in considering the ethics of this study, training individuals, and ensuring participants' safety (i.e., contacting university lawyers, protecting anonymity of the stores, and providing extensive training to study participants). Prior to beginning the study, we had every applicant and observer take part in training, memorize scripts, rehearse contingency responses and

situations, and complete consent forms that highlighted the sensitivity of the study and the need for professionalism. Thus, applicants and observers felt comfortable enacting their roles and familiarized themselves with a range of potential reactions they might receive from store personnel. During training, applicants also received instructions to avoid looking at reflective surfaces (e.g., mirrors, windows) so that they could remain blind to the condition in which they participated. If they became aware of their condition during a trial, they reported it to the experimenter. To abide by the law, applicants were told to report their names, contact information, and previous work experience accurately.

During training and actual sessions, observers additionally wore watches to measure interaction lengths between the applicants and store managers. Observers also were told to maintain confidentiality regarding the trials in which they participated and store identities and were instructed not to reveal the hat condition to the applicants at any time.

Independent raters participated in a single training session with the experimenter in which they rated five audiotaped interactions on a number of dimensions that are discussed shortly. During this training, the experimenter answered any questions that arose and made sure the independent raters understood each dimension and were similar and consistent in their ratings.

Procedure

Applicants and observers were paired together and assigned to enter 40 stores (because of time commitments, 4 applicants were unable to complete all of the assigned trials so we recruited 2 additional applicants to fill most of the missing trials). The experimenter assigned a stigmatized hat in half of the trials and a nonstigmatized hat in the other half, though the particular order was randomly assigned and the applicants were not told what hats or how many of each they would be wearing. At the start of each trial, the experimenter gave applicants a target hat, ensured that the applicant knew which (if any) strategy to enact, and finally directed the applicant to a target store. Prior to entering each store, applicants put on their hat and began taping their interactions.

Manipulations

Stigma

The applicants' stigma was manipulated by mirroring the methodology described by Hebl et al. (2002), in which applicants wore either a nonstigmatized hat bearing the words *Texan and Proud* or a stigmatized hat bearing the words *Gay and Proud*.

Compensation Strategy

Applicants were assigned to enter a total of 40 stores each, enacting each of the following four strategies in 10 stores: the control condition and the acknowledgment, individuating information, and increased positivity strategies. Thus, stigma and strategy were fully crossed, and participants enacted each combination five times. To develop the compensatory strategy manipulations, we developed and pretested a wide variety of statements that were presumed to be indicative of each respective strategy. The pretest consisted of asking 25 college-age individuals to assess—using a 7-point Likert-type scale whose anchors included 1 (*Not at All*), 4

(*Moderately*), and 7 (*Very Much*)—the extent to which the statements were reflective of each of the strategies, and we chose statements if they were rated as being at least moderately reflective of the target strategy and low in reflecting other strategies.

Control. In this condition, applicants were instructed to follow a memorized script that mirrored what was used in Hebl et al. (2002). Specifically, they entered each store and asked three standard questions: (a) “Do you have any jobs?” (b) “Can I complete a job application?” and (c) “What sorts of things would I do if I worked here?”

Acknowledgment. In this condition, applicants also stated, “I don’t usually wear relaxed hats like this, but this is a good reflection of who I am.” Guided by previous research (Hebl & Kleck, 2002), we pretested this statement, and data revealed it was rated as moderately reflecting an acknowledgment ($M = 4.89$, $SD = 1.52$).

Individuating information. In this condition, applicants also divulged two additional pieces of information. Namely, they stated, “I’m a student at Rice University,” and “I can’t work on Wednesday mornings because I take my grandmother to dialysis.” Guided by Fiske and Neuberg’s (1990) continuum model of impression formation, we pretested these joined statements and found that they rated as reflecting individuating information ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.79$).

Increased positivity. In this condition, applicants also declared concerning the job, “Sounds like something right up my alley!” and, “I’m excited about the possibility of working here.” In addition, applicants were instructed “to smile more than they would normally smile” and “to appear pleasant, positive, and generally upbeat.” Guided by Miller’s research (e.g., Miller et al., 1995; Miller & Myers, 1998), we pretested both the verbal and nonverbal manipulations and found that they rated as moderately reflecting increased positivity ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 1.94$).

Measures

Formal Discrimination

Formal discrimination was measured with three dichotomous yes or no items that included whether applicants were (a) told a job was available, (b) allowed to complete a job application, and (c) called back for an interview.

Interpersonal Discrimination

Interpersonal discrimination was measured by three scales—from the perspective of the applicants (Perceived Negativity), observers (Observed Negativity) and independent raters (Coded Negativity).

Perceived Negativity

Applicants made ratings on 13 dimensions of the interaction, which were adapted from the ratings specified in Hebl et al. (2002). Specifically, using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Not at All*) to 7 (*Very Much*), applicants rated the extent to which sales personnel (a) smiled, (b) showed comfort, (c) made eye contact, (d) were standoffish, (e) were rude, (f) showed enthusiasm, (g) prematurely terminated the interaction, (h) nodded, (i) were friendly, (j) were awkward, (k) attended to the interaction,

(l) were hostile, or (m) were nervous. These items constituted the composite of the Perceived Negativity scale ($\alpha = .94$).

Observed Negativity

Observers also rated dimensions of the interaction. Using the same Likert-type scale, they made ratings on seven items, including the extent to which the sales personnel (a) nodded, (b) were rude, (c) were hostile, (d) prematurely terminated the interaction, (e) showed interest, (f) were friendly, or (g) attended to the interaction. These items constituted the composite of the Observed Negativity scale ($\alpha = .84$). Observers also kept track of the total number of seconds that elapsed during the interaction between the applicant and store personnel.

Coded Negativity

Independent coders rated the audiotaped conversations on five items that assessed interpersonal discrimination. That is, using the same Likert-type scale, coders rated the extent to which each interaction depicted personnel who (a) were rude, (b) were friendly, (c) were helpful, (d) prematurely terminated the interaction, or (e) displayed negativity. These items constituted the composite of the Coded Negativity scale ($\alpha = .83$), and interrater agreement between the two coders indicated high levels of agreement ($r_{wg} = .85$).

Results

Analysis of Formal Discrimination

To begin our analyses, we assessed whether there were differences in formal discrimination among applicants across conditions. Using logistic regression analyses, we found no significant differences in formal discrimination (i.e., job availability, permission to complete an application, callback) owing to stigma (stigmatized, nonstigmatized) or strategy (control, acknowledgment, increased positivity, individuating information). In short, formal discrimination was low in overall incidence, because most applicants were told jobs were available, allowed to complete applications, and given callbacks at roughly the same rates across condition. Furthermore, formal discrimination seems to have been unaffected by any of our manipulations (see Table 1 for data on job availability, permission to complete applications, and callbacks by condition).

Table 1
Formal Discrimination Indexes by Count (%)

Stigma and discrimination index	Control	Acknowledgment	Individuating information	Increased positivity
Stigmatized				
Job availability	20/25 (80)	22/25 (88)	20/26 (80)	19/24 (79)
Permission to complete application	21/23 (91)	24/26 (92)	22/26 (85)	26/26 (100)
Callback	2/25 (8)	3/27 (11)	4/26 (15)	1/27 (4)
Nonstigmatized				
Job availability	18/24 (75)	24/27 (89)	27/30 (90)	20/27 (74)
Permission to complete application	21/22 (95)	25/26 (96)	28/28 (100)	24/27 (89)
Callback	2/23 (9)	2/24 (8)	2/27 (7)	4/26 (15)

Analysis of Interpersonal Discrimination

Differences Between Stigmatized and Nonstigmatized Individuals in the Control Condition

To test Hypothesis 1, we conducted *t* tests on applicants', observers', and independent coders' ratings between the stigmatized and nonstigmatized control conditions. Supporting our predictions, stigmatized applicants reported greater amounts of perceived negativity ($M = 3.66$) than did nonstigmatized job applicants ($M = 2.74$), $t(47) = 2.88, p < .05; d = 0.82$. Although no significant differences emerged on observers' ratings of interaction length ($p > .05; d = 0.49$), observers indicated significantly more observed negativity in interactions with stigmatized ($M = 3.10$) than nonstigmatized ($M = 2.45$) job applicants, $t(46) = 2.23, p < .05; d = 0.64$. Finally, independent coders perceived greater amounts of coded negativity in interactions involving stigmatized ($M = 3.18$) than nonstigmatized ($M = 2.16$), $p < .001; t(38) = 3.32, p < .05; d = 1.12$, applicants. In general, then, the findings from applicants, observers, and coders coalesce in supporting Hypothesis 1 and replicate the main findings of Hebl et al. (2002).

Compensatory Strategies to Reduce Interpersonal Discrimination

To test the effectiveness of compensatory strategies in reducing interpersonal discrimination, we conducted a series of planned comparisons. However, we also report results from 2 (stigma: stigmatized, nonstigmatized) \times 4 (strategy: control, acknowledgment, increased positivity, individuating information) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) conducted on perceived negativity and coded negativity and from a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) conducted on observed negativity and interaction length. Table 2 presents correlations among the negativity ratings across the different perspectives.

We report the results from each of the three perspectives separately (see Table 3 for means and standard deviations). To begin, we analyzed data from the applicants' perspective and found a significant Stigma \times Strategy interaction (see Table 4 for complete ANOVA results). The pattern of data suggests that the compensatory strategies did not alter the nonstigmatized applicants' perspectives in any way; that is, applicants indicated that the strategies were effective only if they were stigmatized and used them. In particular, planned contrasts revealed that when they were

Table 2
Correlations Among the Negativity Ratings Across the Perspectives

Perspective	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
1. Applicants	192	3.15	1.13	—	
2. Observers	204	2.58	1.04	.58**	—
3. Independent coders	152	2.46	0.93	.13	.21**

** $p < .01$, one-tailed.

stigmatized and did not enact a strategy (control), applicants perceived significantly more negativity directed at them than when they were stigmatized and enacted the strategy of either acknowledgment ($p < .05$; $d = 0.73$) or increased positivity ($p < .05$; $d = 0.61$). The use of individuating information ($p > .05$; $d = 0.27$), however, did not significantly reduce the extent to which stigmatized individuals perceived negativity in their interactions. Thus, results support both Hypotheses 2 and 4 but do not support Hypothesis 3.

We next considered the observers' perspective and conducted a MANOVA on observed negativity. The MANOVA revealed a significant effect of strategy, $F(3, 195) = 3.78$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$. The Stigma \times Strategy interaction was not significant, $F(3, 196) = 2.47$, $p > .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$ (see Table 5 for between subjects effects); however, planned comparisons revealed that observers

Table 4
Analysis of Variance of Applicant Ratings for Interpersonal Discrimination

Effect	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	η^2
Stigma				
Stigmatized	3.30	1.24		
Nonstigmatized	2.99	0.98	3.80	.02*
Strategy				
Control	3.32	1.22	0.56	.01
Acknowledgment	3.09	0.92		
Individuating information	3.16	1.20		
Increased positivity	3.03	1.18		
Stigma \times Strategy			2.75	.04*

Note. $N = 192$.

* $p < .05$.

perceived significantly less negativity when stigmatized individuals used the compensatory strategies of increased positivity than when they were in the control condition ($p < .01$; $d = 0.70$). However, observers did not detect any significant differences when stigmatized individuals were in the control condition and when they used either acknowledgments ($p > .05$; $d = 0.48$) or individuating information ($p > .05$; $d = 0.20$). Planned comparisons from observers' data also indicated that interactions between store personnel and stigmatized individuals were significantly

Table 3
Univariate Analyses and Means (*SD*) for Perceptions of Negativity

Stigma and perspective	Control	Acknowledgment	Individuating information	Increased positivity	<i>F</i>	η^2
Stigmatized						
Applicants' perceived negativity					2.34	.07
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.66 _a (1.19)	2.88 _b (0.95)	3.32 _a (1.36)	2.92 _b (1.25)		
<i>n</i>	25	25	26	24		
Observers' observed negativity					2.35	.07
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.10 _a (1.21)	2.57 _a (1.00)	2.77 _a (0.97)	2.31 _b (1.06)		
<i>n</i>	23	26	24	24		
Observers' ratings of interaction length (s)					2.92	.08*
<i>M (SD)</i>	67.20 _a (30.06)	97.92 _a (99.92)	115.21 _b (86.66)	150.08 _b (123.68)		
<i>n</i>	23	26	24	24		
Independent raters' coded negativity					4.19	.14*
<i>M (SD)</i>	3.18 _a (1.13)	2.31 _b (0.74)	2.56 _b (0.88)	2.37 _b (0.76)		
<i>n</i>	20	21	20	20		
Nonstigmatized						
Applicants' perceived negativity					0.72	.02
<i>M (SD)</i>	2.74 _a (1.04)	3.21 _a (0.88)	2.86 _a (0.91)	3.03 _a (1.07)		
<i>n</i>	24	24	22	22		
Observers' observed negativity					0.44	.01
<i>M (SD)</i>	2.45 _a (0.78)	2.32 _a (0.89)	2.67 _a (1.04)	2.60 _a (1.25)		
<i>n</i>	25	27	27	28		
Observers' ratings of interaction length (s)					1.31	.04
<i>M (SD)</i>	89.88 _a (57.44)	93.41 _a (67.59)	105.33 _a (65.90)	124.61 _a (88.92)		
<i>n</i>	25	27	27	28		
Independent raters' coded negativity					1.10	.05
<i>M (SD)</i>	2.16 _a (0.61)	2.21 _a (1.09)	2.66 _a (1.18)	2.22 _a (0.82)		
<i>n</i>	20	18	17	18		

Note. Differences in *n* reflect missing data. Differing subscripts within a row indicates means that are significantly different from one another. For those with subscript b, $p < .05$.

* $p < .05$.

Table 5
Between-Subjects Effects of Multivariate Analysis of Variance of Observer Ratings for Interaction Length and Observed Negativity

Effect	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	η^2
Interaction length				
Stigma				
Stigmatized	107.82	95.67		
Nonstigmatized	103.76	71.66	0.14	.00
Strategy				
Control	79.02	47.32	3.75	.05*
Acknowledgment	95.62	84.20		
Individuating information	120.27	87.15		
Increased positivity	126.39	99.02		
Stigma \times Strategy			1.58	.02
Observed negativity				
Stigma				
Stigmatized	2.68	1.08		
Nonstigmatized	2.51	1.00	1.58	.01
Strategy				
Control	2.76	1.05	1.45	.02
Acknowledgment	2.44	0.94		
Individuating information	2.73	1.00		
Increased positivity	2.46	1.17		
Stigma \times Strategy			1.73	.03

Note. *N* = 204.

* *p* < .05.

longer when stigmatized individuals enacted increased positivity than when they enacted no compensatory strategy ($p < .05$; $d = 0.91$). However, there were no differences between the control condition and enacting the other two compensatory strategies. Thus, data from observers consistently supported Hypothesis 4 but did not support Hypothesis 2 or 3.

Finally, we conducted an ANOVA on the data from independent raters, and a significant Stigma \times Strategy interaction emerged (see Table 6), revealing that compensatory strategies had a unique effect for stigmatized applicants. Specifically, planned comparisons in the stigmatized condition revealed that enacting any of the strategies (i.e., acknowledgment, individuating information, or increased positivity) successfully reduced coded negativity for stigmatized applicants ($p < .01$; $d = 0.93$; $p < .05$; $d = 0.62$; $p < .01$; $d = 0.86$, respectively). Thus, results obtained from the independent raters fully support Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4.

Discussion

The current study provides evidence for the continued existence of subtle forms of discrimination in today's society. Although stigmatized (i.e., gay, lesbian) individuals did not report receiving overt forms of discrimination (i.e., formal discrimination), they did report receiving more interpersonal discrimination (i.e., greater amounts of hostility, rudeness, and eagerness to prematurely terminate the interaction and decreased friendliness) than did their nonstigmatized counterparts. These findings were reported with consistency across different perspectives (i.e., applicants, observers, and coders) and replicate the findings of Hebl et al. (2002).

More novel to the current research, however, is the finding that compensatory strategies are effective for stigmatized job appli-

cants. Although individuals are just as likely to receive callbacks for job interviews when they do or do not utilize these strategies, our research shows that, by and large, compensatory strategies do succeed in reducing interpersonal discrimination for stigmatized individuals. Specifically, across all three perspectives, the increased positivity strategy reduced interpersonal discrimination for stigmatized job applicants. Across both applicants and independent raters (but not observers), the acknowledgment strategy significantly reduced interpersonal discrimination. And finally, independent coders (but not applicants and observers) indicated that the individuating information strategy significantly reduced interpersonal discrimination. Thus, each strategy received some support for reducing interpersonal discrimination.

It is noteworthy to consider that compensatory strategies uniquely assisted stigmatized (but not nonstigmatized) individuals. That is, both applicants and independent coders consistently rated stigmatized (but not nonstigmatized) applicants' adoption of compensatory strategies as being effective in reducing interpersonal discrimination. Because individuals from both of these perspectives remained blind to stigma condition, the results clearly suggest that compensatory strategies are not just general prescriptions for how individuals can improve interaction outcomes; rather, they are strategies that show particular benefits for stigmatized individuals and help them gain access to similar interaction outcomes afforded to their nonstigmatized counterparts. Compensatory strategies may redirect one's focus toward an aspect of the target other than his or her membership in a stigmatized group, although this may happen via different mechanisms across strategies. For instance, we think (and have initial evidence suggesting) that acknowledgment may reduce thought suppression that occurs when perceivers are faced with stigmatized individuals (Madera, 2008). Future research could benefit by clarifying these underlying mechanisms. In addition, future research might also examine how stigmatized individuals benefit from adopting these strategies across the employment cycle (i.e., interview setting, during daily interactions while on the job).

It is also important to consider the short- and long-term consequences that compensatory strategies might have for stigmatized individuals. As the current research shows, there are clear benefits for compensating (e.g., having more favorable interactions). In addition, other researchers have suggested that compensating might reduce the amount of anxiety stigmatized individuals experience in mixed interactions, which arise because stigmatized

Table 6
Analysis of Variance of Independent Raters' Coded Negativity

Effect	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	η^2
Stigma				
Stigmatized	2.60	0.93		
Nonstigmatized	2.31	0.96	3.89	.03*
Strategy				
Control	2.69	1.04	1.32	.03
Acknowledgment	2.28	0.87		
Individuating information	2.37	0.80		
Increased positivity	2.50	0.98		
Stigma \times Strategy			3.51	.07*

Note. *N* = 152.

* *p* < .05.

individuals fear that they will confirm negative stereotypes about their group and/or be the targets of prejudice (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Although compensating may help smooth interactions, recent research suggests that compensating may come with personal costs to the stigmatized individuals evoking these strategies. For instance, Shelton et al. (2005) reveal that when Black individuals believe that they are going to be the target of prejudice, they compensate with White interactants by putting forth a great deal of effort in interactions (i.e., by talking more, soliciting their partner's perspective more, and increasing the extent to which they smile and lean forward). However, the Black individuals ultimately report experiencing more negative affect and less authenticity as a result of engaging in these compensatory techniques. These findings suggest that some compensatory strategies may give way to positive interpersonal outcomes but that this may happen at the expense of negative intrapersonal outcomes (see Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Certainly, more research in this area is needed; however, it does suggest that some compensatory strategies may be more effective than others and that interpersonal and intrapersonal consequences should be considered.

It is also likely that certain strategies work better for certain types of individuals and in certain contexts more than others. This makes sense because, clearly, people use different self-presentational styles across contexts. Furthermore, the effectiveness of strategies may depend on the particular stigma, and future research might address this. However, the complexities that these issues raise do not diminish the importance of the current results regardless of the fact that they were found in just one job applicant context. Rather, they inform us that stigmatized individuals can have success in diminishing the amounts of interpersonal discrimination they receive and that there is not simply one effective strategy for doing this.

The current research is provocative in that it focuses on the strategies that stigmatized individuals can utilize. We believe this is important because stigmatized employees often find themselves in vulnerable positions in the workplace in which they strongly desire to remedy various types of discrimination. We have shown that at least in the course of applying for jobs, gay and lesbian applicants can be successful in reducing interpersonal discrimination. However, we do not believe stigmatized individuals should bear the sole responsibility for remedying discriminatory behaviors, particularly if it comes with costs to them. Rather, organizations might consider what they can do to shoulder some of the burden. We propose that organizations try to understand that discrimination, albeit subtle and more interpersonal in nature, continues to exist in the workplace. In addition, we believe they must take some ownership in reducing such discrimination. Although the focus of the current research was not on organizational strategies, it is likely that there are effective strategies at this level as well. For instance, future research might examine how particular organizational policies, information sessions, and diversity training initiatives might raise awareness of and hold employees responsible for considering and altering their interpersonal displays toward stigmatized coworkers. That is, rather than focus solely on overt acts of discrimination, organizational initiatives might consider making people aware of the subtle and interpersonal ways in which they discriminate.

In conclusion, it is informative to know that stigmatized individuals, in this case gay and lesbian job applicants, can influence

the degree of discrimination expressed by interviewers without negatively influencing the extent to which they are called back for interviews. Furthermore, the current research clearly demonstrates that these are strategies that uniquely help stigmatized (but not nonstigmatized) individuals have more favorable interactions with others. We think it is important to equip stigmatized individuals with effective strategies for reducing such discrimination. We encourage future researchers to continue investigating these and other compensatory strategies and to focus on not only individual-level but also organizational-level strategies.

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