

# Discrimination, Attribution, and Racial Group Identification: Implications for Psychological Distress Among Black Americans

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# Discrimination

- Contemporary forms of overt and subtle discrimination experienced by Blacks in the U.S.
- Increasing evidence for negative mental health implications.
  - Indirect and direct mechanisms

# Stress-Mediation Model





# Discrimination and Mental Health

- Greater stress resulting from interpersonal experiences of discrimination
- Poorer racial and self-evaluation
  - Symbolic interaction and social evaluation theories (Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Pettigrew, 1967).



# Discrimination and Attribution

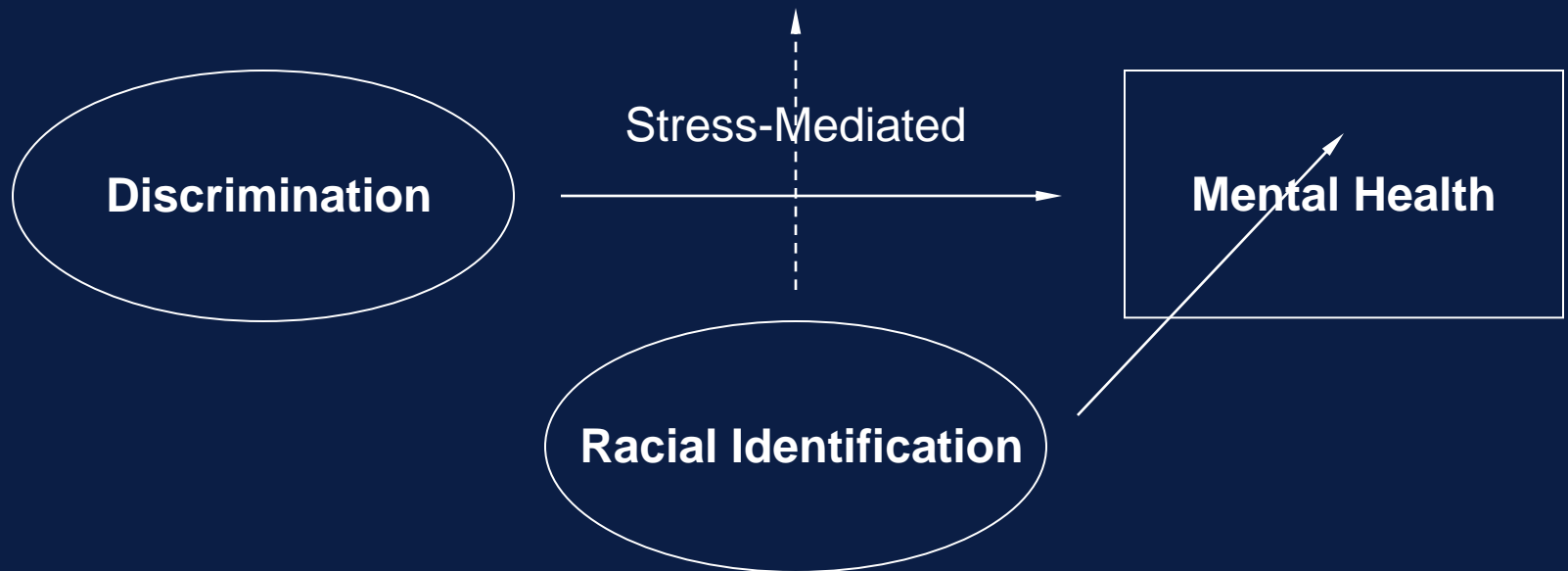
- Two competing perspectives:
  - Interpreting negative experiences as instances of discrimination may have self-protective properties.
  - However, such attributions may entail a threat to social identity.



# Incorporating Racial Group Identification

- Rejection-Identification Model (Branscombe et al., 1999).
  - Stronger in-group identification may mitigate the effect of discrimination.
- Direct protective effect of greater racial group identification and also buffered discrimination.

# Racial Identity Model





# Gaps in Knowledge

- Influence of discrimination attributed to race vs. other forms of discrimination or unfair treatment more broadly.
- Does racial group identification buffer different forms of discrimination?





# Methods

- Data source: National Survey of American Life (PI: James S. Jackson).
- Sample:
  - 5191 Black Americans (3570 African Americans and 1621 Caribbean Blacks).
  - Nationally representative of the Black American household population.



# Measures

- Discrimination and unfair treatment: Everyday Discrimination Scale (Williams et al. 1997).
- Attribution: Single-item assessing the primary reason for these experiences.
- Racial Group Identification: Single-item assessing how closely the respondent felt in their feelings and ideas to other Blacks.



# Measures

- Outcome: Significant Psychological Distress measured using the K6.
- Demographic characteristics:
  - Ethnicity
  - Gender
  - Age
  - Poverty
  - Education
  - Employment
  - Region
  - Social Desirability



# Analyses

- Multivariable logistic regression analyses predicting significant psychological distress
- All analyses weighted and took into account complex survey design characteristics
  - SAS-callable SUDAAN



# Results

## SPD

No: 95.3%

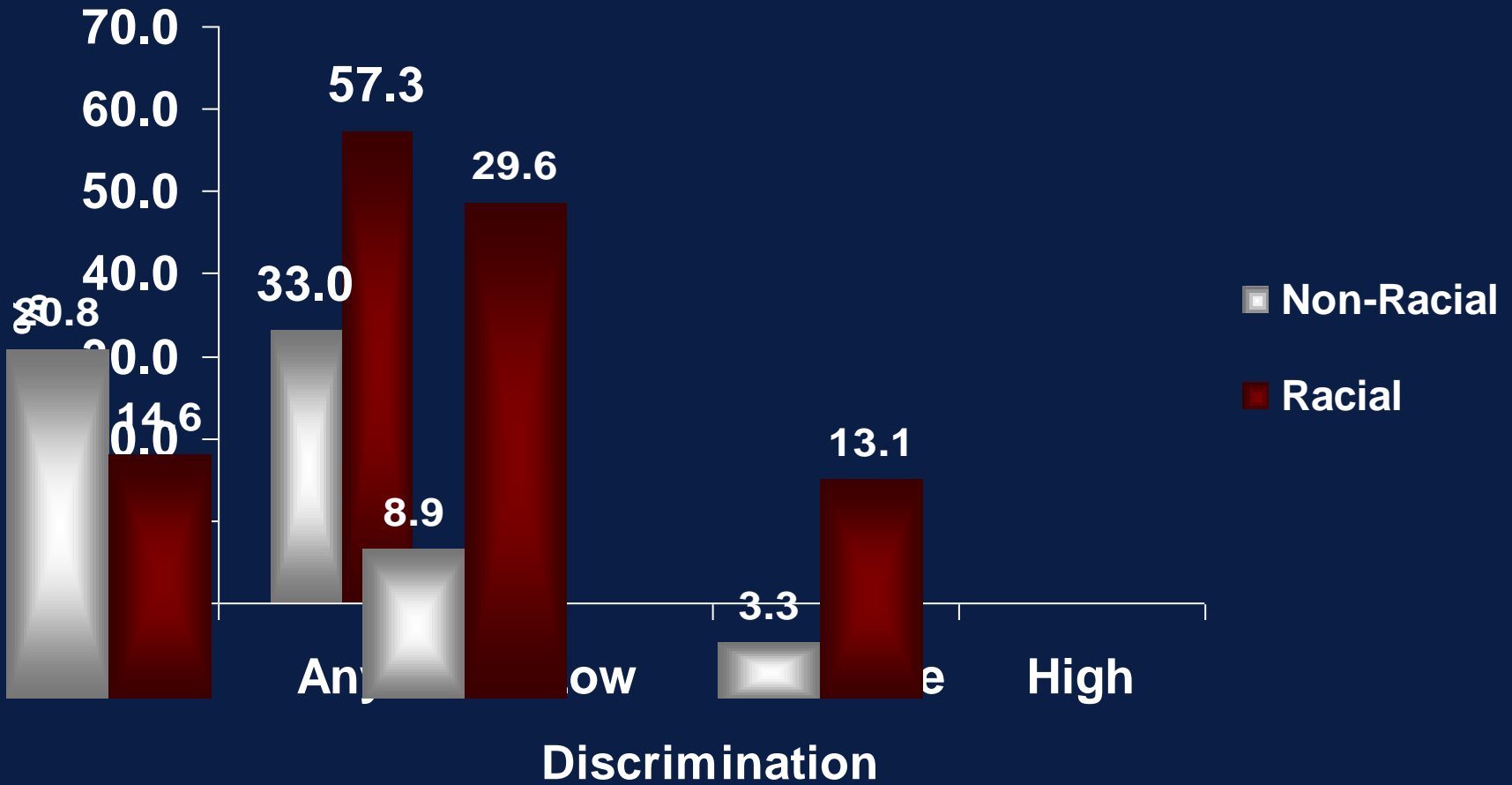
Yes: 4.8%

## Discrimination

None: 9.7%

Any: 20.8%

# Discrimination





# Logistic Regressions Predicting SPD

	<u>OR (95% CI)</u>	<u>OR (95% CI)</u>
<b>Discrimination (ref: None)</b>		
<u>Non-Racial Attribution</u>		
Low	1.10 (0.45, 2.70)	1.40 (0.55, 3.56)
Moderate	2.20 (0.81, 5.99)	2.64 (0.92, 7.58)
High	12.02 (4.66, 31.03)	13.17 (4.90, 35.43)
<u>Racial Attribution</u>		
Low	1.06 (0.37, 3.04)	2.54 (0.84, 7.62)
Moderate	3.37 (1.33, 8.56)	5.85 (2.32, 14.72)
High	10.90 (4.37, 27.18)	17.07 (6.59, 44.27)



# Logistic Regressions Predicting SPD

- Adding racial identification revealed a main protective effect.
  - Moderate vs Low  
OR: 0.90, 95% CI: 0.46, 1.77
  - High vs Low  
OR: 0.72, 95% CI: 0.40, 1.30

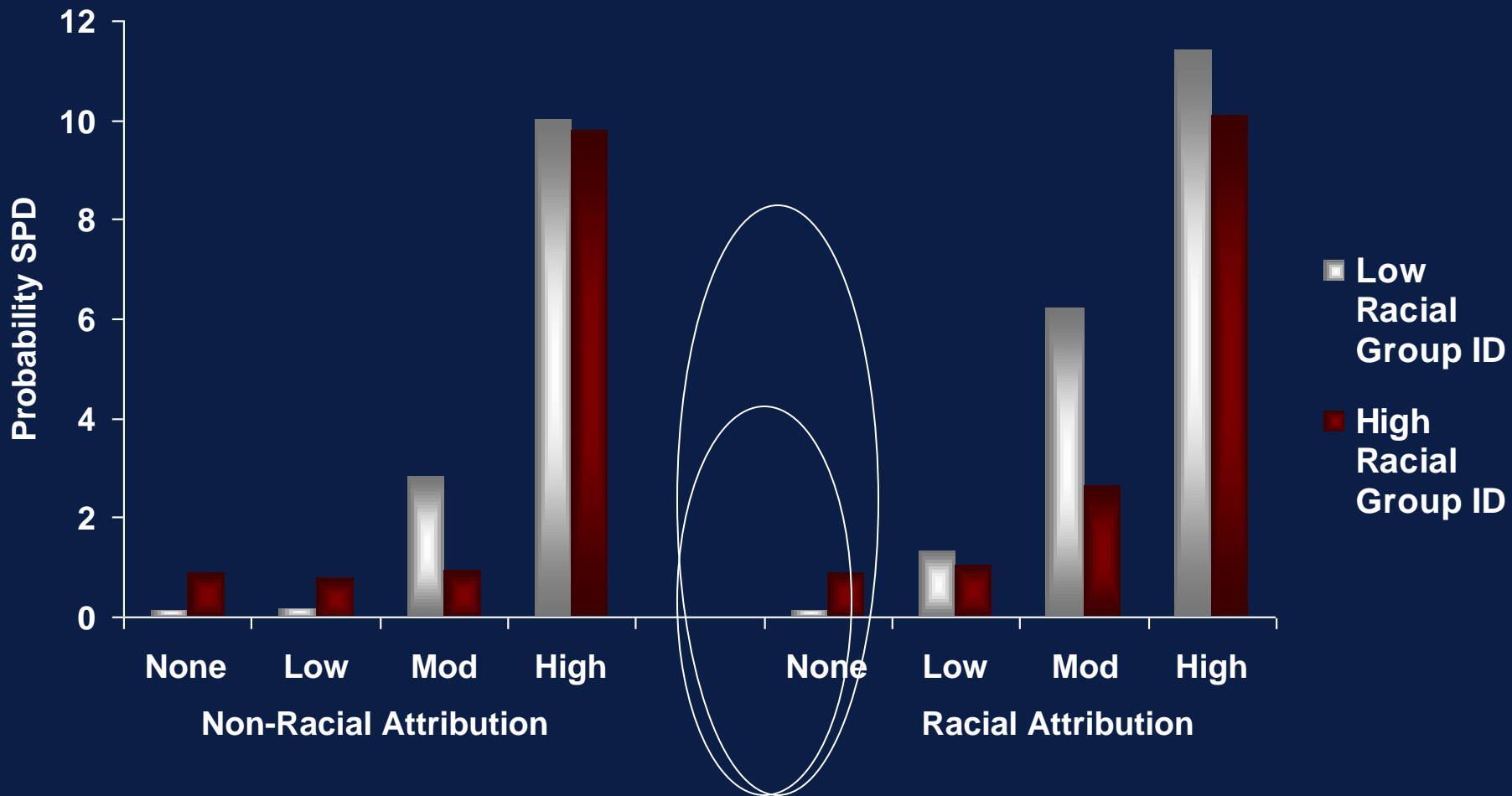




# Discrimination × Racial Identification

- No significant interactions between moderate identification and discrimination
- Significant interactions between high identification and discrimination
  - With moderate levels of non-racial discrimination ( $t = -2.37, p < 0.05$ )
  - With moderate levels of racial discrimination ( $t = -2.49, p < 0.05$ )

# Discrimination × Racial Group Identification





# Discussion

- Negative mental health implications of discrimination and unfair treatment among Black Americans.
  - Regardless of primary attribution
  - Attributions to race were not relatively protective compared to non-racial attributions.



# Discussion

- Some evidence for the Rejection-Identification Model
  - High racial group identification somewhat buffered the effect of both non-racial and racial discrimination.
  - May be limited to only moderate levels of discrimination.



# Limitations

- Cannot conclude whether or not attributions to discrimination are protective.
- Cross-sectional design limits inferences re: direction of causality.
- Power limitations
  - Stratified analyses
  - Testing additional interactions



# Implications

- Discrimination and unfair treatment should be considered in improving mental health outcomes among Black Americans.
- Additional studies on racial group identification and centrality.
- Future studies on additional dimensions of racial identity.



# Acknowledgements