

The Stigma of Perceived Irrelevance: An Affordance-Management Theory of Interpersonal Invisibility

Rebecca Neel and Bethany Lassetter
University of Iowa and University of Toronto

A growing body of research shows that older adults, Black women, and other groups often encounter stigmatization that manifests not as negative prejudice, but as indifference and inattention—that is, *interpersonal invisibility*. We propose an affordance-management theory to explain who is interpersonally invisible, to whom, and with what consequences. A social affordance-management perspective suggests that people seek to detect and strategically engage with those who facilitate or obstruct achievement of important goals. We argue that invisibility emerges from the perception that another person neither helps nor hurts one's ability to achieve chronically or acutely active goals. We thus distinguish among phenomena commonly subsumed under the term *stigmatization*: invisibility-based stigmatization of those perceived to be irrelevant, and threat-based stigmatization of those perceived to obstruct one's goals. Invisibility and threat-based stigmatization are theorized to differ in origin, manifestation, and impact. Furthermore, rather than being a static property of particular target groups, interpersonal invisibility dynamically emerges from perceiver goals, target cues, and situational features. Nonetheless, some perceivers, targets, situations, and goals are more likely to lead to invisibility than others. This affordance-based theory of invisibility helps to organize the heterogeneous field of stigma research; unifies a diverse array of social, cognitive, motivational, and affective phenomena; and suggests numerous novel directions for future stigma research from both perceiver and target perspectives.

Keywords: invisibility, stigmatization, prejudice, social affordances, devaluation

On a dark street, a young Black man is feared and perceived to be dangerous, but in a classroom, he is ignored. In that same classroom, a young Asian man is assumed to set the curve and is resented, but when seeking a romantic partner, women overlook him. An older woman, too, finds herself ignored by potential romantic partners, yet she encounters resentment from neighbors

who see her as draining community resources by accepting public assistance. In each of these examples, a person is stigmatized because he or she is devalued. However, simply calling all of these examples *stigmatization* masks important distinctions: In one situation the person is perceived to pose a threat and encounters negative prejudice, whereas in the other situation the same person is overlooked, encountering others' indifference.

The latter form of stigmatization—*invisibility*—has recently received increased scientific attention. When a group is invisible, instead of being actively discriminated against and targeted with negative prejudices—which has historically been the focus of much stigmatization and prejudice research—members of that group are ignored and overlooked. Invisibility may manifest as being passed over for promotions and recognition; not being seen as a viable friend, romantic partner, or teammate; or being passively excluded from social situations. Because invisibility manifests in different ways than more active forms of prejudice and stigmatization, and furthermore because it can be consequential for those considered invisible, it is important to understand not only what it is, but also why and when it occurs.

In this article, we propose an affordance-management theory of invisibility that builds on recent empirical and conceptual advances in invisibility research (Brown-Iannuzzi, Hoffman, Payne, & Trawalter, 2014; Thomas, 2013) and on work regarding prejudice and stigmatization. In the sections that follow, we first briefly overview existing research and theory on invisibility. We then introduce the basic tenets of an affordance-management approach to social judgment and behavior. This approach identifies *appraisals of goal-relevance* as the mechanism guiding social attention,

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Rebecca Neel and Bethany Lassetter, Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, University of Iowa, and Department of Psychology, University of Toronto.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Rebecca Neel, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, 100 St. George Street, Toronto, ON M5S 3G3, Canada. E-mail: neel@psych.utoronto.ca

social emotion, and social behavior. Appraisal that another person is irrelevant to one's goals leads to *invisibility* (inattention, lack of emotion, and behavioral indifference toward the other person), whereas appraisal that another person impedes one's goals leads to *threat-based stigmatization* (attention and monitoring, negative emotion, threat-management behavior toward the other person). We discuss implications of this theory for understanding interpersonal invisibility, and how this theory differs from others. Our affordance-management theory argues that rather than being a static property of particular target groups (as other theoretical perspectives suggest), invisibility dynamically emerges as a product of perceiver goals and target cues. Nonetheless, the theory also suggests that some perceivers, targets, situations, and goals are generally more likely to lead to invisibility than others. After this overview, to illustrate the theory's utility for understanding and synthesizing existing evidence and for generating novel predictions about when specific groups will be invisible, we use the theory to discuss the invisibility of three specific groups: Black women, people with disabilities, and older adults. Finally, we address related concepts and theories, situating our theory within related literatures and pointing to directions for future research.

Defining Invisibility

Past research in psychology, sociology, and other fields has invoked the concept of invisibility to describe a range of stigma- and stereotyping-related phenomena, from having one's words attributed to someone else (Schug, Alt, & Klauer, 2015; Sesko & Biernat, 2010), to seeing few or only negative cultural representations of one's own group (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008), to experiencing stereotyping or discrimination (Franklin, 1999; Sun & Starosta, 2006), or to being perceived as contributing little to a social group beyond one's presence (Clifford, 1963). *Invisibility* has thus been used to refer to a broad set of phenomena. We suggest distinguishing between two forms of invisibility: representational invisibility and interpersonal invisibility. *Representational invisibility* refers to a group's lack of representation in cultural, historical, legal, and political domains (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Schug, Alt, Lu, Gosin, & Fay, 2017). For example, popular culture may include few representations of Native Americans (Fryberg & Townsend, 2008); histories of Black Americans' civil rights movements may fail to mention contributions of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008); and popular magazines in the United States may feature fewer images of Asian men than Asian women (Schug et al., 2017). In each of these cases, cultural products omit, fail to represent, and/or do not acknowledge a group or specific members of a group. By contrast, interpersonal invisibility manifests in perceivers' responses to particular targets—specifically, perceivers' inattention, indifference, and behavioral neglect of specific people (rather than cultural products representing entire groups). For example, when a Black woman's statements are attributed to others (Sesko & Biernat, 2010), an older adult fails to receive others' attention (Rodin, 1987), and a Black man escapes the notice of White women who are thinking about a romantic partner (Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014), they are targets of interpersonal invisibility. Because they are distinguishable phenomena, interpersonal invisibility may be produced via different mechanisms than

representational invisibility. In this article, we focus on explaining and understanding interpersonal invisibility.

Prototypicality-Based Approaches to Invisibility

Existing theoretical accounts of interpersonal invisibility have often adopted prototypicality-based approaches. These accounts propose that certain groups are invisible by virtue of their multiple nonprototypicality—they experience *intersectional invisibility* (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010; Schug et al., 2015; Thomas, Dovidio, & West, 2014). As an example of a multiply nonprototypical group, in the United States, Black women are considered the prototype of neither the category “Black” nor the category “woman” (the perceived prototypes of each group are Black men and White women, respectively; Crenshaw, 1989/1993; Hooks, 1981; King, 1988; Schug et al., 2015; Thomas et al., 2014). A prototypicality-based approach to invisibility predicts that prototypical group members will experience active forms of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Black men receive the brunt of anti-Black discrimination), whereas multiply nonprototypical group members escape others' notice, receiving little attention or recognition, while also escaping active discrimination (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; though see Thomas, 2013). Studies testing predictions from this perspective have generated empirical support, with nonprototypical group members' faces more likely to be forgotten, and their statements more likely to be misattributed to others, than prototypical group members (e.g., Schug et al., 2015; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). But studies directly testing nonprototypicality as a mechanism of interpersonal invisibility have produced mixed results (e.g., Sesko & Biernat, 2018). Our affordance-based theory proposes a different mechanism for interpersonal invisibility: appraisals of irrelevance. Toward the conclusion of this article, we explicitly compare prototype-based theories of invisibility to our affordance-based theory.

An Affordance-Management Theory of Interpersonal Invisibility

Theoretical Approach

As highly social, interdependent organisms, humans are consequential for one another's ability to achieve important goals. For example, people depend on one another and their broader social groups to acquire shelter and food, to stay safe, and to obtain knowledge for navigating the environment. Our strong interdependence has shaped motivations to form friendships, gain status, and belong to social groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010), and engaging with other people is necessary should we wish to find and form romantic relationships or to care for family members.

Because others are essential to achieving a wide array of goals, failing to recognize who is relevant to which goals can exact significant costs. For example, misperceiving that others afford protection when in fact they intend to attack would be a costly mistake (Haselton & Nettle, 2006). Likewise, failing to detect others carrying contagious illnesses and engaging them in close contact increases the risk of infection (Schaller & Park, 2011). Trusting someone can be costly if he intends to cheat you (Delton,

Cosmides, Guemo, Robertson, & Tooby, 2012). And failing to recognize that someone would be a potential friend in a time of need would constitute a missed opportunity (Maner, DeWall, Baumeister, & Schaller, 2007). It is thus important to detect, with sufficient (if often imperfect) accuracy, who affords what goal-relevant threats and opportunities.

The idea that we seek to detect social threats and opportunities draws from affordance-management theories in cognitive and social psychology (e.g., Gibson, 1979; McArthur & Baron, 1983). These theories emphasize that our senses encounter a potentially overwhelming amount of information (S. T. Fiske, 1992; James, 1890/1983). Because the mind's ultimate purpose is to produce functional behavior, it focuses on the possibilities the environment offers for acting or being acted upon (i.e., environmental affordances; Gibson, 1979), with goals and needs shaping the environment's perceived affordances. For example, for a person looking to relax, a chair affords sitting. For a person seeking to defend herself from a home intruder, however, the same chair may be thrown in self-defense. And for a person hosting a dinner party, the chair affords the opportunity to demonstrate hospitality as it is offered to guests. Decades of evidence demonstrate that goal-relevance can shape perception¹ and evaluation of objects (e.g., Bruner, 1957; Bruner & Goodman, 1947; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Fishbach & Ferguson, 2007; Gibson, 1979; Lewin, 1935; Markman & Brendl, 2000; Rosenberg, 1956). McArthur and Baron (1983) brought this affordance-management approach to the domain of social cognition, arguing that just as with the perception of the physical environment, other people are likewise perceived and judged in ways that function to help us to navigate the social environment (see also Neuberg & Cottrell, 2008; Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010; Zebrowitz & Collins, 1997; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2006). As with perception and evaluation of objects, affordances shape perception and evaluation of people (e.g., Dietze & Knowles, 2016; Eitam, Miele, & Higgins, 2013; Fitzsimons & Shah, 2009; Hilton & Darley, 1991; Maner et al., 2003; Maner, Miller, Moss, Leo, & Plant, 2012; Neuberg & Schaller, 2014; Orehek & Forest, 2016; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2006). An affordance-management approach is thus closely tied to the idea that goals and needs shape social perception and behavior. In this article, for simplicity, we use the terms "goal relevance" and "motivational relevance" to describe whether and how people pose affordances to others.

The Theoretical Model

A conceptual schematic of our affordance-management theory of interpersonal invisibility appears in Figure 1. This theory posits that relevance appraisals are the central mechanism through which goals and target cues guide social attention, emotion, and behavior. These appraisals are made along two independent dimensions of opportunity and threat. Different relevance appraisals lead to differential attention, emotion, and behavior that functions to manage perceived affordances. This analysis highlights a distinction between invisibility of those appraised as irrelevant, and threat-based stigmatization of those appraised to threaten one's goals. We next discuss each component of the proposed theory.

Theorized Mechanism: Relevance Appraisals

Because perceivers need to detect who will be consequential for their goals, and then act to manage those perceived affordances in

ways that will facilitate goal attainment, *relevance appraisals* are the primary mechanism through which goals guide social behavior (Cunningham & Brosch, 2012; Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Frijda, 1987; Maner et al., 2012; Neuberg & Cottrell, 2008). Moors, Ellsworth, Scherer, and Frijda (2013) define appraisal as "a process that detects and assesses the significance of the environment for well-being" (p. 120). Relevance appraisals, then, are assessments of environmental affordances that could either threaten one's goals, or act as opportunities to facilitate goals. For example, the goal to protect yourself from danger leads you to appraise who may pose a goal-relevant threat, which would include those who seek to harm you (e.g., a dangerous, angry person) and those who would increase your vulnerability to harm (e.g., a naïve relative who allows dangerous people into the house). At the same time, this goal should attune you to detect who may offer a goal-relevant opportunity, for example in the form of protection (e.g., a physically formidable ally) or relevant skills (e.g., a self-defense class instructor).

One might assume that perceivers appraise social agents along a single dimension stretching from "threat" to "opportunity." In this case, a person concerned with self-protection while walking down a dark street would be appraising whether the people they see—a man in a suit, an older woman, a young boy, a police officer, and so forth—are more likely to help versus hurt the goal of staying safe. We propose a different view. Rather than being two ends of a spectrum, we posit that threats and opportunities form independent dimensions of social judgment (see Relevance Appraisal Matrix in Figure 1). This Matrix identifies four possible appraisals. As in the unidimensional model described in the preceding text, some people will be seen as threats, but not opportunities, and others will be seen as opportunities, but not threats. In addition, some people will be perceived to pose both an opportunity and a threat to self-protection (e.g., a police officer who could provide protection from a dangerous situation but also has the power to harm you), and some people will be perceived to neither facilitate nor impede self-protection, and therefore would be motivationally irrelevant (e.g., a physically weak person). We argue that a perceiver assesses separate probabilities that a target poses a threat *and* an opportunity to current goals, producing these four possible forms of appraised relevance.

The Relevance Appraisal Matrix can be used to consider social judgment from the vantage point of any goal, not just self-protection (see Table 1 for additional examples). Consider a person who is single and looking to find a new romantic partner. She would assess who is likely to facilitate her mate-seeking goal (e.g., desirable potential romantic partners, friends who set up dates with potential romantic partners), to threaten that goal (e.g., competitors who seek to date those same desirable people), to pose both a threat and an opportunity (e.g., friends who might help to facilitate

¹ Recent work questions whether many effects deemed "perceptual" (e.g., motivation-based differences in social judgments) in fact reflect more cognitive, rather than strictly perceptual, effects (Firestone & Scholl, 2015). Because of the tradition within the intergroup and stigma literatures of using the terms *perceiver* and *target* to refer to those who stigmatize/feel prejudice and those who are stigmatized/targeted with prejudice, respectively, we maintain this usage here; the perceiver effects we describe may be broadly construed as judgment, cognition, emotion, et cetera about and towards others.

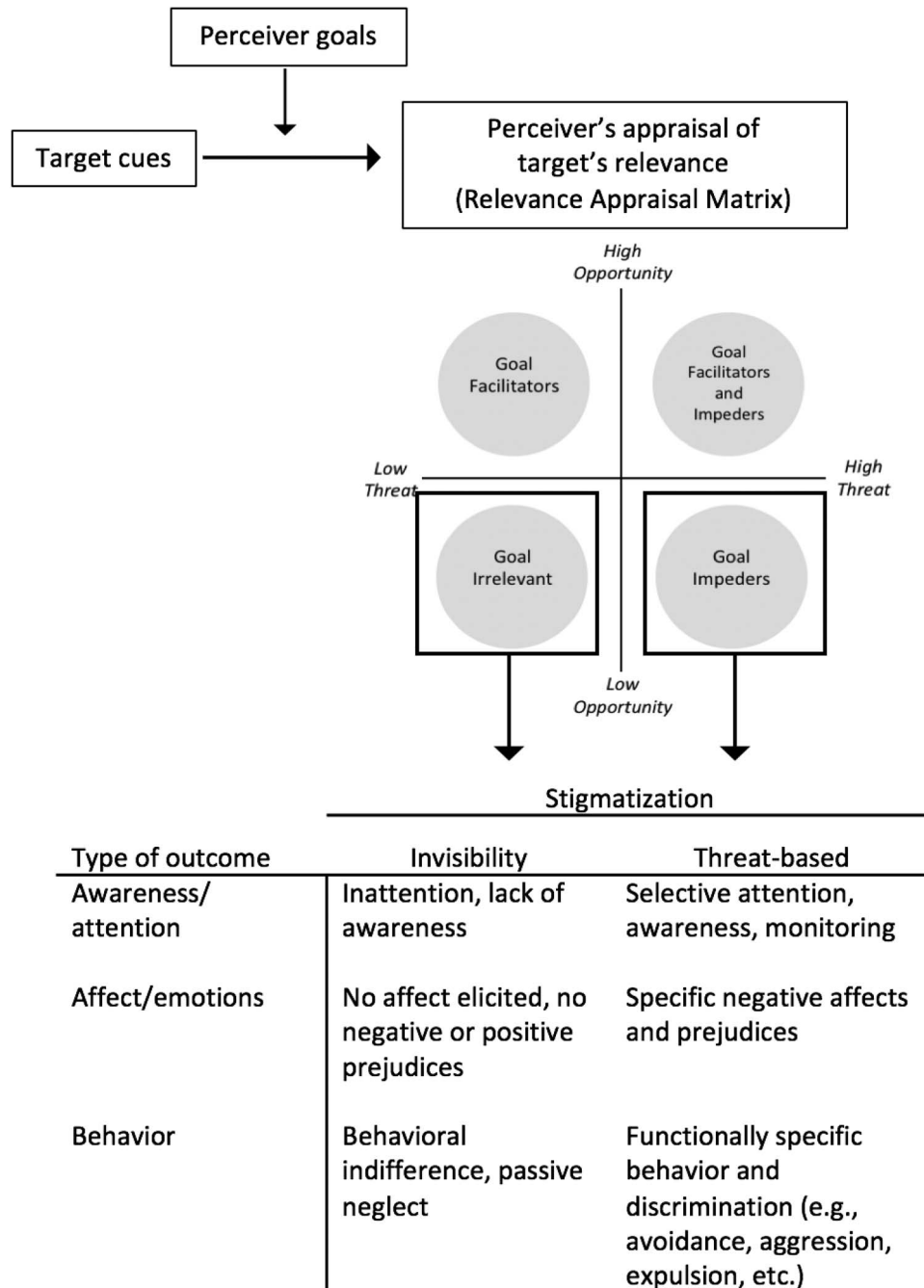


Figure 1. Theorized model of the relevance appraisal process and stigmatization outcomes.

meeting desirable people, but also could be romantic rivals), or to be goal irrelevant (e.g., people not considered desirable potential mates who also do not obstruct finding a mate).

Work from several different areas of psychology similarly converges on goal relevance as a central mechanism guiding social judgment and behavior. For example, classic models of impression formation propose that upon detecting a target (which may occur outside conscious awareness), perceivers initially assess whether the target is relevant or interesting (Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neu-

berg, 1990). If so, further processing of the target occurs, but if not, the perceiver stops forming an impression of the target and may retain only the initially extracted, basic category information—if they retain any information about the target at all. A more recent social-cognitive model of mental representation argues that relevance is the central mechanism shaping which mental representations become accessible, reach conscious awareness, and subsequently guide behavior (Eitam & Higgins, 2010). Most appraisal theories of emotion also posit a central, initial role of relevance

Table 1

Examples of Targets From the Four Quadrants of the Relevance Appraisal Matrix (Facilitator, Impeder, Facilitator/Impeder, and Irrelevant) Across Four Goals (Self-Protection, Mate-Seeking, Disease Avoidance, and Affiliation)

Goal/Motive	Category of social affordance			
	Facilitator	Impeder	Facilitator/Impeder	Irrelevant
Self-protection from physical danger	Physically formidable ally; self-defense class instructor	Dangerous, strong, angry person; naïve ally who might put you in danger	Strong outgroup male who shows signs of being an ally	Weak person from conflict-irrelevant group
Mate-seeking	Desirable romantic partners; friends who might set up initial meetings with prospective dates	Competitors who seek to date desirable people	Friends who help facilitate meeting partners but may also be competitors	People not considered desirable potential mates who also won't obstruct mate seeking
Disease-avoidance	Doctors/medical professionals	Sick people within close proximity; people with poor hygiene	Sick doctor/medical professional	People outside of close proximity
Affiliation	Someone who will introduce you to others; a well-connected friend	A social enemy; someone who might exclude you	"Frenemy" – someone who might connect you with others but might also exclude you or aim to damage your reputation	Those deemed poor prospects for friendship who also do not obstruct finding other friends

appraisal when evaluating a stimulus (see Moors et al., 2013). For example, Scherer (2001) proposes that after an initial relevance assessment, in-depth processing is reserved for relevant targets, with those deemed irrelevant escaping further attention and processing. Relevance appraisals likewise form the crux of our theory of stigmatization: It is these appraisals that catalyze both threat-based stigmatization and invisibility. Although we focus the current article on perceived irrelevance, an affordance-management approach can inform social judgments and behavior across all quadrants of the Relevance Appraisal Matrix (see Future Directions and Implications). We next discuss the components that produce relevance appraisals, and then discuss how relevance appraisals act as the mechanism producing stigmatization.

Predictors of Relevance Appraisals: Perceiver Goals and Target Affordance Cues

The current theory focuses on two interactive predictors of relevance appraisals: perceiver goals and target cues (see Figure 1).

Perceiver goals. Central to this theory is the proposition that relevance judgments are not made in some absolute, context-free fashion, but rather are made in reference to perceivers' goals; different perceivers, with different goals, may see exactly the same target and appraise the target's relevance quite differently. For example, a White person walking down a dark street and feeling acutely concerned with physical safety may appraise a young Black man as a threat (because of stereotypes that Black men are aggressive; Devine, 1989). In contrast, if that White person is a student in a classroom concerned with getting a good grade, that same young Black man may be appraised as neither a threat nor an opportunity for this goal (because of stereotypes that Black people are not intelligent or hardworking; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002).

Perceiver goals thus play a central role in relevance appraisals, and in the downstream psychological consequences that relevance appraisals produce. Note that we use the term "goal" in the broad

sense, to capture a range of motivational constructs ranging from needs like surviving and reproducing, to specific concerns and tasks like catching a bus or ordering lunch (see Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Emmons, 1995). The Relevance Appraisal Matrix (see Figure 1) can be considered in reference to any goal or motivational concern, at any level of specificity: performing well on an exam, making a positive impression, maintaining one's romantic relationship, caring for children, leaving a legacy to future generations, and so forth. For parsimony, we focus in the current article on a select few goals that have been identified as fundamental social goals, so-called because they constitute several major tasks humans face in managing the costs and benefits of sociality: self-protection from physical danger, mate-seeking, avoiding disease, and affiliation (Kenrick et al., 2010; Schaller, Kenrick, Neel, & Neuberg, 2017; see Table 1).

A perceiver's goals in any particular situation can come from several sources. First, people differ in the extent to which they are chronically concerned with particular goals. For example, some people think a lot about how to stay safe from dangerous people, whereas others are relatively unconcerned about safety (Altemeyer, 1988; Neel, Kenrick, White, & Neuberg, 2016). Second, a person's goals vary over time and across situations. For example, darkness heightens concerns about safety, leading to greater stereotyping of social groups associated with danger (Schaller, Park, & Mueller, 2003). Third, sometimes merely seeing a target who is closely associated with a particular goal will activate that goal (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2002; Shah & Kruglanski, 2003), as encountering a desirable person of one's preferred sex can activate mate-seeking goals (e.g., Miller & Maner, 2011), or seeing that someone is running toward you with a weapon and an angry expression on their face can activate a self-protection goal.

Target affordance cues. To assess another person's relevance to a particular goal, perceivers may often rely on static and easily perceptible cues that are a traditional focus of much stereotyping and prejudice research, such as apparent age, attractiveness, and

race. However, they also may use cues that are dynamic, such as emotional expressions, eye gaze, and direction of movement; those that are not always immediately obvious such as relationship status and sexual orientation; and those operating outside conscious awareness such as chemical signals. For example, work on perceptions of dangerousness shows that men are considered more likely than women to pose a threat of physical aggression (Becker, Kenrick, Neuberg, Blackwell, & Smith, 2007), and evidence suggests that a man is more likely to be perceived as threatening when he is from a racial outgroup (Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002; Duncan, 1976; Navarrete, McDonald, Molina, & Sidanius, 2010; Payne, 2001; Plant, Goplen, & Kunstman, 2011), bears an angry expression (Kubota & Ito, 2014), is moving toward the perceiver (S. L. Miller, Maner, & Becker, 2010), is looking directly at the perceiver (Richeson, Todd, Trawalter, & Baird, 2008; Trawalter, Todd, Baird, & Richeson, 2008), and/or is holding weapons (Fessler, Holbrook, & Snyder, 2012; Holbrook et al., 2014). For any particular target, a perceiver integrates an array of cues in a dynamic, ongoing fashion (Freeman & Ambady, 2011; Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Van Bavel, Xiao, & Cunningham, 2012) to assess the likelihood that the target poses different threats and opportunities. Which cues are seen as meaningful will of course vary across goals—seeing that someone wears a wedding ring could be highly useful for appraising their relevance to a mate-seeking goal, but less useful for relevance to a self-protection goal.

Fully outlining the process by which perceivers integrate cues to appraise others' goal-relevance is beyond the scope of the current article (see, e.g., Brewer, 1988; Cunningham, Zelazo, Packer, & Van Bavel, 2007; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Freeman & Ambady, 2011; Kawakami, Amodio, & Hugenberg, 2017; Kunda & Thagard, 1996; Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000), but we do note a few important points here. First, cues do not inherently have meaning; an interpretation process is required to infer relevance from target cues. Stereotypes are one source of information that can contribute to appraised relevance, as stereotypes often describe a group as posing particular affordances (e.g., stereotypes that Black men and Muslims are dangerous; that Asians are hardworking and capable and thus will outcompete others for high-status jobs). But individuating or idiosyncratic cues also provide information used to assess affordances (e.g., someone expressing anger and holding a weapon is perceived as dangerous; a particularly ambitious coworker is perceived as a threat to one's job). Both are integrated when appraising whether a particular person poses a particular affordance (see Freeman & Ambady, 2011; Kunda & Thagard, 1996).² Furthermore, for any cue, there are individual differences between perceivers in the meaning they attach to the cue, and in the extent to which they rely on that cue. For example, some men rely on the cue of a woman's emotion expression to determine whether she would be interested in a sexual relationship, whereas others rely more heavily on the woman's attractiveness (Treat, Church, & Viken, 2017). Because cues are imperfect indicators of relevance, and because people differ in their interpretation and use of cues, relevance appraisals can reflect bias and/or be inaccurate.

Second, we expect that those cues that are most detectable and considered to be most diagnostic will most strongly influence relevance appraisals (e.g., Funder, 2012; Rubinstein, Jussim, & Stevens, 2018). Many perceivers would treat an expression of rage and brandishing a weapon as more diagnostic of whether someone

will be physically dangerous than the target's age and race. As another example, wearing a wedding ring is an easy cue to detect, and is commonly considered a relatively diagnostic indicator that the target is unlikely to enter a new long-term relationship (and thus unlikely to afford others a new romantic opportunity). Other information may even more accurately indicate potential affordances—for example, the target's expression of wishes to leave their marriage—but be unexpressed or undetectable in a particular situation. Perceivers thus integrate available cues to make a best guess as to affordances.

Third, just as comparison shapes numerous aspects of cognition and judgment (e.g., Cogan, Parker, & Zellner, 2013; Kenrick & Gutierrez, 1980; Mussweiler, 2003; Wedell, Parducci, & Geiselman, 1987), a particular cue's meaning and weight may change with comparisons across targets in the social environment. For example, a target who is generally considered a reasonably attractive potential mate may be less preferred in the presence of a highly desirable person. Relevance appraisals thus can change dynamically with the social ecology and the *relative* likelihood that a particular target will help and/or hurt the perceiver's goal.

Fourth, a variety of findings suggest that target relevance can be appraised from cues very quickly and without perceiver attention to, or even awareness of, the target (e.g., Eitam & Higgins, 2010; Gawronski, Cunningham, LeBel, & Deutsch, 2010; McCormick, 1997; Simons & Rensink, 2005; Wolfe, 1999). That said, if the target presents salient cues whose meaning is unknown (e.g., an unusual facial expression or body posture, distinctive clothing, etc.), that are perceived to conflict (e.g., female scientist), or if available cues are not sufficient for determining relevance, perceivers will likely continue to attend to the target to assess potential relevance (Brewer, 1988; Cunningham et al., 2007; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). Perceivers may thus pay attention to a target that they ultimately deem irrelevant, and it is important to distinguish between this initial attention that serves to facilitate relevance appraisal, and subsequent attention that is an outcome of relevance appraisal (i.e., attention to relevant targets, discussed in the next section).

In sum, we propose that relevance appraisals—assessments of others' affordances relative to one's goals—are the key mechanism linking perceiver goals and target cues to downstream outcomes such as attention, emotion, and behavior. Perceivers assess

² It is important to clarify that some past research has defined interpersonal invisibility as being stereotyped or perceived as a member of a category rather than as an individual. For example, Gamson (1995) defined invisibility in terms of deindividuation and category-based perception:

"Individuals have their names, their hair, and other distinguishing characteristics taken from them as they are turned into a number. In the more subtle and indirect version, others do not see a person in their individuality, but see only a personification of some collective. This is the sense in which the late Ralph Ellison called his protagonist 'The Invisible Man.'" (p. 10)

We adopt a different approach. Stereotyping can be distinguished from other stigma-related processes (Biernat & Dovidio, 2000), and our model posits that stereotypes help give meaning to targets' affordance cues. That said, the literature on the experience of prejudice often equates feeling not individuated by others to feeling invisible and describes feelings of depersonalization, as in the preceding Ralph Ellison quote. We do not dispute that that feeling occurs, nor do we minimize its importance to the individual, but simply argue that stereotyping is an ingredient in the relevance appraisal process, rather than evidence of a particular outcome of that process (i.e., interpersonal invisibility).

targets on two independent dimensions of relevance—threat and opportunity—in reference to their goals. These judgments are made on the basis of the targets' available cues, but the meaning and use of particular cues will be assessed in reference to the perceiver's goal, and will depend on the perceiver's interpretation of the meaning of those cues. Relevance appraisals are thus an emergent product of both perceiver goals and target cues.

Outcomes of Relevance Appraisal: Distinguishing Between Invisibility-Based and Threat-Based Stigmatization

We can now turn to the primary focus of this article, which is to use the affordance-management approach outlined in the preceding text to understand stigmatization. Stigmatization is a broad term that can encompass numerous prejudice- and discrimination-related phenomena (see Link & Phelan, 2001), but the most widely accepted definitions typically describe stigmatization in terms of devaluation. For example, Crocker, Major, and Steele (1998) define stigma as “some attribute, or characteristic, that conveys a social identity that is devalued in a particular social context,” and Jones et al. (1984) define someone who is stigmatized as “the bearer of a ‘mark’ that defines him or her as deviant, flawed, spoiled, or generally undesirable” (see also Dovidio, Major, & Crocker, 2000; Goffman, 1963). Following these predominant definitions, we define stigmatization as devaluation. Because perceivers assign positive value to those who facilitate goals (Brendl, Markman, & Messner, 2003; Ferguson & Bargh, 2004; Kruglanski et al., 2002; Lewin, 1935; Orehek & Forest, 2016), those not seen to facilitate one's goals are devalued and, therefore, stigmatized. In the Relevance Appraisal Matrix (see Figure 1), targets in the top two cells (who can pose goal-relevant opportunities) are valued, whereas targets in the bottom two cells (who do not pose goal-relevant opportunities) are devalued and stigmatized.

The Relevance Appraisal Matrix makes clear, however, that knowing the target is devalued is insufficient for precisely predicting the perceiver's behavior toward the target. The specific form stigmatization will take depends on whether or not the target is also seen to pose a threat. If a devalued target is appraised to pose threats (i.e., they are a goal impeder), they will be subjected to *threat-based stigmatization*. Many perspectives on stigmatization and prejudice focus on the role of perceived threat (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, & Lickel, 2000; Jones et al., 1984; Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Neuberg, Smith, & Asher, 2000; Phelan, Link, & Dovidio, 2008; Sherif, 1958; Stangor & Crandall, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Affordance-management approaches to threat-based prejudice propose that targets seen to pose a threat are actively stigmatized in ways that aim to manage the perceived threat (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Schaller & Neuberg, 2012). Threat-based stigmatization can manifest as monitoring or paying close attention to the target, holding and/or expressing negative attitudes toward the target, explicit prohibition or expulsion from physical spaces and social domains, physical attack, and so forth, with different manifestations tailored to manage different threats. Threat-based stigmatization has traditionally been the focus of the intergroup and prejudice literatures, and much of the stigmatization literature as well.

In contrast, if a target is devalued and also seen to pose no threats, this appraisal of irrelevance precipitates *interpersonal in-*

visibility. Once an appraisal of irrelevance is reached, the perceiver's awareness, attention, emotion, and behavior toward the target will be minimized. Targets appraised as irrelevant will be ignored and overlooked, elicit no negative prejudice, and experience behavioral neglect. Our theory thus draws on and extends previous evidence for goal-irrelevance as the source of interpersonal invisibility (e.g., Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014). In this vein, Rodin (1982, 1987) proposes that we “cognitively disregard” those people deemed irrelevant to our “social purpose,” and Clifford (1963) proposes that an invisible person is one who “occupies space . . . but is perceived by others as contributing little other than his own presence.” Like other theoretical approaches to invisibility (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010), we are not proposing that irrelevant targets are completely unperceived by others, as some initial processing is required to appraise the target's affordances. Rather we propose that a syndrome of perceiver's inattention, lack of affect, and lack of behavior toward the target constitutes interpersonal invisibility, and that this syndrome is the outcome of appraised irrelevance.

The specific contrast our theory makes between threat-based stigmatization and invisibility echoes Rodin's (1982, 1987) distinction between dislike and disregard, work on being rejected versus being ignored as distinct forms of social exclusion (Molden, Lucas, Gardner, Dean, & Knowles, 2009), and ostracism motivated by punishment or defense versus “oblivious” ostracism that occurs because the target is viewed as unworthy of attention (Williams, Shore, & Grahe, 1998). Whereas many theories of stigmatization and prejudice have focused on explaining only threat-based stigmatization or only interpersonal invisibility, our theory provides a single integrative approach to predicting when these different forms of stigmatization will occur. We next discuss the specific categories of outcomes that distinguish invisibility from threat-based stigmatization—attention, awareness, and memory; emotion; and behavior—as well as evidence that these different outcomes are caused by appraisals of irrelevance or of threat (see Stigmatization Outcomes in Figure 1).

Attention, awareness, and memory. The affordance management theory of interpersonal invisibility predicts that after detection and appraisal of goal-relevance (which can involve some initial attention, as discussed in the preceding text), those people judged to be goal irrelevant will escape perceivers' ongoing attention, awareness, and memory. Abundant evidence supports this notion. Goals can strongly guide attention to relevant stimuli (Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2010). For example, when feeling disgust, people attend more to images both of disgusting objects and of potential opportunities to mitigate disease threats than to neutral images (Vogt, Lozo, Koster, & De Houwer, 2011). Likewise, a mating goal renders both potential romantic competitors (threats) and potential mates (opportunities) more likely to hold attention (Maner et al., 2007). Implicit in these findings is that, in comparison to these goal-relevant targets, those who are seen to pose neither a threat nor an opportunity garner significantly less attention. Indeed, stimuli that are neither dangerous nor rewarding lose perceivers' interest and attention (Bornstein, 1989).

Goal-relevance strongly guides not only which targets are attended to, but also which targets reach perceiver's awareness (Eitam et al., 2013; Koivisto & Revonsuo, 2007; Most, Scholl, Clifford, & Simons, 2005; Simons & Chabris, 1999). As one example using an inattention blindness paradigm (Mack & Rock,

1998; Neisser & Becklen, 1975), Brown-Iannuzzi and colleagues (2014) found that when primed with a friendship or romance goal, White women are less likely to report seeing a Black man walk across a scene. Eitam and colleagues (2013) posit, “the primary effect that motivational relevance has on cognitive functioning is to determine the degree to which the represented information is accessible and, thus, how likely it is to become active. As a result, only sufficiently relevant information becomes available for use by other mental processes” (p. 467).

What aspects of an irrelevant target are “invisible” – that is, what aspects of a person do perceivers fail to be aware of, pay attention to, and remember? Because perceivers process targets initially to appraise goal-relevance, they will be more likely to be aware of and remember those aspects of the target that aided in the relevance assessment. Recall that the aspects of a target that inform relevance will vary across different goals. A perceiver concerned with avoiding disease would attend to a target’s cues of disease (e.g., skin characteristics, body posture, etc.), whereas a perceiver concerned with protecting him or herself from danger would attend to indicators of capacity and intent to harm (e.g., body size, direction of eye gaze, approach behaviors, etc.). Because categorization of a target along basic dimensions like sex, age, and race occurs rapidly and informs relevance appraisals for many goals (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Ito & Urland, 2003; Kawakami et al., 2017; Macrae & Quadflieg, 2010; Neuberg & Sng, 2013; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glas, 1992), categorical information may be remembered even about irrelevant targets (e.g., that the target was a young Asian woman). However, once a target is determined to be irrelevant, there is no need for the perceiver to further process or attend to the target. Thus, we expect that a range of attributes of irrelevant targets—from targets’ individuating physical characteristics, to their statements, to their likely thoughts and feelings—will not be attended to or remembered if they were not used to appraise relevance.

Irrelevant targets may be individuated if individuation is required to determine relevance, or if the target is already familiar to the perceiver, as with a coworker or relative. Outside these circumstances, however, irrelevant targets are unlikely to be individuated and will be poorly recognized in tasks where identification of specific individuals is required (e.g., Chance & Goldstein, 1996; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). Along these lines, Rodin (1987) showed that older people tend to be “cognitively disregarded” – nonindividuated and forgotten—by younger people; Sesko and Biernat (2010) found that Black women are more likely to be misremembered and to have their statements misattributed to others than are Black men or Whites; and Schug and colleagues (2015) found that this misremembering and misattribution extends to Asian men. These studies did not explicitly manipulate perceiver goals (suggesting, perhaps, chronic irrelevance of these targets for these particular perceivers, or else unmeasured goals at work for these perceivers). We expect that this failure of recognition memory will be reduced when the target is relevant to current perceiver goals. Indirectly supporting this possibility is evidence from the cross-group effect. Outgroup members are typically more poorly remembered than ingroup members (Hugenberg, Young, Bernstein, & Sacco, 2010; Meissner & Brigham, 2001), but making outgroup members more relevant (e.g., via perceiver dependence on or anticipated interaction with the target) improves memory for these outgroup faces (Baldwin, Keefer,

Gravelin, & Biernat, 2013; Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2012; Wilson, See, Bernstein, Hugenberg, & Chartier, 2014). Conversely, cues that would render an otherwise socially relevant target irrelevant should also reduce individuation of that target. Indeed, averted eye gaze, which may act as a cue to social irrelevance (see Young, Slepian, Wilson, & Hugenberg, 2014), diminishes preferential memory for ingroup members (Adams, Pauker, & Weisbuch, 2010).

Evidence from other paradigms also demonstrates that targets commonly considered irrelevant to goals are nonetheless more likely to receive perceiver attention and awareness in contexts where they are appraised as relevant. Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, and Davies (2004, Studies 2 and 4) found that in the absence of contextual cues, Black male faces capture Whites’ attention less than do White male faces. However, when exposed briefly to images of crime-relevant objects, faces of Black men—stereotypically considered to be violent and criminal (Devine, 1989) – captured White participants’ attention *more* than did White male faces. The subtle activation of a self-protection goal appears to, in the words of Eberhardt and colleagues, “render these faces more perceptually relevant and therefore worthy of gaze” (p. 883). In the language of affordance-management, White participants appear to have moved from invisibility-based stigmatization of Black men to threat-based stigmatization of those same targets—simply by changing their goals to one for which Black men are perceived to be relevant (see also Rattan & Eberhardt, 2010).

Note that even though target irrelevance produces poor attention and memory for many aspects of a person, target relevance does not necessarily produce excellent attention and memory for all aspects of a person. As with irrelevant targets, in the process of relevance appraisal perceivers may attend to and subsequently remember those cues that suggest relevance (that the person was “Black” and “male,” for example). Once a target is appraised as relevant, perceivers should attend to those aspects of the target that allow the perceiver to effectively manage the interaction with the target, given the perceiver’s goal and the constraints of the situation. Because this attention is selective, even when perceivers appraise a target as relevant, they may forget or not be aware of target attributes that are irrelevant to the goal (see Eitam, Shoval, & Yeshurun, 2015). Indeed, targets who are perceived to pose opportunities or threats can be confused with others in the same social category and nonindividuated (e.g., A. P. Fiske, Haslam, & S. T. Fiske, 1991), as for example, friends who are seen as instrumental for the goal of being healthy and fit are more likely to be confused with one another (Fitzsimons & Shah, 2009). As another example, even as people with a chronic goal to avoid disease have their attention captured by people with heuristic cues of disease threat (e.g., facial disfigurement; see Ryan, Oaten, Stevenson, & Case, 2012), they fail to accurately recognize these individual targets in a later task (Ackerman et al., 2009).³ Not all

³ Curiously, women fail to recognize individual attractive men they have recently seen, even when a mating goal is currently active (U. S. Anderson et al., 2010; Maner et al., 2003). There are multiple possible explanations for this finding that await empirical test. For example, straight women may pay attention to attractive men but fail to remember them if there is no further engagement from the man (i.e., women’s threshold for mating relevance may require more than simply attractiveness).

evidence of poor memory for target attributes is necessarily evidence of invisibility.

In sum, our theory predicts lack of attention, awareness, and memory for most aspects of people appraised as irrelevant. However, we also expect that perceivers will fail to recognize relevant targets, despite attending to them, when individuating cues are not seen as relevant to managing the targets' threats and/or opportunities. The best evidence for invisibility will thus come from a convergence of poor memory with evidence of inattention, lack of emotion, and behavioral indifference.

Emotion and affect. Many theoretical approaches to emotion closely link emotional experiences to the process of goal pursuit (Carver, 2004; Frijda, 1987; Lench, Bench, Darbor, & Moore, 2015; Levine, 1996; Moors, 2017; Moors, Boddez, & De Houwer, 2017; Roseman, Antoniou, & Jose, 1996), and highlight the role of relevance appraisal in producing emotional experience, which in turn facilitates functional responses to the emotion-eliciting stimulus (Nesse & Ellsworth, 2009; Scherer, 2005). Emotions experienced as a result of relevance appraisals potentiate behavior that could help the perceiver to manage goal-relevant threats and opportunities. A perceiver may run away from a dangerous person, motivated by fear; avoid and reject someone who bears cues to disease, motivated by disgust; woo a potential mate, motivated by sexual desire; attend to someone with skills that could provide help, motivated by respect and awe (Cosmides & Tooby, 2000). Some theories of prejudice apply this relevance-based perspective on emotions to understand prejudicial emotions toward other people (e.g., Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Dasgupta, DeSteno, Williams, & Hunsinger, 2009). For example, numerous recent studies show that people report negative prejudices such as fear and disgust toward those groups seen to pose threats of physical violence or contamination, respectively (see Schaller & Neuberg, 2012, for an overview), and these reports of prejudice predict functional responses toward those groups (Cottrell, Richards, & Nichols, 2010).

To the extent that emotional experiences result from or reflect relevance appraisal, and serve to motivate functional action toward relevant targets, perceivers should be unlikely to feel any negative or positive emotion toward targets perceived to pose no threats or opportunities. People or groups who are appraised as irrelevant, then, will elicit little emotional experience—that is, no experienced prejudice—in perceivers. This indifference can be operationalized as neutral valence and low arousal affect (Russell, 2003), and as experienced neutrality (the lack of both positive and negative emotion, e.g., Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994).⁴ Note that bipolar measures of emotion (i.e., negative to positive, as in a feeling thermometer) are not ideal for assessing indifference, as perceivers may choose the same scale point to indicate ambivalence (simultaneous positive and negative emotion; Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Kaplan, 1972; Olson & Zanna, 1993), which our model anticipates will be felt toward targets appraised to pose both threats and opportunities. To our knowledge, work on invisibility has not yet directly measured the affective and emotional components of interpersonal invisibility, making this an important direction for future research. Examining indifference versus negative prejudice may be particularly useful for distinguishing instances of interpersonal invisibility from threat-based stigmatization.

Our analysis suggests that when measuring either indifference or prejudicial emotions, research needs to take into account how the perceiver's goals fit with the specific threats a target may be

seen to pose. Given different goals, a single perceiver may feel fear, pity, or indifference toward a single target. Explicitly asking perceivers to self-report how they feel in general toward the group could lead participants to mentally average the feelings they might experience toward the target group, to report how they typically feel toward a target group, or else to consider how they feel toward a group when that group is relevant to their concerns. For this reason, measuring emotional experience and affect in a way that is sensitive to perceiver goals will be particularly important for assessing the indifference component of interpersonal invisibility.

Behavior. As with attention and emotion, target relevance should guide a perceiver's behavior toward a target. Importantly, what constitutes "functional behavior" toward those deemed relevant will often differ across different goals, and discriminatory behavior toward targets stigmatized as a threat will be tailored to manage the specific threat the group is perceived to pose (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). For example, the perceiver concerned with self-protection needs to effectively elicit protection and alliances from those who would pose these opportunities, and minimize the threat posed by those who would harm him; the perceiver concerned with mate seeking needs to effectively engage with potential mates and manage those others who might compete for her desired mate.

If active discriminatory behavior is tailored to managing perceived affordances, then people will not actively discriminate toward those seen as irrelevant. This is not to say that their behavior will not affect people perceived to be irrelevant, but rather that the perceiver's behavior will not be caused by, shaped by, or intended to manage their relation to the irrelevant person. We may therefore detect invisibility by observing *behavioral indifference* toward a person, as when they are passed over as an interaction partner for a particular context (Clifford, 1963; Cottrell, Neuberg, & Li, 2007), excluded via unintentional neglect, or when a perceiver simply does not alter their behavior in the presence of the person perceived to be irrelevant.

Target, Perceiver, Goal, and Situational Factors That Produce Interpersonal Invisibility

Like many other approaches to stigmatization (Crocker et al., 1998; Goffman, 1963; Jones et al., 1984; Major & O'Brien, 2005), at its core, an affordance management approach is an interactionist approach. It proposes that interpersonal invisibility is not a static property of particular groups, but rather emerges dynamically from a target's affordance cues and a perceiver's goals. Nevertheless, the theory also suggests certain target, perceiver, goal, and situational variables that make a target more or less likely to be interpersonally invisible.

Target Factors: Who Is Invisible?

Anyone can be interpersonally invisible. Everyone has the potential to be irrelevant to *someone* else's outcomes. Unlike

⁴Targets who have been initially appraised as irrelevant, but who demand attention from the perceiver—for example by interrupting conversation—may elicit irritation and annoyance. But this is because they are now seen as impeding the perceiver's goal pursuit and are thus no longer purely irrelevant to the perceiver.

prototypicality-based approaches to invisibility, our theory explicitly anticipates that invisibility is not a property of only some people or groups, but could (and at times, will) occur for anyone. Of course, hypothetically there could be classes of people who would be always invisible because they are considered irrelevant to all others' goals. Conversely, if a target were considered relevant to all others' goals, they would never be invisible. In reality, any person will fall somewhere between these two poles by being irrelevant, and therefore invisible, to some people at some times. Therefore, our theory predicts that in all likelihood no one is *always* invisible.

The current theory predicts that even normally threatening targets will become invisible when they bear overriding cues of goal-irrelevance. For example, Black men's faces, which often grab White perceivers' attention, are less likely to do so when there is a cue—averted eye gaze—that suggests they are not a threat (Trawalter et al., 2008). Similarly, having a goal that renders those otherwise threatening stimuli irrelevant can lead perceivers to attend elsewhere (Vogt, De Houwer, Crombez, & Van Damme, 2013). In other words, even those targets generally considered threatening, and who would typically draw attention, might nonetheless be invisible when acutely goal-irrelevant.

Some people are more likely to be frequently socially invisible than others. Despite the potential for anyone to be invisible, we predict that some targets are especially likely to be invisible: those seen as having little general ability to impact others' goals. Factors that indicate a low likelihood of goal relevance should be particularly likely to produce invisibility. These factors may be either goal-specific or generic. As a goal-specific example, people who are considered unattractive or romantically undesirable would be appraised to pose neither a threat nor an opportunity to those seeking a mate. We would expect that for perceivers concerned with mating, unattractive targets will be invisible—and that in social environments or life stages where mating is an ongoing concern, unattractive others will be especially likely to be invisible. Indeed, undergraduates—who on average are at a stage of life and in a social context in which finding a mate is likely to be a particularly active and chronic concern (e.g., Kenrick et al., 2010; Neel et al., 2016) – do not attend to or remember very well relatively unattractive people (Maner et al., 2003). Likewise, those groups stereotyped in ways that suggest they will be perceived as poor mating prospects—for example, people with certain disabilities (Hanna & Rogovsky, 1991; Howland & Rintala, 2001; Phillips, 1990) – may be invisible in life stages and social contexts where mating is a particular concern.

Certain cues may act to signal irrelevance to most goals, and in doing so produce invisibility across many social contexts. Abundant work has identified the ways that power, status, and hierarchy can contribute to the stigmatization process (e.g., S. T. Fiske, 1993, 2010; Link & Phelan, 2001; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Status, also known as prestige (Cheng, Tracy, Foulsham, Kingstone, & Henrich, 2013; Henrich & Gil-White, 2001), is conferred on those who appear to possess instrumental social value—those who have the ability to facilitate one's goals (C. Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015; C. Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, & Keltner, 2012; Benoit-Smullyan, 1944; Leary, Jongman-Sereno, & Diebels, 2014; although note that precise definitions of these constructs often differ). Power is a related but distinct construct, and has been defined as “an individual's relative capacity to modify others'

states by providing or withholding resources or administering punishments” (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003) or “the ability to control one's own outcomes, as well as the outcomes of others” (Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2012; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). We expect, then, that people with power and/or status will be seen as able to impose costs (goal impellers), benefits (goal facilitators), or both (ambivalently goal-relevant targets).

Note that we do not equate invisibility with low power and low status; even those low in power and status may still impede others' goals, for example via negligence. However, it seems plausible that those seen to be very low in power and status in any particular interaction will be more likely to be temporarily invisible than high-power, high-status people. Indeed, compared with high power or status people, those with low power or status are less attended to and less well remembered (Cheng et al., 2013; S. T. Fiske, 1993; Foulsham, Cheng, Tracy, Henrich, & Kingstone, 2010; Maner, DeWall, & Gailliot, 2008; Ratcliff, Hugenberg, Shriver, & Bernstein, 2011), providing some evidence of their invisibility. In contrast, people perceived to have only the power to negatively influence others' outcomes (i.e., to pose threats), while simultaneously appearing unable to provide opportunities, may be subjected to threat-based stigmatization rather than invisibility-based stigmatization.

In addition to low status and power predicting invisibility, factors that inform assessments of low power and status, such as perceived lack of competence (see Leary et al., 2014) may likewise lead to invisibility. For example, people stereotyped as unathletic may be invisible to those seeking to put together a winning soccer team, and people stereotyped as unintelligent may be invisible to someone searching for prospective members of a high-achieving work group (assuming those stereotyped as low in athleticism and intelligence, respectively, are not perceived as threats to group functioning). Further, a lack of specific competencies may result in someone being invisible in one context but not another; for example, a very physically strong yet less intelligent person may be considered an opportunity to the person putting together a soccer team, and considered irrelevant to the person forming a work group (Cottrell et al., 2007). If older adults are generally perceived as low on competence (S. T. Fiske et al., 2002), they may be invisible across many contexts (though note that older adults are sometimes seen as high status and power, which would reduce their invisibility, e.g., Hummert, Garstka, Shaner, & Strahm, 1994; see “Predictions for Three Target Groups” section). Still other characteristics that suggest low likelihood of having an impact on others' goals—such as having few tangible goods or resources (e.g., money) that could benefit others, or appearing disinterested in helping to facilitate others' goals (Leary et al., 2014)—should also lead to a target's interpersonal invisibility.

Because irrelevance to others' goals should lead to invisibility, targets who are relevant to multiple goals—for example, by facilitating multiple goals and thus being “multifinal” (Kruglanski et al., 2002, 2013)—should be particularly *unlikely* to be interpersonally invisible. For example, close others (parents, children, siblings, close friends, romantic partners) typically are seen as able to serve and/or obstruct multiple goals—securing food and protection, finding a romantic partner, achieving status, affiliating with others, and so forth—and this cross-situational relevance should render them less likely to be interpersonally invisible (e.g., Eitam & Higgins, 2010).

When invisible targets become visible. Importantly, our affordance-based theory proposes that invisibility is not a static property of certain people or groups; those who have in the past been invisible may not always remain so. For example, after September 11, 2001, Arab Americans were especially likely to be seen as threatening in the United States. Whereas in the past they may often have been invisible (Naber, 2000; Salaita, 2005), we would expect that increasingly prevalent stereotypes of Arab Americans as threatening render them less often invisible (e.g., Jamal, 2008). Even historically invisible groups will become less so when they are newly perceived to pose threats or opportunities.

Our theory predicts at least two routes by which a target may become goal-relevant to a perceiver, and thus no longer invisible. The first route to a target becoming noninvisible is for the target's cues to change to make them goal-relevant, as either an opportunity or threat. For example, as children grow up they become perceived as opportunities and threats to a number of goals for which they were previously considered irrelevant. As boys grow into young men, they become more physically formidable and will newly be perceived as relevant to others' self-protection goals by posing either increased likelihood of threat (e.g., greater likelihood of aggression and violence; Wilson & Daly, 1985), or by posing a greater ability to protect others from dangers. As people go through puberty and develop secondary sex characteristics, they will be perceived as possible mating threats and opportunities where before they typically were not. Change in goal-relevant cues can also take place on a smaller timescale, as when a passenger on a plane—likely invisible to many—may become perceived as a threat (e.g., by bursting out in anger at a flight attendant, by becoming violently ill) or an opportunity (e.g., by revealing she's a doctor when another passenger becomes ill). Likewise, people can choose to conceal or reveal many affordance-implicating cues like sexual orientation, religion, mental health status, nationality, and so forth, and in doing so change to become goal-relevant where they were previously invisible. We discuss concealing and revealing in greater detail in the section on "Related Concepts and Theoretical Perspectives."

Perceiver Factors: Who Sees Others as Invisible?

Our approach identifies several person factors that should predict who is likely to see others as invisible. As with target factors, some of these operate across goals. First, if a person doesn't need to rely on others to achieve his or her goals, more people will be invisible. Power and status may insulate a person from the threats that others could pose, and/or generally allow her to be less dependent on others to achieve her goals (see S. T. Fiske, 2010; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). This suggests that those with high power and/or status will have fewer people who are potentially goal-relevant, leading more people to be invisible. Conversely, those with low status or power may be less likely to see others as irrelevant, because many others have the potential to influence their own goal achievement. Supporting this contention, those who identify as higher social class gaze at other people for less time, and are slower to detect that a face has changed, than are those who identify as lower social class (Dietze & Knowles, 2016). In addition, powerful people act in ways that facilitate their own goal pursuit (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Guinote, 2007a), and direct attention to goal-relevant targets (Guinote,

2007b), suggesting that powerful people may be more likely to ignore goal-irrelevant targets than do those with low power.

Second, all else being equal, a person who typically encounters many other people (a worker at a company with thousands of employees, a politician) will be more likely to appraise some people as goal-irrelevant than a person who encounters few other people. Also in this vein, once one's limited "friendship niches" are filled (see Kurzban & Leary, 2001; Tooby & Cosmides, 1996), one may be more likely to see others as irrelevant to affiliation concerns. Relatedly, people who feel socially connected are less likely to attribute minds to a variety of social targets (Waytz & Epley, 2012) – potentially because those social targets are less relevant when belonging needs are met. Third, having strong commitment to a single goal, rather than pursuing multiple goals, renders fewer people potentially goal-relevant. We therefore expect that a person intensely focused on a single goal will be more likely to see some others as invisible. Fourth, people vary in the extent to which they chronically care about particular goals (e.g., Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Neel et al., 2016; Roberts & Robins, 2000; Winter, John, Stewart, Klohnen, & Duncan, 1998). For someone generally concerned with physical safety, groups stereotyped as dangerous may rarely be seen as irrelevant (e.g., Schaller et al., 2003), whereas someone unconcerned with physical safety may often see members of those groups as irrelevant. Fifth, a perceiver's goals and life situations change over the life span (e.g., Carstensen, 2006), producing commensurate changes over time in who perceivers appraise as irrelevant. A target who would have been irrelevant to a perceiver at one life stage may be newly relevant when that perceiver is at another life stage; a perceiver may see older adults as irrelevant when young and concerned with mate-seeking and friendship with peers, but when they become a new parent, that same perceiver may see older adults as opportunities for providing grandparent-like care.

Goals and Situations: When Is Invisibility Especially Likely to Occur?

Specific goals. Independent of perceivers and targets, goals themselves may vary in the extent to which they tend to produce invisibility. For some goals, there may be very few people who could facilitate or obstruct that goal, rendering many people invisible to a perceiver. For example, the desire to find a mate may only be facilitated by a select number of people (e.g., desirable others) and obstructed by few people (e.g., potential competitors). For this kind of goal, many people may be invisible as the goal narrows one's social focus to those few who could affect goal achievement. Further, goals that typically require only one person to fulfill them, such as mating goals, may be more likely to render invisible not only those irrelevant to the goal, but also those who are simply *less* relevant to the goal (e.g., those seen as relatively less desirable).

Other goals may have a much higher limit, or even no limit, on the number of people who may be goal-relevant. For these goals, very few people should be invisible. For example, a pressing goal to affiliate with others may lower the threshold for who may be a sufficient social agent for interaction, increasing the number of people perceived to be potential affiliation opportunities. Numer-

ous findings support this possibility. Being excluded induces desire to affiliate with others with whom one has a reasonable chance of interaction, and to view those people more positively (Maner et al., 2007). Lonely people are more likely to extend their circle of potential affiliates, feeling connected to TV characters (Gardner & Knowles, 2008) and anthropomorphizing pets (Epley, Waytz, Akalis, & Cacioppo, 2008; Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007). People who have either a strong need to belong or who are temporarily socially excluded are also more likely to individuate outgroup members, reducing the typical outgroup homogeneity effect (Van Bavel, Swencionis, O'Connor, & Cunningham, 2012). In addition to seeing more people as potential affiliation opportunities, lonely people are also more vigilant to social threats (Cacioppo & Hawley, 2009). Affiliation goals appear to lead perceivers to consider more people as both potential opportunities and potential threats, reducing the overall likelihood of invisibility.

Goal gradients. Invisibility may vary depending not only on the content of a perceiver's goal, but how close the perceiver is to achieving that goal. Many theories suggest that the more a person expects a valued goal to be attainable, and the closer one gets to achieving a goal, the more motivated a person will be to pursue the goal (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Hull, 1932; Kivetz, Urminsky, & Zheng, 2006). This greater motivation should in turn lead to a greater likelihood of seeing others as invisible. In turn, once a goal is fulfilled, means of attaining that goal lose value (Ferguson & Bargh, 2004). This suggests that those who were once relevant (i.e., a potential mate for a short-term sexual relationship) can become invisible once the goal has been attained.

Variability between situations. To the extent that particular situations activate certain goals or make particular concerns more salient, targets' invisibility will shift. Ambient cues (e.g., darkness and bad smells) can activate goals that lead to the stigmatization of groups perceived to pose relevant threats (e.g., men from racial outgroups [Schaller et al., 2003] and gay men [Dasgupta et al., 2009], respectively). These cues should likewise lead to the invisibility of those seen as irrelevant to self-protection or disease avoidance goals, respectively.

Aspects of the social ecology, too, may shape invisibility. Situations in which there are many social targets and therefore greater competition for any one perceiver's limited attention may be particularly likely to produce invisibility. A perceiver with the goal of finding someone to talk to will be more likely to treat someone as invisible in a room with 50 people than in a room with four. We might find, then, that members of some groups are especially likely to be subjected to invisibility-based stigmatization when in large groups of people. Building from this point, social markets with many people (e.g., big cities) may be more likely to produce invisibility than social markets with few people (e.g., small towns). However, this may depend on one or more conditions being met, such as consensus about who provides relevant affordances. For example, imagine that all the single people in a particular city see the same few people as the most desirable mates. This could render many potential (but slightly less desirable) mates invisible. However, if these single people's mate preferences are idiosyncratic, or else determined simply by proximity, then large social markets may be no more likely to produce invisibility as people assort to find mates of their liking.

Predictions for the Invisibility of Three Target Groups

In practice, how might the perceiver's goals and the target's affordance cues interact to lead to invisibility? What specific predictions does our affordance-management theory generate about when someone will be invisible? We argue that this theory helps to organize existing findings on the stigmatization of different groups, and allows for the generation of novel predictions about which groups will be invisible to whom. In the following text, we illustrate the utility of our approach for examining three target groups: Black women, people with disabilities, and older adults. We selected these three target groups as examples because of the heterogeneous (and even conflicting) stereotypes associated with each group, as well as past research suggesting that each group experiences interpersonal invisibility (e.g., Black women: Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010; people with disabilities: Witkin, 1998; older adults: Rodin, 1987). Because specific stereotypes about Black women, people with disabilities, and older adults inform their perceived affordances, we examine specific stereotype content to generate predictions about when members of these groups will be invisible. However, note that dynamic and individuating cues may also be used when seen as diagnostic of a person's affordances (see section on Predictors of Relevance Appraisals).

Black Women

As noted in the preceding text, an emerging body of research identifies Black women as a group that experiences interpersonal invisibility (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). The affordance management theory of stigmatization suggests new predictions about when Black women are less likely to be seen as goal-relevant, and therefore less likely to garner others' attention, affect, and behavior. Cultural scholars as well as researchers of African American women's experiences describe three common stereotypes about Black women in the U.S.: Jezebel, Mammy, and Sapphire (Collins, 2000; Harris-Perry, 2011; West, 1995). Thomas (2013) proposed that a Black woman's invisibility may vary depending on which of these stereotypes is situationally salient. Because these stereotypes correspond to different perceived affordances, we can predict those goals for which Black women might be considered irrelevant and thus be invisible. Although we focus here on stereotypes of Black women that may inform perceived relevance to particular goals, stereotypes are only one type of information about a target and we expect variability among Black women's experiences of invisibility on the basis of other cues that perceivers use to infer goal-relevance or irrelevance (e.g., emotion expression, skin color, apparent wealth, relation to the perceiver, etc.).

The Jezebel stereotype characterizes Black women as sexually promiscuous and unrestrained. To the extent that people seek long-term relationships with committed and dependable others (e.g., Fletcher, Simpson, Thomas, & Giles, 1999; Jonason, Garcia, Webster, Li, & Fisher, 2015), the sexually loose, licentious Jezebel stereotype would lead Black women to be considered undesirable for long-term relationships. On the basis of this stereotype we predict that Black women often will be invisible to straight men seeking a long-term mate, and more generally in social situations or stages of life in which long-term mating goals dominate. However, because the Jezebel subtype describes sexual availability,

Black women may *not* be invisible to straight men seeking a short-term mate, or to women in relationships who believe their partner may be looking for a short-term mate, as Black women would then be perceived as opportunities or threats to these peoples' goals, respectively.

Black women are also stereotyped as more masculine than Asian and White women (Galinsky, Hall, & Cuddy, 2013; Goff, Thomas, & Jackson, 2008; Johnson, Freeman, & Pauker, 2012), and this has implications for the perceived desirability of Black women across perceiver racial groups. Heterosexual Black-White and Black-Asian interracial marriages are much more likely to include a Black husband than a Black wife (Galinsky et al., 2013). If straight men see masculinity as an undesirable quality in both short- and long-term mates, then in contrast to the aforementioned prediction, Black women may be seen as less desirable to straight men across short- and long-term mating contexts.

Other stereotypes suggest circumstances in which Black women are unlikely to be invisible. The Mammy stereotype describes a tough but nurturing character. People seeking affiliation, a strong social ally, or comfort may perceive Black women as especially likely to afford these social benefits, and therefore be less likely to see Black women as invisible. The Sapphire stereotype presents Black women as independent, emasculating, powerful, and headstrong, and Black women are perceived to be good leaders (Galinsky et al., 2013; Livingston, Rosette, & Washington, 2012). This suggests that Black women may be less invisible to perceivers who seek a strong and independent leader (by posing a potential opportunity) or to those who seek to maintain a powerful leadership position (by posing a potential threat). Finally, Black women appear to be more closely associated with danger than White women, but less so than Black men (Jones & Fazio, 2010; Thiem, Neel, Simpson, & Todd, *in press*). Perceivers concerned with self-protection may be more likely to see Black women as invisible when Black women are encountered in the context of Black men, and less invisible in the context of White women.

These examples rely on an interaction of perceiver goals (to find a mate, to have a leader, to stay safe), and the stereotypes that give meaning to a Black woman's intersectional race and gender cues. To the extent that members of different racial or sexual orientation groups are exposed to and/or endorse the same stereotypes of Black women, we would expect to find the same effects across different perceiver groups. For example, because mate selection preferences tend to be consistent across racial groups (Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994), the Jezebel stereotype may produce invisibility of straight Black women to straight men seeking a mate, regardless of the man's race. However, if different perceiver groups hold different stereotypes of Black women, Black women's invisibility should vary across perceiver groups. Different perceivers may see Black women as posing different affordances because they differently interpret the same cues. For example, if a straight Black man believes Black women are more likely to share his values than are other-race women, he may see Black women as highly relevant for a mate-seeking goal.

Unlike prototypicality-based approaches to invisibility (e.g., Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010), which do not readily predict perceiver or situational variability in invisibility, our framework offers specific predictions about when, and for whom, Black women will and will not be invisible.

People With Disabilities

People with disabilities have also been described as invisible (Witkin, 1998), and are often stigmatized (Esses & Beaufoy, 1994; Farnall & Smith, 1999), excluded from modern-day American society (Kitchin, 1998), avoided (Snyder, Kleck, Strenta, & Mentzer, 1979), and targeted with prejudice colored by both antipathy and sympathy (Dovidio, Pagotto, & Hebl, 2011; Katz, Glass, Lucido, & Farber, 1977). The current theory posits that people with disabilities will be invisible to the extent that they are appraised as irrelevant to others' goals. Because of perceptions of impaired competence (S. T. Fiske et al., 2002; Louvet, 2007), which suggests a generalized (perceived) inability to confer benefits to others, we expect that interpersonal invisibility may be a common experience among people with disabilities. For example, one study found that able-bodied children were less likely to look at, play with, or talk to a child confederate when he was in a wheelchair (Perlman & Routh, 1980, Study 2). However, our affordance-management theory of stigmatization also predicts specific circumstances in which people with disabilities will *not* be invisible.

People with disabilities may be perceived as posing threats to others, and thus experience threat-based stigmatization, to the extent that they are seen as receiving more than their fair share of resources or "unearned" entitlements (e.g., social welfare, dedicated parking spaces; Paetzold et al., 2008). We would expect that perceivers who are concerned with resource scarcity, and who believe people with disabilities are taking more than their fair share, will be especially likely to stigmatize people with disabilities not as invisible, but as posing a threat—perhaps even if they themselves have a physical disability.

People with certain physical disabilities may also be perceived to pose a threat of disease because they fall into a broader class of people who have physically atypical characteristics, which are processed heuristically as disease threats (Park, Faulkner, & Schaller, 2003; Schaller & Neuberg, 2012). Perceivers motivated to avoid disease, either acutely (e.g., someone actively trying to remain healthy for an important upcoming event) or dispositionally, may be more likely to engage in threat-based than invisibility-based stigmatization of people with physical disabilities.

As with the example of Black women, our theory predicts that people with disabilities will also be less invisible when they are perceived to provide goal-relevant opportunities to others. Disability may be more closely associated with concepts of childhood than with adulthood (Robey, Beckley, & Kirschner, 2006), suggesting that people may infantilize people with disabilities and treat them as they would children—that is, as needing and deserving care (Buckels et al., 2015). Anecdotal evidence suggests that people with disabilities are at times stereotyped as the perfect objects for charity and compassion (see Park et al., 2003). If a person with a disability is perceived as an opportunity to enact or display benevolence, he or she will be particularly visible to perceivers motivated to see themselves as moral or who seek the prestige associated with helping another.

Note that the group "people with physical disabilities" is quite heterogeneous and would include, for example, a person who has facial paralysis, who has a prosthetic limb, who is blind, who is paraplegic, or who has a chronic illness. The life situations of people with disabilities are likewise variable, with some being

quite wealthy and others living in poverty, and some having large friend, family, or workplace networks and others being relatively socially isolated. Again, our perspective may be particularly useful for anticipating when people who vary in their particular disability or circumstances are more likely to be stigmatized as invisible, as threatening, or neither. We would predict that, for example, someone who has quadriplegia and who is also independently wealthy (and so has plentiful resources) may be more likely to be invisible to able-bodied others than either a person with a less disabling condition or someone with quadriplegia who is poor: This person's inability to use their limbs may be perceived as indicating less general ability to facilitate others' goals (low perceived opportunity), but because of their wealth this person also would be perceived not to depend on or require shared resources (low perceived threat). Interestingly, because of their financial independence, this person would also likely be deemed unsuitable as a target for charitable donations (low perceived opportunity). People with disabilities who are poor may be likely to be subject to resource-threat-based stigmatization, whereas their wealthy counterparts are disproportionately likely to be invisible. An affordance-management perspective may prove useful for identifying those combinations of circumstances that lead people with disabilities to be stigmatized in specific ways.

Older Adults

Much work has explored the ways in which older adults are subjected to age-based stigmatization (see Chasteen & Cary, 2015; Kite & Johnson, 1988; Nelson, 2004; North & Fiske, 2013; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2000). Older adults tend to be "cognitively disregarded" by younger adults (Rodin, 1987) and stereotyped as absent-minded, forgetful, and slow, potentially indicating low general social value (Heckhausen & Baltes, 1991; Heckhausen, Dixon, & Baltes, 1989). Importantly, these stereotypes can become internalized as people age (Levy, 2003): Older adults express negative attitudes toward older adults that are comparable to attitudes of younger adults (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002), and so also may selectively engage in invisibility-based stigmatization of older adults. At the same time, older adults provide opportunities for one another, for example, for friendship, that would likely render them less invisible to older than to younger adults. Older adults also may be perceived as higher in status and power than younger adults (e.g., Hummert et al., 1994), and as having valuable cultural information and skills (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001), which should lead younger adults to perceive older adults as capable of facilitating and/or impeding some goals.

To the extent that they are generally perceived to have low social value, older adults, like Black women and people with disabilities, may find invisibility-based stigmatization to be a common experience. Specific stereotypes suggest circumstances especially likely to produce invisibility. Older adults may be perceived as asexual by young adults (e.g., Gott & Hinchliff, 2003), suggesting that they may be invisible to young people seeking a new mate. Because age decreases women's perceived sexual desirability more so than men's (Deusch, Zalenski, & Clark, 1986; Sontag, 1972), older women may be particularly likely to experience invisibility in mating-related contexts (Rodin, 1982).

Additionally, older adults are likely to be invisible to perceivers concerned with self-protection given that the body loses muscle mass and becomes weaker in older age (Bassey, 1998; Goodpaster et al., 2006), and because older adults are less violent on average than are younger adults (e.g., Wilson & Daly, 1985). Even people typically stereotyped as dangerous, such as Black men, may no longer be seen to pose a threat when they reach older age (e.g., Kang & Chasteen, 2009), and thus have an increased likelihood of invisibility (though see Lundberg, Neel, Lassetter, & Todd, 2018).

Yet like Black women and people with disabilities, older adults are also stereotyped as posing specific affordances to others, and these affordances set boundary conditions to their invisibility. To the extent that a perceiver particularly values a mate's status and resources, wealthy and high-status older adults may be perceived as attractive long-term mates, and given sex differences in the desire for a mate with resources (Buss, 1989; Kenrick, Sadalla, Groth, & Trost, 1990), wealth and status may particularly boost the perceived mate value of (straight) older men. Younger adults may see older adults as posing threats to succession (by occupying desirable, and limited, positions of influence and employment and/or by maintaining high status and power) and to consumption (by depleting shared resources; North & Fiske, 2013), suggesting that perceivers particularly concerned with these threats will be less likely to see older adults as invisible. Older adults are also a heterogeneous group often subtended in a number of different ways (Hummert, 1990), and will vary in the extent to which these different stereotypes are applied. Stereotypes of the "perfect grandparent" and "matriarch/patriarch" (Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Hummert, 1990), for example, suggest that perceivers who seek emotional or financial support, or assistance caring for children, will see some older adults as opportunities.

To review, the affordance-management theory of stigmatization points to the importance of examining the relation of perceiver goals, target cues, and situational contexts in generating predictions about invisibility, and produces differential, nuanced predictions about the invisibility of Black women, people with disabilities, and older adults. Applying this approach to explore the stigmatization of other groups—such as immigrants, people with a mental illness, or sexual minorities, to name just a few—may provide a unified structure for examining stigmatization in its many forms. This approach can even be applied to high-status groups, whose status and power would lead them to rarely experience invisibility, but who may be stereotyped in ways that would suggest domain-specific irrelevance (e.g., a White man in a typically feminine domain, like childcare).

Related Concepts and Theoretical Perspectives

Contrast With Prototype-Based Theories of Invisibility

Our approach to invisibility differs from prototype-based theories of invisibility in several important ways. Prototype-based perspectives anticipate that members of multiply nonprototypical groups (Black women, Asian men, gay Latinos, etc.) will experience what we have termed both representational invisibility (lack of representation in cultural and historical products; Fryberg & Townsend, 2008; Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008) and interpersonal invisibility (perceivers' inattention and indifference to specific targets; Sesko & Biernat, 2010). Although prototype-based

perspectives have generated some support, it is unclear how the mechanism of nonprototypicality would produce the situational, perceiver, or target variability in interpersonal invisibility anticipated by an affordance-management approach. That is, if interpersonal invisibility emerges from targets' intersectional identities, which do not depend on or vary across situations or perceivers but rather are a property of the target (e.g., being a Black woman), a prototypicality-based perspective does not easily suggest a) situations in which these same targets will *not* be interpersonally invisible, b) when prototypical targets (e.g., Black men, White women) might become interpersonally invisible, or c) perceiver factors beyond perceived group prototypicality that would make them more likely to see others as interpersonally invisible.

That said, the affordance-management theory presented here does not imply that prototypicality has no relation to interpersonal invisibility. Rather, prototypicality will contribute to interpersonal invisibility when prototypicality informs relevance appraisals. More prototypical group members may be especially likely to come to mind when generating exemplars of a category (Silvera, Krull, & Sassler, 2002). When a perceiver's goal requires generating exemplars of a category, then, prototypicality will directly inform group members' appraised relevance. For example, a White manager with a goal to bring more racial and gender diversity to a primarily White and male work team would be more likely to bring to mind Black men and White women than Black women because, as discussed, these groups are considered prototypical of the category "Black" and "woman." Or similarly, if a White journalist would like to interview a Black expert on race, she may be more likely to seek out a Black man than a Black woman because Black men are seen as most representative of the group "Black people" and therefore as most relevant to her goal.

Our theory thus predicts that prototypicality can produce interpersonal invisibility *to the extent that prototypicality informs relevance*. In contrast to prototype-based theories of invisibility, however, the current theory also predicts that these same prototypical group members will sometimes be interpersonally invisible when stereotypes of the prototypical group suggest irrelevance (as when a straight White woman is seeking a long-term romantic partner, and may overlook Black men as potential mates, given stereotypes that Black men are low status and aggressive; Brown-Iannuzzi et al., 2014).

Although in the current article we have focused on understanding interpersonal invisibility, and not representational invisibility, the two may be linked. Note that in the examples of the manager and journalist deciding who to hire or interview, interpersonal invisibility may contribute to representational invisibility by influencing diversity at a company and representation in news media. Likewise, representational invisibility may contribute to interpersonal invisibility. Given that cultural products are one major way in which stereotypes are both represented and learned (e.g., Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008; Mok, 1998; Weisbuch, Pauker, & Ambady, 2009), if a group is not represented in cultural products, perceivers may have fewer and weaker stereotypes about what the group is like. Thus, people from the unrepresented target group may fail to be seen as relevant because perceivers have not learned to associate them with particular affordances. In addition, lack of representation may itself communicate that the group lacks importance or status, and therefore is unlikely to pose relevant affordances for perceivers' goals (and so can be ignored and treated

with indifference). Representational invisibility can contribute to interpersonal invisibility to the extent that it informs perceivers' appraisals of targets' goal-irrelevance.

In sum, our theory suggests that prototypicality can contribute to interpersonal invisibility via the mechanism of relevance appraisal. Likewise, interpersonal and representational invisibility, although distinct classes of phenomena, may nonetheless influence one another. Discovering and describing the precise relation among prototypicality, relevance appraisal, representational invisibility, and interpersonal invisibility is an exciting area for future empirical research.

Models of Social Perception

Our approach's reliance on independent threat and opportunity dimensions may call to readers' minds other two-dimensional models of social perception. For example, the stereotype content model (S. T. Fiske et al., 2002; S. T. Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007) identifies *warmth* and *competence* as two fundamental dimensions of social perception (see also Wojciszke, 1994), and proposes that combinations of these dimensions correspond to differential forms of prejudice and stigmatization (e.g., Asians stereotyped as competent but cold, and thus envied; homeless people stereotyped as incompetent and cold, and thus subjected to contempt; old people stereotyped as warm but incompetent, and thus pitied; Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). Other models have somewhat differently characterized two or three fundamental dimensions of social perception as ability and willingness; agency and experience; agency, beliefs, and communion; dominance and trustworthiness; or uniquely human and essentially human characteristics (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007; Haslam, 2006; Koch, Imhoff, Dotsch, Unkelbach, & Alves, 2016; Montoya & Horton, 2014; Todorov, Said, Engell, & Oosterhof, 2008). Is our focus on goal-relevant opportunities and threats merely a recapitulation of one or more of these models?

In short, no. Our affordance-management approach is largely compatible with such models, but not redundant with them. These models tend to describe *dimensions along which people generally assess others' potential affordances*, whereas our approach focuses on *how others' affordances are currently relevant*. That is, in our theory, the inferences these other models describe act as inputs that perceivers can use to appraise relevance to target goals. Consider the stereotype content model: Regardless of which quadrant of competence and warmth a group is stereotyped to occupy, members of that group will be invisible when perceivers appraise that group to be goal-irrelevant. For example, Asian men, generally stereotyped in the U.S. as competent and cold, may be perceived to pose a threat to those seeking a job (Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011), but invisible to some women who are looking for a romantic partner (Galinsky et al., 2013).

Furthermore, threat and opportunity dimensions do not map directly on to warmth and competence judgments. For example, perceived competence may amplify *both* threat and opportunity perceptions; greater competence would render enemies more dangerous and allies better able to aid. Yet those who have little competence also can be quite threatening to one's goals, for example when one depends on the assistance of an incompetent person. Models like the stereotype content model broadly account for associations that inform the likelihood that members of differ-

ent groups are assessed as relevant to any particular goal. But the stereotype content itself does not account for interpersonal invisibility.

Stigma Concealability

Invisibility may at first blush appear similar to identity or stigma concealment. Many stigmatized identities or cues are not readily apparent to others (e.g., belonging to a minority religion, having a mental illness, being gay), and thus people with these identities or who bear these cues experience stigmatization in different ways from those with conspicuous stigmas (Barreto & Ellemers, 2015; Jones et al., 1984; Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009), such as deciding when, how, and to whom to disclose their stigma (Derlega & Berg, 1987). Although stigma concealability may appear to resemble invisibility and the two phenomena share some terminology (e.g., “visible” stigmas), concealability is qualitatively distinct from a target’s interpersonal invisibility. Stigma concealability refers to whether a target can effectively mask the cues people use to infer underlying identities or potential affordances. For simplicity, we have tended to focus on easily observed (typically nonconcealed) cues in explaining the affordance-management theory of invisibility, but we can consider how concealable cues would operate in the model outlined in Figure 1. A cue’s concealability affects whether that cue is available to perceivers (see “target cues” box of Figure 1). Interpersonal invisibility refers to a perceivers’ inattention and indifference toward a target (see “stigmatization outcomes”) on the basis of their appraised irrelevance. Thus, in our model concealability informs early stages of the relevance appraisal process, whereas invisibility is an outcome of the resultant relevance appraisals.

Targets may choose to conceal an affordance cue in order to be invisible to others, as when a gay man conceals his sexual orientation from strangers who might discriminate against gay men. However, at other times targets may *reveal* their affordance cue in order to be invisible—as when a gay man reveals his sexual orientation to a woman who is pursuing him romantically. Likewise, targets may conceal or reveal in order to appear relevant to others. A gay man might conceal his sexual orientation to be a valued team member in a highly masculine workplace (because of stereotypes of gay men suggesting weakness or femininity; Kite & Deaux, 1987), but reveal his sexual orientation to attract another man as a romantic partner. Concealability thus affects whether certain cues are available to perceivers to assess target relevance, whereas interpersonal invisibility is a possible outcome of that appraisal process.

Further Directions and Implications

The Relevance Appraisal Matrix

This article articulates an affordance-management model of social judgment and behavior in the service of understanding stigmatization. We have focused on those appraised as neither facilitating nor obstructing one’s goals (i.e., those seen as motivationally irrelevant). However, we anticipate that the Relevance Appraisal Matrix, with its theorized antecedents and consequences, will also prove a useful lens for understanding attention, emotion, and behavior toward those appraised to facilitate, impede,

or both facilitate and impede goals (i.e., the other three quadrants of the Relevance Appraisal Matrix). Consider targets appraised to both facilitate and obstruct goals. These targets may be seen as simultaneous threats and opportunities to a single goal (as with an attractive friend in reference to a mating goal, or a police officer in reference to a self-protection goal). But they may also be seen as facilitating one goal, while obstructing another (a straight woman may see a particular man as a desirable sexual partner, but also as potentially physically dangerous). Whether perceivers differently respond to targets who are high-threat, high-opportunity for a single goal versus across multiple goals awaits further study. In addition, reactions and behavior toward high threat, high opportunity targets may qualitatively differ from reactions and behavior toward other targets—not simply an addition of behavior toward high opportunity targets and high threat targets. For example, perceivers may feel ambivalent toward these targets (Cacioppo & Berntson, 1994; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004), and may attempt to resolve this ambivalence via a variety of strategies (e.g., Clark, Wegener, & Fabrigar, 2008; Festinger, 1964; Maio, Bell, & Esses, 1996). Managing these targets may require perceivers to pay particular attention to and monitor these targets. These are only a few of the numerous possible research directions suggested by the Relevance Appraisal Matrix, which may provide a unifying framework for understanding an array of social phenomena.

Other Appraisals: Novelty, Uncertainty, Coping Resources, and Environmental Constraints

Appraisals form the fulcrum of our theory. We have focused on relevance appraisals, which many perspectives agree are foundational in social cognition, judgment, emotion, and behavior (Brewer, 1988; Cunningham & Brosch, 2012; Eitam & Higgins, 2010; Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Moors et al., 2013). However, it is worth noting that research has identified a number of additional, commonly made appraisals, such as stimulus novelty, uncertainty, a perceiver’s own resources for coping with a stimulus, and the behaviors that are possible in a specific environment (Cesario, Plaks, Hagiwara, Navarrete, & Higgins, 2010; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Moors et al., 2013; Tomaka, Blascovich, Kelsey, & Leitten, 1993; Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009). Some of these appraisals contribute to the relevance appraisal process, whereas others shape how a perceiver responds to targets appraised as relevant.

Whereas the affordances of a familiar target (a close friend) or an easily categorized target (a highly prototypical man) are inferred with relative ease, a target who is novel or whose affordances are uncertain must be further processed until the perceiver sufficiently assesses the target’s goal-relevance. One aspect of this process—categorization—helps perceivers anticipate what a novel target will be like. Thus, difficulty categorizing a novel target can obstruct the process of relevance appraisal, and this difficulty can be experienced as aversive (see Lick & Johnson, 2015, for a review). For example, difficulty categorizing gay and transgender people predicts negative evaluations of those targets (Lick & Johnson, 2013; Stern & Rule, 2018). Thus, an initial form of negative prejudice toward difficult-to-categorize targets can emerge toward targets during the relevance appraisal process itself, and this prejudice is distinct from the negative prejudice we have focused on throughout our article that emerges as a product of

appraisal as a threat. Once perceivers experience disfluency-based negativity toward a target, this can precipitate other negative inferences about the target, such as stereotypes that could justify those negative feelings (Bahns, 2017; Crandall, Bahns, Warner, & Schaller, 2011). As people have more contact with these unfamiliar groups, the process of assessing their relevance (including categorization) should become easier and produce less disfluency-based prejudice (Pearson & Dovidio, 2013). However, we anticipate that this will not eliminate all prejudice toward a target: Even a fluently categorized person can be a target of prejudice or indifference, depending on the target's appraised relevance.

Other appraisals contribute not to the perceived relevance of a target, but rather to the selection of specific behaviors to manage a relevant target. Consider the distinction between primary and secondary appraisals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Primary appraisals assess the situation, whereas secondary appraisals assess one's ability to cope with the situation. When a situation is seen to demand more resources than a person currently has, that person will engage in behavior like freezing, aggression, escape, or overcompensation (Tomaka et al., 1993; Trawalter et al., 2009). Which of these responses is engaged depends on appraisal of the action possibilities within the situation—as when Whites in an enclosed environment respond to Black faces with approach behavior that could facilitate aggression, but Whites in an open environment respond to those same faces with avoidance behavior that could facilitate flight (Cesario et al., 2010). Appraisals of novelty, uncertainty, coping resources, and environmental constraints on behavior thus help to shape the initial relevance appraisal process, as well as the specific behaviors with which perceivers respond to relevant targets.

Multiple Goals

For simplicity, we have focused primarily on how perceivers assess and subsequently treat targets in reference to single goals. However, people often pursue not one single goal in isolation, but several goals at the same time (Chun, Kruglanski, Sleeth-Keppler, & Friedman, 2011; Kernan & Lord, 1990; Köpetz, Faber, Fishbach, & Kruglanski, 2011; Unsworth, Yeo, & Beck, 2014; Vancouver, Weinhardt, & Schmidt, 2010). This suggests a number of interesting directions to expand upon the current theory. First, the more goals a perceiver has, the greater will be the number of potentially relevant targets. Thus, one straightforward prediction is that perceivers pursuing multiple goals will treat fewer others as interpersonally invisible. Second, as noted in our discussion on which targets are invisible, those targets who are relevant to multiple goals will be less likely to be invisible. Expanding the current model to fully consider multiple goals will be a useful direction for future research.

The Target Perspective on Invisibility

We have primarily considered targets from the perceiver perspective, but the current theory speaks to the target perspective on invisibility in numerous ways. Because full treatment of the target perspective is beyond the scope of the current article, we note here only a few directions suggested by the theory.

Being interpersonally invisible can have social consequences, such as limiting the target's ability to reap benefits from others. In

some cases—for example, when experienced as interpersonal rejection or ostracism—being a target of interpersonal invisibility will feel quite aversive (see Williams, 2007). However, invisibility does not obligate negative outcomes for the target, and invisibility may sometimes impose minimal or no costs. For example, in the case of two people who appraise each other as irrelevant (i.e., “null relationships,” A. P. Fiske, 1992), invisibility should not be experienced by either party as aversive. There may also be times when invisibility offers respite from unwanted attention and prejudice (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Thomas, 2013). The affordance-management approach suggests that targets will seek to manage their invisibility only when they perceive invisibility as an obstruction to achieving their own goals and therefore as something that *needs* to be managed.

Should a target desire not to be invisible, our theory suggests that attempts to do so will be most successful if they lead perceivers to appraise targets as relevant—which can be accomplished either by changing perceivers' goals to ones for which the target would be considered relevant, or by changing the perceivers' appraisal of the target's relevance to existing goals. To be clear, we do not suggest that targets are *responsible* for changing their invisibility, but rather highlight the implications of our model for predicting what targets may do, and how successful those attempts will be at reducing invisibility.

It is important to note that targets are perceivers, too, seeking to manage the environment for their own goals (Major, Quinton, McCoy, & Schmader, 2000; Neel, Neufeld, & Neuberg, 2013; Shelton, 2000). Applying the current theory to the target perspective suggests numerous directions for future research to explore, such as how targets detect whether they are invisible to others, the circumstances in which invisibility will feel aversive versus tolerable versus desirable, and the specific strategies targets adopt to manage unwanted invisibility or to seek desired invisibility.

Reducing Invisibility

What can be done to reduce invisibility that produces negative outcomes for targets? Work in intergroup conflict shows that intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and stigmatization, especially when certain conditions are met (see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Following from our discussion of novelty and fluency, our theory suggests that to successfully reduce a group's invisibility, mere contact may need to be accompanied by perceptions of goal-relevance; contact alone may be insufficient to make a group no longer seem irrelevant. Interventions that highlight or create group interdependence (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979; Shnabel, Dovidio, & Levin, 2016) or emphasize a common ingroup identity (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993) may better reduce invisibility than contact alone, albeit only to the extent that they render the invisible group relevant to others' concerns.

Researchers might begin by intervening with perceivers who are most likely to see others as invisible (e.g., high power and high status perceivers) or by focusing on assessments of targets most likely to be recurrently invisible (e.g., targets judged as low in power, status, and/or competence). Note, however, that our theory of interpersonal invisibility suggests that to the extent that goal relevance is a comparative assessment, interventions aimed at reducing invisibility could carry unwanted side effects (e.g., re-

ducing the invisibility of one target might increase the invisibility of another). Researchers should be mindful of these potential tradeoffs.

Conclusion

Our theory of interpersonal invisibility both integrates existing work and provides numerous directions for future research. It is worth noting that the affordance-management approach we adopt has already uncovered and helped to explain many of the nuances of threat-based stigmatization (e.g., Pirlott & Cook, 2018; Schaller & Neuberg, 2012) and other social psychological phenomena (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Maner et al., 2005; McArthur & Baron, 1983; Neuberg & Cottrell, 2008; Zebrowitz & Montepare, 2006). Our theory of interpersonal invisibility not only complements this prior work, but by considering threats and opportunities as distinct dimensions, our theoretical approach exposes novel research questions that extend beyond stigmatization: How do people judge and interact with those who are perceived to pose simultaneous threats and opportunities (the top right quadrant of the Relevance Appraisal Matrix, Figure 1)? What happens when a target is perceived to pose a threat for one goal, but an opportunity for another? How might this extension of the affordance-management framework help us understand dynamics in close relationships—do we tend to see close others as varying in the extent to which they threaten or facilitate our goals? Consideration of threats and opportunities as independent dimensions may fruitfully guide affordance-management-based analysis of phenomena beyond stigmatization.

The affordance-management theory of invisibility contributes to the rich and growing body of research on groups at the intersection of multiple identities—groups that have historically been understudied and for which social psychological understanding is nascent (Kang & Bodenhausen, 2015; Remedios & Snyder, 2015). By considering those factors of perceivers, targets, goals, and situations that dynamically shape social judgment and behavior, affordance-management provides a generative approach for identifying new research directions and uncovering nuance in psychological phenomena such as interpersonal invisibility.

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Correction to Neel and Lassetter (2019)

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All versions of this article have been corrected.

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