Confronting Racism: the impacts of confronter race and the context of social media

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Abstract

Previous research demonstrates that confronting racism can reduce repetition of prejudicial behavior, but confronters also face considerable costs when addressing these behaviors. Past studies also suggest that confronters of the target racial group, are often perceived more negatively than non-target confronters, however the scope of these studies is limited to the impact of Black and White confronters. With the ubiquity of social media, also comes the prevalence of online forms of racism, yet there is limited research on how the context of social media influences perceptions of confronters. This study aimed to address these issues, and determine the impact of Asian confronters and the influence of social media on confrontation. Participants recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (n=222), were asked to read a scenario where a White coworker makes racially charged comments towards a Black coworker, who is then confronted by a third coworker, whose race is manipulated to be White, Black or Asian. The scenario either takes place in an in-person context (vignette) or through social media (Facebook post). Participants were asked a series of questions assessing their impressions of the confronter, through various measures. Results indicated that over social media, confronters faced higher interpersonal costs and were perceived more negatively along this measure. Contradictory to previous research, the results failed to demonstrate any significant differences between conditions based on confronter race.

Confronting Racism: the impacts of confronter race and the context of social media

Racism is prevalent throughout society and exists in various subtle forms, such as through racially charged comments and "microaggressions," which are defined as "subtle forms of racism, progressing the dominance of a group upon a targeted group" (Soloranzo, 1998). Although the more blatant and violent acts of racism often receive more attention, these smaller, subtler forms of racism are detrimental, since they collectively cement the dominant racial group's position of power over the oppressed minority groups. Confronting acts of racism could be a critical tool in combating racism, since confrontation was shown to reduce the repetition of prejudicial behavior (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). Because of the subtle nature of microaggressions and how they may be perceived as harmless and benign, many witnesses are hesitant when confronting the perpetrators of microaggressions.

It is important to consider the costs of confronting racism, since previous research shows that there are considerable negative consequences of confronting racism (Kaiser, & Miller, 2001), such as being perceived as oversensitive or complaining (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith 2013). The race of the confronter also plays an important role in the impact of confrontation and how the confronter's actions are perceived by observers. Previous research suggests that White confronters of racism are typically the best received by observers, since they have the least to gain from confronting racism (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013). Target in-group members (such

as Black confronters) that state discrimination as a cause for poor test performance, are also more

likely to be seen as avoiding personal responsibility and were perceived more negatively (Garcia,

Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005). However, when non-target, outgroup members

(such as White confronters) advocate on behalf of target ingroup members, stating discrimination

as a cause for poor test performance, they are perceived more positively for confronting (Garcia,

Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005). This further supports the reasoning behind

White confronters of racism, being more accepted, than Black confronters of racism (Kaiser, &

Miller, 2001).

Non-target, Racial Minority Confronters

Previous research has generally limited its scope to the impact of Black and White

confronters, ignoring the multidimensional constructs of race. It is important that further research

is conducted on the impact of confronters who belong to neither the black or white racial groups,

for example, those that are Asian. It would be interesting to examine how Asian confronters of

racism directed towards Black people are perceived, since they neither belong to the target racial

group, nor the dominant racial group in this context. Because Asians do not fall into the racial

target group and are therefore not directly impacted by this type of racism, they could be less

likely to be seen as self advancing (Dickter, Kittel, and Gyurovski, 2011). However, it is also

possible that the Asian confronter could be perceived as having some level of group membership

with the Black racial group, since they both experience racial discrimination. In a situation where

racism is apparent, discrimination may serve as a common ground of similarity, between Black

and Asian peoples, creating situational group membership (Brewer, 1979). Group membership is

largely based on contextual similarities and also which differences are most salient in a given

situation. Czopp and Monteith (2003) found that when target group members confront racism, they were more likely to be antagonized and perceived as irritating. So since Blacks and Asians share a minority identity, As, Aian confronters may be more perceived more negatively than White confronters, when confronting racism towards Blacks. As a racial minority in general, attributing certain actions to racial discrimination could have various costs, including being perceived as a complainer, or as using discrimination as an excuse for poor performance (eg. using the race card). It is clear that there is a need to further fill in the gaps and determine the impact of confronters of the non-target and non-dominant racial groups.

Confronting Over Social Media

With the ubiquity of social media usage, comes the increase in prevalence of online racism and microaggressions, across every platform. It seems that nowadays racially charged posts and comments are inescapable, although many choose to take action and confront these agressions online. However, many question whether this form of activism is sincere and honest, since writing up a social media post takes minimal effort and has a greater level of anonymity than in-person interactions. This observation has lead to the coinage of the term "slacktivism," which is "a combination of the words 'slacker' and 'activism,' which has increasingly been used to describe the disconnect between awareness and action through the use of social media" (Glenn, 2015). In addition, social media is often a performative tool, used by many to present oneself in a positive light, in order to gain social capital. When people are placed in situations of high social observability, such as when using social media, impression management is placed as a priority (Leary, & Kowalsky, 1990). Impression management is the process through which people attempt to influence others' perceptions of themselves, through social

interaction. It is then important to consider how confrontation of racism through social media, may be perceived by observers as performative, or as a means to come across in a positive light. Past research demonstrates that when people engage in public support for a cause, they are less likely to follow up with future support for the same cause, as opposed to when they engage in private support for a cause (Kristofferson, White, & Peloza, 2013). This is most likely because engaging in a public form of support, actualizes a positive impression, which in turn leads to satisfaction in personal image. Social media users may already be wary of this form of potential impression management and view cyber-confrontation as an insincere method of improving one's outward image. Despite the ubiquity of microaggressions across all platforms of social media, there is very limited Psychological research on how confronting these forms of racism through the internet, may be received.

The Impact of Social Media on Confronter Race

People naturally attempt to attribute a person's actions to certain intentions, that are deduced from understanding the action, person and context (Heider, 1958). If social media creates a context where users naturally perceive confronters as self-promoting and performative, then how might this context alter the impact of confronter race? In situations like these, observers tend to perceive the costs of confrontation and determine whether the situation is a high-stakes or low-stakes one (Lavado, Pereira, Dovida, & Vala, 2016). Black confronters of Black-directed racism, face the highest-stakes, since they have the greatest likelihood of being seen as complaining and self-promoting. The fact that Black confronters face these high-stakes, might help to make their actions seem less complacent and less like "slacktivism," when confronting over social media. If confronting racism over social media is seen as performative

and motivated by impression management, it should also be more acceptable to do so through publicly addressing the issues that actually impact oneself. White confronters face lower risks when confronting racism, so their acts of confrontation over social media could be seen as even more complacent and self serving, given they face lower barriers. In addition, attempting to achieve a positive impression, through addressing issues that do not directly affect oneself, could be seen as very self-advancing and insincere. It is possible that the context of social media could alter the impact of confronter race, although there is very limited research on the topic.

The Present Study

There are clearly gaps in the literature with regards to the impact of Asian confronters and how they might be received, as opposed to Black and White confronters. Looking at Asian confronters could yield novel information, since they neither belong to the target racial group (i.e .Blacks), nor the dominant racial group (i.e.Whites), in the context of anti-Black racism. This study examined how Asian confronters are perceived by observers, when confronting racism directed towards Black People. Past literature on confrontation also fails to examine the context of social media and its impact on how confrontation is perceived. This is important to consider, since the with the ubiquity of social media, comes a high prevalence of microaggressions across all platforms. However, because social media is often performative, confrontation of racism could be seen as a means to manage a positive outward image. The present study examined the influence of how social media context could impact the observer's perception of a confronter of online racism. In the study, participants were asked to imagine a hypothetical scenario, where a confronter addresses racist comments made towards a Black coworker. The conditions manipulated were the race of the confronter (White, Black or Asian) and the context of

confrontation (in-person or through social media). They were then asked a series of questions

assessing their impression of the confronter, through various measures, such as interpersonal

costs and rewards.

I hypothesized that with regards to confronter race, White confronters would receive the

most positive impression ratings in an in-person setting, since they are the least likely to be

perceived as self advancing (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013). When comparing the impression

ratings of confronters between the in-person and social-media conditions, I predicted that those

who confronted racism in-person, would receive more positive impression ratings. This is

because they are less-likely to be seen as performative, than those who confront over social-

media (Leary, & Kowalsky, 1990 and Heider, 1958). However, over the context of social media,

I predicted the impact of race would flip, such that Black confronters would receive the most

positive impression ratings. If confrontation over social media is perceived as a form of public

impression management, Black confronters should be best received. This is because confronting

for personal motivations should be more accepted, if one is actually confronting the issues that

directly affect oneself. White confronters of racism face fewer costs than Black confronters

(Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013), thus confronting through social media, could be perceived as

more complacent for White confronters. In addition, White confronters could be perceived as

using a social issue that does not directly affect themselves, to achieve a positive impression.

Therefore I predicted that over social media, White confronters would be perceived more

negatively.

Methods

Study Overview

Confronting racism is shown to reduce the repetition of prejudicial behavior (Czopp,

Mark, & Monteith, 2006). Despite this, there are many costs to confronting racism, especially if

the confronter is of the target racial group. These confronters are more likely to be perceived as

complainers and also be perceived as self-advancing (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013 & Garcia,

Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005). Despite fairly extensive research on

confronting racism, the previous literature fails to assess the impact of confronters who are

neither of the target racial group, nor the dominant racial group. In the case of racism towards

Black people, this could be Asian confronters. With the ubiquity of social media, comes the

increase in online acts of racism, especially microaggressions, also leading to a rise in the online

confrontation of racism. The current literature on confrontation also neglects this important

context and how in a highly observable social context, such as on social media, impression

management is placed as a priority (Leary, and Kowalsky, 1990). It is possible that these acts of

confrontation through social media are done for more performative reasons and to convey a

positive outward image of oneself, to a large audience. The present study aimed to determine the

impact of confronter race and the context of social media, on how confronters are perceived.

Participants either read a vignette demonstrating an in-person interaction, or a social media post,

portraying a scenario between coworkers. In this scenario, one White coworker makes racially-

charged comments towards a Black coworker, when a third coworker confronts the White

coworker about his comments. The race of the confronting coworker was manipulated to be

either White, Black or Asian. The context was manipulated to be an in-person interaction

(vignette) or an interaction through a social media post. Participants were then asked a series of

questions, assessing their overall impressions of the confronter, with responses ranging from 1 (Not at all/ Strongly disagree) to 7 (Very much/ Strongly agree).

Participants:

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and were compensated 50 cents for their participation. Sample size was determined through a power analysis, indicating that 40 participants were needed per condition, in order to detect large effects ($d=0.8;$ outlined by Cohen, 1992). Correlation values converted from Dickter, Kittel and Gyurovski (2012) to obtain an effect size to be used in the power analysis k=3,f=.29,sig.level=.05,power=.8. Ultimately, 222 participants completed the study, 106 males, 114 females, one other and one participant that preferred not to answer. Their ages ranged from 18 to 75, with an average age of 36.12 ($SD=12.524$). The participant pool was fairly diverse racially, with 10.4% Asian, 0.9% Native American, 11.7% Black, 1.8% Middle Eastern, 6.8% Hispanic, 74.3% White, 1.8% Biracial and 1% other participants.

Procedure:

Potential participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and after clicking the link for the study, they were then asked to complete a prescreen questionnaire to determine eligibility. The prescreen questionnaire ensured that all participants were in the US and spoke English fluently. Participants that fit the eligibility criteria and consented to participate in the study, were given instructions to either "Imagine you are eating lunch with three coworkers, in the breakroom at your office, when this conversation occurs…" or "Imagine you are scrolling through your social media newsfeed, when you come across this post by one of your coworkers…", depending on whether they were in the in-person condition, or the social

media condition. (Note, that in the social media condition, profiles pictures were kept as the default silhouette, to stay consistent with the vignette, which had no photos of the characters). In both scenarios a Black coworker, Deshawn Jackson, says "Phew, I'm so relieved. I'm glad I got that presentation over with. I was super stressed out to be giving a pitch in front of the executive director." A White coworker, Connor Matthews, then states "You did great man, I was really surprised with how well-spoken you were and how much you knew about market trends." Deshawn asks, "Wait, what do you mean Connor?" and Connor responds, "I just meant that I'm surprised a person like you is so well spoken." This microaggressive comment was developed from microaggressive phrases, rated in Kanter et al. (2017) A third coworker, who is either Black, White or Asian, depending on condition, confronts the white Coworker for his statements and says, "Are you serious Connor? Come on. It's 2018, it's not OK to say something like that." Note race was manipulated through the name of the characters in the scenario, names were selected from a list of top 10 names for each race (Freakonomics, 2005). The confronting coworker's name was either Jake Adams, Tyrone Johnson or Michael Yang. Note for the Asian confronter, only their last name was typical of Asians. They were given the typical American name of Michael, in order to eliminate the confounds of him seeming foreign. I wanted him to appear to be Asian American. Participants were then given a survey that asked them a number of questions, to determine their views of the confronter. I used various questions to assess the confronter on multiple measures such as their interpersonal costs/ rewards (To what extent is _____ a troublemaker?), genuineness (How sincere is _____?), likability (How friendly is _____?) and self interest(How likely is it that _____ did what he did to look good?). (For a full list of items used to assess each measure, see Appendix A.) Participants

were than asked various questions, to assess their personal beliefs with regards to racism and

confronting it (How necessary do you think it would be to hold diversity workshops in this

workplace?).

Hypotheses

      Impact of Confronter Race. I predicted that in an in-person context, White confronters

would receive the most positive impression scores, since they are less likely to be seen as

complainers and self-advancing (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013). Black confronters should

then receive the most negative impression scores, since confronters of the target group are often

perceived as self-advancing and motivated by personal interest (Garcia, Reser, Amo,

Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005). I predicted Asian confronters would receive impression

rating scores somewhere between Black and White confronters' scores, because even though

they are not of the target racial group, they may share some group membership with Black

targets, since they both receive discrimination from the White racial group (Heider, 1958).

      Impact of Social Media. Overall, across the three races, I predicted that confronters over

social media, would receive more negative impression scores than in-person confronters. This is

because online activism is often viewed as complacent and insincere, since it may take little

commitment to the cause and low effort (Glenn, 2015). In addition, under situations of high

social observability (eg. social media), people tend to prioritize impression management.

Observers may be wary of this and thus confronting over social media could be perceived as

insincere and performative.

Impact of Social Media on Confronter Race. I predicted that there would be an interaction between confronter race and social media, such that when confronting over social media, the impact of race would flip. If confronting over social media is perceived as a performative act of impression management, then Black confronters should be the best received, since they are addressing an issue that actually impacts themselves. Black confronters also face the highest costs when confronting (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013), which could help to mitigate the conceptions that activism through social media is insincere. Over social media, I predicted that White confronters would receive the most negative impression scores, since they face the lowest costs to confronting (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013) and engaging in impression management against low costs could be seen as more complacent. In addition, if confronting over social media is already seen as performative, than White confronters could be perceived as using someone else's social suffering, for their personal gain.

Results

Responses for the questions used in each measure, were averaged for each participant, to create an average score for the five different measures. The average scores for each dependent measure, were then analyzed in a series of 2(in-person vs. social media) x 3(confronter race) between subjects ANOVAs.

With regards to average interpersonal costs scores, there was a significant difference between the in-person and social media conditions ($F(1)=4.403$, $p=.037$). In line with my hypothesis, average interpersonal costs scores were significantly higher for the in-person condition, than the social media condition (refer to Fg.1 & Table 1). The interpersonal costs

measure aimed to assess the costs of confronting and a higher score on this measure meant the confronter faced greater costs, based on the perceptions of the participants. However, across all other measures, including interpersonal rewards, genuineness, self-interest and likability, there were no significant differences between the in-person and social media conditions' scores (refer to Tables 2-5). Despite the expectation that the in-person confronters would receive more positive receptions across all the dependent variable measures, I only observed significant differences with regards to the interpersonal costs measure.

The 2(in-person vs. social media) x 3(confronter race) between subjects ANOVAs I ran, were used to determine any significant differences between all six conditions, for all measures. When looking at the in-person condition, I hypothesized that White confronters would receive overall more positive scores across all measures, Black confronters would receive more negative scores and Asian confronters would be somewhere in the middle. When looking at the social media condition, I predicted that these scores would flip, such that Black confronters would receive more positive scores across all measures, White confronters would receive more negative scores and Asian confronters would remain somewhere in the middle. Despite my predictions, there were no significant differences between any of the conditions, for each dependent measure (refer to Tables 6-10).

Discussion

This study examined the impact of confronter race and context of confrontation on how observers perceive the confronter. Confronter race was manipulated to be either White, Black or Asian and confrontation either took place in an in-person context or through social media. The

results with regards to confronter race were not in line with my hypothesis, since I observed no significant difference between conditions based on confronter race. When examining the impact of context of confrontation, I saw that confronters faced higher interpersonal costs when confronting racism over social media, as opposed to in-person. In line with my hypothesis, there was a significant difference in the average interpersonal costs score between the social media and in-person conditions. Confronting over social media proved to be more interpersonally costly than confronting in-person. That is, online confronters were seen more like troublemakers and more hypersensitive than in-person confronters.

The main reason I suspect confronters over social media received higher scores for interpersonal costs , is because social media as a platform is used for fairly performative reasons. In social situations, people tend to attribute other's actions to certain motivations and intentions, based on the context and situation (Heider, 1958). People naturally attempt to understand the reasoning and intentions behind other's actions and thus attempt to form an impression of others through their actions (Kelley, 1967). Critically, in highly observable situations, such as social media platforms, people tend to prioritize impression management, as it becomes increasingly important to portray oneself in a positive manner (Leary, & Kowalsky, 1990). Thus it is likely that when the participants witnessed the confrontation over social media, they deduced the intentions of the confronter to be guided by positive impression management. In the highly observable context of social media, users might assume that those engaging in supposedly altruistic behavior, such as confronting racism, might be doing so simply because of leaving a positive impression with a large audience.

It is important to consider the message of our actions, especially when it comes to confronting racism in such a public manner as social media. The highly observable nature of social media can help amplify a positive message to a large audience, however the very public nature of social media, may backfire when confronting racism. Confrontation can reduce repetition of prejudicial behavior (Czopp, Mark, & Monteith, 2006), so it is clearly important to confront racism even if it occurs over social media. However, we must be wary of how the message comes across through this medium. One could ultimately be engaging in purely altruistic behavior, yet this is not as important as how the message is received by the observers and the perpetrator. It is important to consider the overall impact of our actions, rather than the intention, since intentions can be misconstrued over social media. Perhaps it is more effective to privately message those that engage in prejudicial behavior over social media, in order to inform them of how their behavior is so harmful. Privately messaging the perpetrator could be more effective, since it removes the aspect of a public audience and thus reduces the chances confronting could be perceived as performative. In addition, the perpetrator may also feel as if the confronter is attempting to publicly shame them, if they choose to confront over social media. Through private messaging, there is still the opportunity to alert perpetrators of the harmful nature of their actions, while also hopefully reducing future repetition. Privately confronting offers a way to address racism, without running the costs of being seen as performative or impression managing.

Limitations

The results of this study with regards to confronter race, contradicted the previous studies that examined the subject. Past research consistently suggests that Black and White confronters

are received differently by observers, with White confronters being more accepted than black

confronters (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2013 and Dickter, Kittel, & Gyurovski, 2011). Kaiser

and Miller (2001) demonstrated that Black confronters are more likely to be perceived as

complainers, as they are addressing issues that directly affect themselves. Confronting racism

towards one's own racial group, can also make one come across as more self-advancing (Garcia,

Reser, Amo, Redersdorff, & Branscombe, 2005). Thus, I hypothesized in the current study, that

manipulating confronter race would yield significant differences between the conditions. Past

research suggests that across all five measures used (interpersonal costs, interpersonal rewards,

genuineness, self-interest and likability), White confronters should be better received than Black

Confronters. Despite my predictions, the results did not demonstrate any significant differences

between conditions, based on confronter race.

It is possible there were design flaws in this study, since the results with regards to

confronter race were incongruent with the previous research. There is a possibility that race was

not properly manipulated during this study and that participants did not assume the race of the

characters in the scenarios, from just the stereotypical names. The manipulation check questions

at the end of the study asked participants to guess the race of each individual character, to the

best of their knowledge, which they answered with accuracies of 86.1 percent for the Asian

character, between 91.7 percent and 92.2 percent for the White characters and between 83.1 and

90.3 percent for the Black characters. Even though these accuracies are relatively high and

participants could infer race from the characters' names fairly consistently, it is possible they

only consciously did this, when primed to think about race. These questions were asked at the

very end of the study and the characters' races were not made explicitly apparent at the

beginning of the study, in order to hide the study's intentions. It is possible that the participants did not infer the race of the characters upon initially reading the vignettes or social media posts, since they were not explicitly told to do so.

Another reason why I might not have seen the differences between conditions by race, is that the scenario may have lacked impact. In both the in-person and social media conditions, the White coworker, Connor Matthews, says to his Black coworker, DeShawn Jackson, "I just meant that I'm surprised a person like you is so well spoken." The dialogue in this scenario did not mention race explicitly and only alluded to it through this microaggression and participant names. Although this microaggression was taken from a list of rated microaggressions from Kanter et al.'s 2017 study, it still may have lacked the impact to come across as truly racist. Past research shows that when the racist comments made, have low offensiveness ratings, observer's impressions of those that confront and those that chose not to, do not differ significantly (Dickter, Kittel, and Gyurovski, 2011). It is possible that the microaggression used, was not offensive enough to elicit any real differences in impressions between races. In addition, the participant pool was 74.3 percent White, so a majority of the participants may not have been as sensitive to such subtle forms of racism. The participants could have glanced over this microaggression, without realizing the underlying racist intentions. Without a strong, believable microaggression in this scenario, it may have lacked impact to elicit any differences in confronter impressions, by race.

Similarly, the confrontation itself lacked severity, as the confronter only states, "Are you serious Connor? Come on, it's 2018. It's not OK to say something like that." This confrontation does not alert Connor as to why his comments are offensive and racist, it simply states they are

not OK. In addition, this confrontation may imply that the only reason it's not OK to say these things, is because society now deems it unacceptable in 2018. This comment does inform Connor on why racism and microaggressions are morally wrong and detrimental to society.

Since the confrontation lacked severity and failed to directly address the root of Connor's problematic behavior, the participants perceptions of the confronter may have been more moderate. This was reflected in their responses, since the average scores for each measure, tended to fall in the mid range, between 3 and 5, on a scale of 1 to 7. If the confronter addressed the racist comments with greater conviction and highlighted the problematic nature of the microaggression, the participants may have formed more polarized views of the confronter. If the participants had more opinionated and divergent views of the confronter, it could have elicited a greater variance in responses based on confronter race.

Future directions

If this study were to be revised and run again, it would be critical to manipulate race in an impactful, effective and memorable way, without divulging the motivations of the research. Perhaps faces could be matched with characters, to signify their races. These faces would be carefully computed composite photos with equal ratings in attractiveness and other measures like high agreeableness. Adding faces to the characters would especially increase the realism of the social media post, since in the current study, faces were kept as default silhouette images, to stay consistent with the vignettes. If both the vignettes and social media posts used the same images for each character, this could help to manipulate race, while also making the simulations more realistic and meaningful. In addition, the study should use a microaggression rated higher on levels of offensiveness and prejudiceness. A confrontation of higher severity should also be

used; one that directly addresses the underlying harmful nature of the actions and why the

perpetrator themself is wrong. The overall experience of the study and simulation, should be

designed to be more impactful, in order to create a more realistic believable scenario. This may

help to confirm the expected results based on previous research and also my own hypotheses.

Conclusion

There are various costs to confronting racism, such as being perceived as a complainer

and self-advancing, especially if one belongs to the target racial group (Kaiser & Miller, 2001).

With the ubiquity of social media, comes the increase in online confrontations of racist and

prejudicial behavior across all platforms. These online confrontations may have intentions of

stopping further prejudicial behavior, however it is possible that they are perceived as

performative, given the highly public nature of social media (Glenn, 2015). The current study

aimed to determine the impact of confronter race (White, Black or Asian) as well as the context

of confrontation (In-person or Social media). Participants were asked to rate confonters of racist

comments, through a series of questions, assessing various measures (Interpersonal costs/

rewards, genuineness, self-interest and likability). I observed a significant difference in

interpersonal costs scores between confronters who confronted over social media versus in-

person, with those confronting over social media receiving higher interpersonal costs scores. I

predict this is due to the highly observable nature of social media and how these acts of

confrontation could be perceived as forms of impression management, for a large audience.

When confronting racism online in the future, it is important to consider the greater impact of

these actions and how the general online audience may perceive these acts. Perhaps it is more

effective to privately message the perpetrator, since this still could reduce repetition of prejudicial behavior, while removing the context of a large audience.

It would be beneficial to further investigate the findings on interpersonal costs and confronting racism through the context of social media. There is clearly a need for better methods of combating racism online, since microaggressions and prejudicial comments are ubiquitous throughout all platforms. However, very little research examines the influence of social media on actions of confronting racism and how the public nature of social media may alter our perceptions of those who choose to confront. The results from the current study suggesting that online confronters face higher interpersonal costs than in-person confronters, could act as a strong starting point to further research on the most effective methods of confronting online forms of racism. Future studies could examine the different impacts between choosing to publicly confront through social media posts, or privately confronting through direct messaging. It would be interesting to compare the reception of public and private confrontation and determine which is more effective in preventing repetition of prejudicial behavior. Ultimately public confrontation could help to spread the message to a greater audience, yet private confrontation through direct messaging, could be perceived as a more sincere and honest act. Both methods of confrontation pose different benefits and risks, however it is clear further research should be conducted in order to determine the effects of both.

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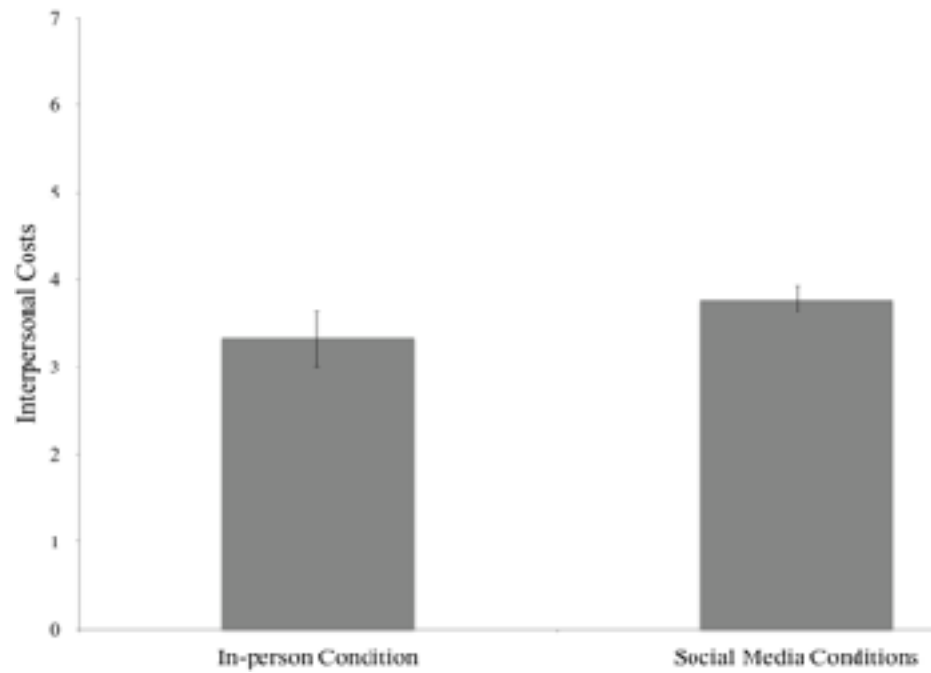
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Fg. 1 Comparison of the means of average interpersonal costs scores, between the in-person condition and social media condition. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree)

Results by Context Condition (Social Media versus In Person)

Table 1.

Means and standard deviations for interpersonal costs between social media and in-person conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
In-person	110	3.3323	1.52435
Social media	111	3.7734	1.59961

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree). The mean interpersonal costs score for the social media condition, was significantly higher than the score for the in-person condition [$F(1)=4.403$, $p=.037$].

Table 2.

Means and standard deviations for interpersonal rewards between social media and in-person conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
In-person	109	4.9564	1.45807
Social media	111	4.8326	1.35757

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree). No significant difference in mean interpersonal rewards scores, was observed between in-person and social media conditions [$F(1)=.425$, $p=.515$].

Table 3.

Means and standard deviations for genuineness between social media and in-person conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
In-person	109	5.1092	1.32387
Social media	110	4.8996	1.27784

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree). No significant difference in mean genuineness scores, was observed between in-person and social media conditions [$F(1)=1.421$, $p=.0235$].

Table 4.

Means and standard deviations for self-interest between social media and in-person conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
In-person	109	5.0341	1.36254
Social media	111	4.9069	1.22692

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree). No significant difference in mean "self-interest" scores, was observed between in-person and social media conditions [$F(1)=.530$ $p=.468$].

Table 5.

Means and standard deviations for likability between social media and in-person conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*

In-person	108	4.7556	1.25764
Social media	111	4.5450	1.31354

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree). No significant difference in mean likability scores, was observed between in-person and social media conditions [F(1)=1.466, p=.227].

Results by cell

Table 6.

Means and standard deviations for interpersonal costs by cell.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
White In-person	34	3.3676	1.37350
Black In-person	37	3.2486	1.55307
Asian In-person	39	3.3808	1.65273
White Social Media	38	3.6000	1.59662
Black Social Media	40	3.9050	1.43365
Asian Social Media	33	3.8136	1.81225

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strong agree). No significant difference in mean likability scores, was observed between all six conditions [F(5)=1.053, p=.388].

Table 7.

Means and standard deviations for interpersonal rewards between all conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
White In-person	34	4.8088	1.52139
Black In-person	37	5.1824	1.40145
Asian In-person	38	4.8684	1.46668
White Social Media	38	4.8224	1.17103
Black Social Media	40	4.8792	1.32918
Asian Social Media	33	4.7879	1.60985

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strongly agree). No significant difference in mean likability scores, was observed between all six conditions [F(5)=.391, p=.854]

Table 8.

Means and standard deviations for genuineness between all conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
White In-person	34	5.0088	1.43429

Black In-person	37	5.0417	1.50638
Asian In-person	38	5.2646	1.01712
White Social Media	38	5.0751	1.15744
Black Social Media	40	4.6625	1.42913
Asian Social Media	32	4.9875	1.20610

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strongly agree). No significant difference in mean likability scores, was observed between all six conditions [$F(5)=.882$, $p=.494$].

Table 9.
Means and standard deviations for self-interest between all conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
White In-person	34	4.8263	1.50684
Black In-person	37	5.2728	1.17717
Asian In-person	38	4.9875	1.39527
White Social Media	38	4.8772	1.18594
Black Social Media	40	4.9798	.92357
Asian Social Media	33	4.8528	1.58053

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strongly agree). No significant difference in mean likability scores, was observed between all six conditions [$F(5)=.578$, $p=.717$].

Table 10.
Means and standard deviations for likability between all conditions.

Condition	*n*	*M*	*SD*
White In-person	34	4.4257	1.29237
Black In-person	36	5.0101	1.02571
Asian In-person	38	4.8096	1.38675
White Social Media	38	4.6086	1.26472
Black Social Media	40	4.5634	1.68790
Asian Social Media	33	4.4496	1.68790

Note. Scores were on a scale of 1(Not at all/ Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very much/ Very Strongly agree). No significant difference in mean likability scores, was observed between all six conditions [$F(5)=1.092$ $p=.366$].

Appendix A

List of the items used to assess the dependent measures. Participants were asked to what extent they agreed/disagreed with these items or how true they found these items, when rating confronters. Answers ranged from 1(Not at all/Very strongly disagree) to 7(Very Much/Very strongly agree)

Interpersonal costs
- To what extent is this person a Troublemaker?
- To what extent is this person a complainer?
- To what extent is this person irritating?
- To what extent is this person argumentative?
- To what extent is this person hypersensitive?

Interpersonal rewards
- How strong is this person?
- How authentic is this person?
- This person is true to himself
- This person is brave

Genuineness
- To what extent is this person genuine?
- To what extent is this person truthful?
- To what extent is this person sincere?
- To what extent is this person deceptive?
- To what extent is this person dishonest?
- How fake is this person?
- How inauthentic is this person?
- This person is a liar.
- This person is not believable.
- This person is honest

What does the confronter stand to gain?
- How selfish is this person?
- How self serving is this person?
- They believe everyone should be treated equally
- They believe it's important to combat discrimination.
- They believe it's important to create a fair system for society.
- How honorable is this person?
- I believe this person has integrity

Likability
- This person is likable.
- This person is trustworthy.
- This person is friendly.
- This person is agreeable.
- This person is kind.
- This person is annoying.
- This person is offensive.
- This person is Warm.
- This person is approachable.
- I would like this person as a coworker.
- I would like to be friends with this person.