

The Effects of Christian Religious Imagery on Anti-Black Attitudes

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## Abstract

Across five experiments, I explore the relationship between religiosity—in particular, White religious iconography—and anti-Black attitudes, assessing the potential causality underlying this association through the use of a priming manipulation among both White (Experiments 1, 2a-2b, 3) and Black individuals (Experiment 4). Recent studies have found that activating religious concepts via priming techniques can increase anti-Black attitudes. To date, however, no research has examined whether priming religious images rather than words leads to similar effects, or whether activation of different components of religiosity (e.g., *religious cognitions* vs. *supernatural agent cognitions*) produces comparable patterns of anti-Black prejudice. This dissertation examined these questions, as well as whether such effects depend on the racial depiction of a supernatural agent (i.e., White Jesus vs. Black Jesus). Three out of five experiments provide evidence that exposure to Christian religious imagery—specifically subliminal exposure to images of Jesus Christ depicted as White—leads *both* White (Experiments 2a, 3) and Black individuals (Experiment 4) to express greater racial bias against Blacks. The observed increase in Whites’ and Blacks’ anti-Black attitudes from exposure to White Jesus remained significant even when controlling for participants’ self-reported religiosity. Furthermore, the increase in White and Black individuals’ bias appears to be due to exposure to White religious iconography and not simply exposure to White male figures more generally (Experiments 3 and 4), highlighting the qualitative difference of White religious supernatural agents and non-supernatural White agents. The present findings add to our understanding of the complex relationship between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes, while also identifying additional research questions for future exploration.

*Keywords:* anti-Black prejudice, religiosity, priming, White supremacy, Christianity

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For My Ancestors

It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten (Sankofa).

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

“At age 10...what called my attention to the neglect of Africa, was the Sunday school lessons with all those White angels... and when they say God is love, God is kind, God is no respect of kith or kin, I kept wondering why didn't he let one or two little Brown or Black angels sneak into heaven.” – John Henrik Clarke, Professor of African Studies

“And by the way, for all you kids watching at home, Santa just is White. But this person is maybe just arguing that we should also have Black Santa. But, you know, Santa is what he is, and just so you know, we're just debating this because someone wrote about it, kids...Just because it makes you feel uncomfortable doesn't mean it has to change. You know, I mean, Jesus was a White man too. He was a historical figure; that's a verifiable fact—as is Santa, I want you kids watching to know that.” – Megyn Kelly, Fox News Anchor

While there is no scholarly agreement on Jesus Christ's exact physical appearance, the most common images of him—particularly in the United States, but elsewhere as well—unfailingly depict him as a White man. A quick Google image search of “Jesus Christ” illustrates this point. Furthermore, Warner Sallman's 1940 painting, *the Head of Christ*, which depicts Jesus as a White blue-eyed male, is arguably the most popularly disseminated image of Jesus worldwide, having been reproduced over 500 million times (a number that surpasses one billion if lamps, clocks and calendars are included; Newsweek staff, 2007).

Since Christian accounts are that Jesus is the son of an omnipotent and omniscient God, some have argued that depicting Jesus as a White man not only symbolizes White supremacy—namely, the ideological belief that biological and cultural Whiteness is superior, whereas biological and cultural Blackness is inferior—but also consciously and unconsciously reinforces this belief (Akbar, 1984; 1996; Blay 2011; Welsing, 1991; Wilson, 1993). For example, Blay (2011) writes:

If, Christ, the Son of God, is portrayed as White, the logical assumption is that God too is White. And if, as according to Christian doctrine, God made man in His image and gave him authority over all other creatures, approximations of this whiteness when embodied by “man on earth” communicate not only a greater nearness to God, but humanity itself.

In the Manichean sense, then, whiteness, embodied by humanity, communicates moral and physical superiority. Conversely, blackness, the absence of whiteness, communicates inhumanity, immorality, and physical inferiority, *divinely* subjected to the dominance of God and/or His earthly counterpart -- man (read: White man). (p. 10)

Supporting this notion is more general experimental evidence that religious symbols can automatically activate complex knowledge and beliefs (Weisbuch-Remington, Mendes, Seery, & Blascovich, 2005). Consequently, it has been theorized that anthropomorphized supernatural agents depicted as White—such as God, Jesus Christ, and angels—may contribute to links between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes (Howard & Sommers, 2015). Of course, this is a problematic and paradoxical proposition given that religions and their supernatural agents are often conceived of in a positive light and religiosity has been linked to a variety of positive outcomes such as increased prosocial attitudes and behavior (e.g., Preston, Ritter, Hernandez, 2010; Preston Pichon, Bocatto, & Saroglou, 2007, Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007), honesty (e.g., Randolph-Seng & Nielsen, 2007), and self-regulation (e.g., McCullough, & Willoughby, 2009). However, prejudice predicted by or resulting from religion has been, and remains, a source of conflict and suffering throughout the world; for example, the use of Christianity to justify the barbaric treatment and enslavement of African peoples in the transatlantic slave trade (see Cannon, 2008), or as the basis for negative contemporary treatment directed towards Gays and Lesbians (see Gettlemen, 2010 and Whitley, 2009 for a meta-analysis on the topic). Moreover, there is also a decades-long history of empirical research demonstrating a positive correlation between religiosity and racial prejudice (see Hall, Matz & Wood, 2010 for a meta-analysis).

In this dissertation my primary objective is to explore the complex relationship between religiosity (particularly White religious iconography) and anti-Black attitudes, assessing the potential causality underlying this association through the use of a priming manipulation across four experiments. Given that religious images are pervasive in the United States (Morgan,

1997), even outside religious establishments such as the church, it is important to know the potential effect this imagery may have on racial attitudes. If, indeed, evidence indicates that different racial depictions of Christ can shape racial attitudes, then we may wish to give additional thought to where, when, and how religious imagery is displayed, and to what effect.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will first discuss the different ways in which psychologists have conceptualized religiosity. I will then review correlational findings regarding religiosity and anti-Black bias and discuss the limitations of this work. Next, I will review a limited amount of contemporary experimental research that has explored causal links between religion and anti-Blackness, mainly through the utilization of priming techniques. After that, I briefly consider psychological and social processes that may help account for the relationship between religiosity and anti-Blackness. Following this, I discuss how the proposed dual nature of religiosity (i.e., conceptual distinctions between *religious* and *supernatural cognitions*) when applied to anti-Black prejudice may further our understanding of the relationship between religiosity and anti-Blackness. Next, I discuss how religion, specifically the exposure to White religious iconography may explain, in part, anti-Black attitudes held by Black individuals. Finally, I will outline the five experiments that comprise this dissertation and will identify limitations and specific areas in need of future investigation.

### **Conceptualizing Religiosity**

I note that throughout this dissertation, although I use the terms religion/religiosity, I focus on Westernized Christianity<sup>1</sup> specifically, not simply because the majority of the work investigating the link between religion and anti-Black attitudes has focused on Christianity (Hall,

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<sup>1</sup> Westernized Christianity refers to Christianity that originated within European/Western civilization (e.g., Roman Catholicism and Protestantism). It is historically, culturally, and theologically distinct from Eastern Christianity that originated in the Balkans, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Matz & Wood, 2010), but also because the population of the United States overwhelmingly identifies as Christian (77% of people identify with one of the Christian religions; Gallup, 2012). American culture and values have been heavily shaped and influenced by Christianity, which has the potential to influence the thoughts, attitudes and behavior of American believers and non-believers alike (e.g., Protestant work ethic; Uhlmann, Poehlman, Tannenbaum, & Bargh, 2011; Bargh, 2006). Furthermore, Christianity is one of the few major world religions that worships a God who is in part “man” (as Jesus) and thus could therefore have human characteristics (such as a “gender” or a “race”). Other major world religions such as Islam and Judaism (unlike Christianity) explicitly prohibit iconography, while still others have mostly abstract or impersonal conceptions of deities (if any).

It is also important to note that religiosity has been linked to prejudice toward a variety of social groups beyond just African Americans, including gays (Whitley, 2009) and non-Christians such as atheists and Muslims (Johnson et al., 2012). These different prejudices directed at particular social groups are believed to stem from different sources. For example, evidence suggests that religious based prejudice directed towards gays and non-Christians owes in large part to the perception of these groups as violating or threatening important Judeo-Christian worldviews/values. A majority of Black Americans, on the other hand, belong to some Christian denomination, which suggests that any link between religion and anti-Black prejudice must be based on other factors. Although there are basic affective, cognitive and social mechanisms that contribute to all forms of prejudice, it is important to explore the nuances that are tied to specific target groups and differentiate the sources of prejudice. In this dissertation I will focus on anti-Black prejudice in light of the unique historical legacy of anti-Blackness in America, the clear empirical evidence of persistent disparities along these lines in contemporary society, and the

important research questions such focus permits regarding both Whites' biases and the influence on Blacks' internalized race-related attitudes.

More generally, religion is a subject that has been written about extensively for thousands of years across a wide array of perspectives. In terms of the behavioral sciences, there have been a number of ways in which theorists have approached the topic (e.g., see Oman, 2013, p. 29). One behavioral science definition of religion is provided by Rowatt, Carpenter and Haggard (2013), who broadly characterize it as "a set of beliefs, practices, and rituals that provide adherents with a sense of meaning, purpose and value in life" (p. 170). They go on to define religiosity/religiousness (these two terms are often used interchangeably) as both a perception of one's own belief system and the degree to which one engages in religious acts such as attending services, personal prayer, and study of sacred texts. Religiosity and religiousness have also been defined as the mental representations associated with such beliefs and acts. In short, the psychological study of religion has attempted to apply a scientific methodology to questions of religion, and in doing so has recognized the multiple different ways in which religiosity can be conceptualized, which I will review in more detail in the sections to follow.

### **Correlational Findings**

Early research on the link between religiosity and prejudice concentrated on the association between religious affiliation/involvement and racial prejudice, though, of course, the correlational nature of these investigations prevents causal conclusions. Of 17 studies on the topic published between 1940 and 1975, 13 demonstrated a positive relationship between religiosity and anti-Black prejudice, such that increased religiosity was associated with increased prejudice (Batson & Burris, 1994). For example, Allport and Kramer (1946) reported that individuals who identified as Protestant and Catholic were more likely than those with no

religious affiliation to hold anti-Black attitudes. Hall, Matz and Wood (2010) conducted a meta-analytic review of past research on religiosity and racism in the United States since the 1964 Civil Rights Act and found that the extent to which religiosity was linked to racial prejudice depended on social-cognitive orientations. Specifically, three common orientations with regard to religiosity have been referred to as *intrinsic*, *extrinsic*, and *quest/agnostic* (for a summary of these religious orientations, see Hall, Matz & Wood, 2010 meta-analytic review; Allport, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967; Batson, 1976; Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis 1993).

*Intrinsic.* Individuals who have an intrinsic religious orientation are characterized by sincere belief in their religion and attempt to live their lives as their religion dictates (Allport & Ross, 1967; Allport, 1966). How does such an orientation predict intergroup attitudes and tendencies? Intrinsically religious individuals have been found to self-stereotype and apply to themselves the ideal characteristics of their religious group (Burris & Jackson, 2000), which often includes self-reported racial tolerance (Batson, Naifeh, & Pate, 1978; Preston, Ritton & Hernandez, 2010). In other words, for the intrinsically religious individual, it is often important to see the self as egalitarian because that is what is expected of the religious.

However, on indirect, less controllable measures of racial attitudes (e.g., choosing to interact with a White person versus a Black person), this ostensible racial tolerance often fades. For example, in one study Batson, Flink, Schoenrade, Fultz and Pych (1986) had White participants choose between two theaters in which to watch a movie. In one theater they would be sitting next to a White student, whereas in the other theater they would be sitting next to a Black student. In one condition the movie playing in both theaters was identical, while in the other condition the theaters played two different movies. In the condition where both theaters were playing the same movie, a decision to sit next to a White student versus a Black student

could give the impression that one is prejudiced. Individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation more often chose to sit next to the Black student in this condition, whereas in the condition where the theaters played different movies (i.e., where the decision could be interpreted as a preference for the movie, not for the White versus Black student) they more often chose to sit with the White student. In other words, the greater racial tolerance self-reported by intrinsically religious individuals has not always been observed to the same degree in terms of actual behavior.

*Extrinsic.* Individuals who have an extrinsic religious orientation are more likely to view religion as a means to an end (Allport & Ross, 1967; Allport, 1966). They tend to use religion for social status, social networks, acceptance, and security (Allport & Ross, 1967). For example, those who attend religious events to create or preserve social connections while only selectively following the teachings of their religion—such as a politician who attends church in order to secure or gain votes—would be characterized as having an extrinsic approach to religion. It has been shown that extrinsically religious individuals place value on social conformity and respect for tradition (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010), and these values may contribute to the expression of prejudice. Indeed, Schwartz and Huisman (1995) found that values of social conformity and traditionalism are positively correlated with intergroup bias, and other research has demonstrated that individuals who are extrinsically religious tend to self-report greater levels of racial prejudice (Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

*Quest/Agnostic.* Other religious individuals are characterized as being on a spiritual quest for existential meaning. Such people question religion and have religious doubts, yet still continue to claim some form of religious identification (Batson, 1976). Quest/Agnostic individuals tend to resist conformity or the status quo values which may also relate to

institutionalized racism. Individuals with this “religious” (placed in quotation marks since some might question whether such individuals truly are religious) orientation tend to demonstrate greater racial tolerance relative to those who are intrinsically or extrinsically prejudiced (Batson, 1976; Donahue, 1985). Indeed, in the Batson (1986) et al. movie theater study introduced above, participants who had a quest orientation chose more often to sit next to the Black student regardless of experimental condition.

In a more recent correlational analysis, Rowatt, LaBouff, Johnson, Froese, and Tsang (2009) collected data from over 1,500 American adults (88.2% White) and analyzed self-reported measures on religiosity and social attitudes towards social groups that have been historically disadvantaged in the U.S. (e.g., Asians, Blacks and Latinos). They found that religiosity was only marginally related to general racial prejudice, but the authors noted that since some of the questions regarding social attitudes toward historically disadvantaged ethnic groups were high in face validity and potentially reactive (e.g., Are you uncomfortable being in-laws with a Black person?), participants may have sought to control their responses in order to appear more egalitarian. Indeed, both religious and non-religious individuals will often self-report racial tolerant attitudes primarily because of a desire not to appear racist (Plant & Devine, 1998).

In short, although there has been a 60-year plus history of investigating the relationship between religiosity and prejudice—research that has, more often than not, identified a positive correlation between the two constructs—an understanding of this link remains incomplete. Primarily because the majority of the empirical investigations examining the link between religiosity and prejudice have been correlational, preventing determinations of causality. Moreover, most of the data from these investigations have been reliant on self-report measures.

Because of social desirability effects, self-reported measures are often unreliable, especially with regard to racial attitudes (Gaertner, & Dovidio, 2005; Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010).

Recently, this concern regarding social desirability effects for self-report measures has led researchers to adopt subtle and indirect ways to measure prejudice (e.g., Implicit Association Test or IAT, Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; RAS, Saucier & Miller, 2003; Symbolic Racism Scale, Henry & Sears, 2002). For example, Rowatt and Franklin (2004) explored the relationship between various dimensions of religiosity and implicit racial prejudice assessed via the IAT, a computer-based test designed to measure an individual's unconscious attitudes. The race-based IAT works by measuring the strength of associations between concepts (e.g., Black people) and adjectives/evaluations (e.g., good, bad). The IAT records reaction time as participants categorize Black or White faces and pleasant or negative adjectives. A respondent is described as having an implicit bias against Black individuals relative to White individuals if it takes them longer to group pleasant words with Black faces and unpleasant words with White faces than it does to group together Black faces/pleasant words and White faces/unpleasant words. Because the IAT requires participants to make categorizations as quickly as possible without sacrificing accuracy, researchers believe that the IAT can address the concern of social desirability effects because people are less able to control their automatic responses. Rowan and Franklin (2004) found no statistically significant relationships between implicit racial bias as captured by the IAT and either an intrinsic, extrinsic, or quest religious orientation.

Although the use of indirect measures of racial attitudes has the potential to further our understanding of the relationships between different religious orientations and prejudice (Batson, et al., 1986; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004), the majority of the work is still correlational and thus incapable of providing causal links between religiosity and prejudice. In addition, other

variables known to be correlated with racial prejudice (e.g., age, socioeconomic status, education) are also strongly correlated with religiosity (Hill, 2005), serving as potential third variables that further complicate efforts to draw causal conclusions based on correlational research.

### **Experimental Findings**

To address some of these shortcomings, researchers have recently started manipulating individuals' thoughts regarding religion through priming (i.e., "the temporary activation of an individual's mental representation by the environment, and the effect of this activation on various psychological phenomena; " Reis & Judd, 2014, p. 314), or by exploring the effects of the subliminal presentation of religion-related stimuli on participants' subsequent attitudes and perceptions related to race (e.g., Johnson, Rowatt, and LaBouff, 2010, 2012; LaBouff, Rowatt, Johnson, & Finkle, 2012). Indeed, research has indicated that the associations between religiosity and different consequences may function unconsciously (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999), with evidence supporting this notion first documented with regard to religious priming and prosocial behavior (Pichon, Boccato, & Saroglou, 2007; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). For example, Pichon, Boccato, and Saroglou (2007) subliminally primed participants with positive religious words and found that these words not only activated the concept of prosociality but also increased individuals' intent to help.

With regard to racial prejudice and religion, Johnson, Rowatt, and LaBouff (2010) were the first to provide evidence of a causal link between religion and prejudice through the use of priming. In this research, participants completed what is known as a lexical decision task, in which they were charged with determining whether various strings of letters were nonsense or actual words. While they were completing this task, they were also subliminally presented with

either Christian words (e.g., *sermon, Christ, Bible, Jesus*) or neutral words (e.g., *shirt, butter, switch*). Results indicated that the subliminal presentation of religious concepts significantly increased both subtle and explicit negative anti-Black attitudes, as assessed afterward. This finding has since been replicated using a more ecologically valid design, in which researchers recruited participants as they passed by either a religious or nonreligious building and found that those in the religious context reported more negative attitudes toward Blacks relative to those in the non-religious context (LaBouff et al. 2012).

Due to the limited experimental research on the association between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes, there are still specific areas for future inquiry that seem particularly important and fruitful for shedding light on important unanswered questions. In particular, we do not know the influence of religious imagery on racial attitudes. Do religious images have similar effects as religious words? In addition, the question as to whether religious priming affects Black respondents' intragroup attitudes is yet another area warranting further research.

### **Psychological and Social Processes that Lead to Religious Based Racial Prejudice**

Even when taken together, recent findings from empirical priming studies, the large body of correlational research, and meta-analysis (see Hall, Woods, & Matz, 2010), it remains unclear exactly how and in what fashion religiosity has causal effects related to anti-Black prejudice. In the following section I will explore psychological and social processes that may help explain continued efforts to bridge this gap in the literature. The processes raised in this section include religious group identification leading to ingroup/outgroup distinctions and the spreading semantic activation of religious concepts. However, these are by no means an exhaustive list of possible explanations for a relationship as complicated as religion and prejudice, but rather

constitute a starting point in the effort to identify additional social psychological explanations for this link (and additional questions for future investigation).

### *Ingroup/Outgroup and Religious Group Identity*

Martin Luther King is credited for saying that “Sunday morning is the most segregated hour of America.” Nine out of ten Christian congregations in the U.S. are racially segregated (Scheitle & Dougherty, 2010). Because of this, it has been suggested individuals from other races are perceived as belonging to religious out-groups even if they share one’s religion (Hall, Matz & Wood, 2010). Thus, when it comes to the relationship between religiosity and racial prejudice, at least in the case of White American Christians, it seems that race can serve as a proxy for religious affiliation. For example, when Christians in the U.S. were primed with religious concepts it increased anti-Black prejudice, even though the majority of African Americans identify as Christian (Johnson, Rowatt & LaBouff, 2010).

### *Activation of Constructs Related to Prejudice*

Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010) proposed that the activation of religious concepts may also spread activation to related constructs, such as right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer, 1981) and religious fundamentalism (RF, Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), which in turn can activate anti-Black prejudice. Consistent with this notion, Johnson et al. (2011) found that RWA accounted for the relationship between religiosity and negative racial attitudes towards African Americans, whereas RF helped explain the relationship between religiosity and prejudice directed towards value-violating groups (e.g., gays, atheists). They suggest that the “strong punitive tendency among aggressive authoritarians... may be what leads to increases in negative attitudes toward African Americans and possibly other minorities” (p. 854). Another related construct that may be activated when religiosity is primed is Protestant Puritanism, specifically

the component of the Protestant Ethic (Uhlmann, Poehlman, & Bargh, 2009). Correlational and experimental evidence suggest that Protestant Ethic is related to anti-Black attitudes as well (for a meta-analysis, see Rosenthal, Levy & Moyer, 2011).

In addition to ingroup/outgroup, religious group identity, and the activation of related concepts to religion that are related to prejudice there have been a variety of other mechanisms that have been suggested (see, Jennings, 2014). Priming mythologies have been instrumental in shedding light on how and in what fashion religiosity has causal effects related to anti-Black prejudice; however, only a handful of such studies, those that have actually primed religious concepts and measured its effects on racial attitudes, exist. Although it is important for researchers to explore the potential mechanisms underlying the relationship between religiosity and anti-Black prejudice, it may be good to step back and continue to explore the effect given the complexity underlying the relationship.

For example, it has been theorized by researchers that there are two meaningful distinct components/cognitions of religiosity (i.e., *group component/religious cognitions* and *supernatural component/supernatural cognitions*; Preston, Ritter & Hernandez, 2010). Preston, Ritter and Hernandez (2010) have cautioned researchers who utilize priming methods in religion research to take into consideration the differences in the conceptual distinctions between the two components of religiosity when designing experiments. Furthermore, they cautioned to avoid priming individuals with multiple religious concepts because in doing so, researchers may “inadvertently conflate different religious concepts, making it difficult to determine the true mechanisms responsible for their effects” (Ritter & Preston, 2013 p. 1480), a notion explored in more detail in the following section.

### **Priming Religion versus Priming Supernatural Agents Cognitions**

Preston, Ritter, and Hernandez (2010) theorized that there are meaningful conceptual distinctions between *religious* and *supernatural cognitions* and depending on the activation of these distinct cognitions researchers can expect to observe different outcomes. They argue that both religious and supernatural cognitions are related to moral behavior, but are guided by different moral concerns. The chief moral concern of religious cognitions (also referred to as the group component of religiosity) is cooperation and protection among the ingroup, whereas supernatural cognitions (also referred to as the supernatural component of religiosity) has as its chief moral concern virtue, defined as obedience to God (or other supernatural agents) and following the moral rules of God. Across three studies, Preston and Ritter (2013) found evidence supporting their theory, finding increased prosocial behavior toward the ingroup after activating the concept of religion (i.e., religious cognitions), but increased prosocial behavior toward the outgroup when the concept of God was activated (i.e., supernatural cognitions).

How may this distinction relate to prejudice? In some experiments, as detailed above, researchers have exposed participants to a series of words (e.g., *bible*, *religion*, *God*, *faith*) to activate religiosity—which may have inadvertently conflated religious and supernatural cognitions—and then measured participants' racial attitudes. Due to these methodological limitations, one is unable to determine if the results from experiments such as these are due to religious cognitions, supernatural cognitions or some combination of both. Although work has explored how the activation of these distinct cognitions affects prosocial outcomes, to date, no research has examined the potential differences these distinct cognitions could have on patterns of racial prejudice. If the results from Preston and Ritter (2013) are extrapolated to the domain of prejudice, one could hypothesize similar effects with anti-Black prejudice: individuals primed

with *religious cognitions* might be expected to demonstrate increased racial prejudice, whereas individuals primed with *supernatural cognitions* might demonstrate increased tolerance toward Black individuals because of concerns of morality. However, as stated earlier, it has been theorized that anthropomorphized supernatural agents depicted as White may contribute to the complex link that exists between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes (Howard & Sommers, 2015), thus suggesting the alternative hypothesis that exposure to images of supernatural agents may lead to an increase in racial prejudice against Blacks among White individuals. Individuals' racial prejudice may be influenced by the representation and/or perception of supernatural agents.

Some tangential evidence supporting this notion is provided by Bushman, Ridge, Das, Key, and Busath, (2007), who demonstrated that how God is perceived can influence participants' aggressiveness. Participants read violent passages ostensibly taken from the Bible and sanctioned by God (e.g., depicting God in a violent light) or from an ancient scroll. Participants who were made to believe that the passage came from God versus an ancient scroll subsequently displayed an increase in aggressive behavior. Although this effect was more pronounced for individuals who believe in God and/or the Bible, it also occurred for those who did not. Research may find that priming different depictions of supernatural agents (e.g., racial, gender) may also lead to different patterns of prejudice. Further research on these dual distinctions of religiosity may provide some answers to the paradoxical relationship between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes.

### **Black Individuals and Anti-Black Attitudes**

In addition to unanswered questions that exist regarding the dual distinctions of religiosity and racial depictions of supernatural agents and how these both relate to prejudice,

another important question to ask is *whose* anti-Black attitudes will be influenced by such racial priming. Of particular importance is the absence of empirical investigations on religious priming and its effects on Black respondents' anti-Black attitudes (Howard & Sommers, 2015).

Although there have been a number of individuals throughout history, notably Pan-African and Black Nationalists (e.g., Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Amos Wilson), who have raised questions and have spoken vigorously about the potential detrimental effects that White religious iconography may have on the internalization of anti-Blackness by Black people, to date, there have been no empirical investigations exploring the effects of religious priming on Black individuals' anti-Black attitudes. Although, there are no empirical investigations involving the effects of religious priming on Blacks intragroup attitudes, this is not to suggest that behavioral scientists have not been interested in the potential effects of White religious iconography on African Americans. For example, during the 1940's sociologist E. Franklin Frazer, for work commissioned by the American Council of Education to assess the personalities and experiences of African American children, asked Black youth "Is God a White man?" The majority of the answers to this question mirrored this response of one youth "I've never heard of him being a Negro. So He must have been a White man. People would think you were crazy if you told them He was a Negro, especially White people" (Blum & Harvey, 2012). Although this study took place during the 1940's, today most religious iconography that Blacks are exposed to are still White (e.g., Jesus, angels, God), even in predominately Black religious establishments, which could, unbeknownst to Black individuals, influence implicit negative attitudes toward the ingroup. If this is indeed the case, it could prove to be detrimental to Black individuals' psychological health. Implicit negative attitudes have been shown to have a negative effect on the overall psychological well-being (i.e., less positive psychological function and increased

depression) of African Americans (Ashburn-Nardo, Monteith, Arthur, & Bain, 2007). Research in this area seems particularly important and fruitful for shedding light on the complex relationship between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes.

The majority of empirical research looking at anti-Black attitudes has been conducted with White participants (Hall, Matz & Wood, 2010). One exception, however, is provided by LaBouff et al. (2012), who demonstrated that participants self-reported more anti-Black attitudes when approached in a religious context versus a non-religious context in London, England. Although the sample was multinational, it can be inferred that anywhere between 65-75 percent of their participants were White based on the percentage of their participants' nationalities.

It therefore remains unclear what, if any, effect religious primes have on Black individuals' racial attitudes. Blacks commonly report explicit pro-Black attitudes that are quite high (i.e., at or near ceiling effects on many scales), while holding more mixed implicit attitudes toward their ingroup (Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003; Livingston, 2002; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). As such, Blacks sometimes display outgroup favoritism (i.e., relatively pro-White attitudes), resulting in negative evaluations of ingroup members. For example, Ashburn-Nardo and Johnson (2008) found that participants who implicitly favored Whites liked Black partners less than White partners on tasks related to intelligence. Outgroup favoritism has also been documented with children as young three (Clark & Clark, 1947). In their experiments colloquially known as "the doll studies" which presented Black children with two dolls that were identical with one exception: one doll was Black and the other was White, Kenneth and Mamie Clark identified a clear preference for the white doll among a majority of the Black children. The child was asked a series of questions such as which doll would they rather play with, which one is the bad doll, which one is pretty, which one they liked best, etc. A

majority of the children gave anti-Black answers (i.e., identifying the Black doll as the ugly doll, the bad doll, and the one they liked the least). The results from Clark and Clark (1947) and later replications (Davis, 2006; Greenwald & Oppenheim, 1968; Lewis & Biber, 1951; Morland, 1962, 1966) demonstrate Black children's internalized racism. Perhaps religious images of supernatural agents such as White Jesus or White angels would unconsciously exaggerate such a White supremacist ideology in Black individuals resulting in a further increase in pro-White attitudes. Although there are many contributing factors to explain why Black adults and children may internalize anti-Black attitudes, researchers cannot ignore the potential role religion may play in such processes, especially when religiosity is associated with a strictly White iconography.

The finding that Black individuals' implicit attitudes are often in line with their White counterparts (i.e., pro-White bias) is consistent with the notion that White supremacist ideologies are embedded in the historical and cultural fabric of the United States (Adams et al., 2008, Feagin, 2013; hooks, 1989; Salter & Adams, 2013; Wilson, 1988) and that these ideologies can influence the psychological processes of *both* racial majority and minority group members. Black and White Americans are socialized in similar environments that produce and reinforce positive images associated with White people (e.g., Jesus, angels, Santa Claus, superheroes) and negative images associated with Black people which contributes to conscious and unconscious ideas of Black inferiority and anti-Blackness, while simultaneously reinforcing conscious and unconscious ideas of White superiority and pro-Whiteness.

Exposure to White religious iconography likely contributes to some of the variability seen in Black individuals' implicit attitudes, especially since African Americans are more religious on a number of measures (e.g., religious affiliation, religious service attendance,

frequency of prayer, and importance of religion in one's life) than the rest of the United States population as a whole (Pew Research, 2009), thus exposure to White religious iconography for Black individuals is both frequent and repeated. It has been theorized that one of the ways implicit associations are thought to form is through socialization from an early age and through repeated experiences over time (e.g., Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2006, Smith & DeCoster 2000). Therefore, conducting a religious priming experiment with Black participants may inform researchers whether supernatural agents depicted as White symbolizes and reinforces White supremacy (maybe even more so than an experiment with White participants) and get us one step closer to answering some of the complicated and paradoxical questions surrounding the relationship between religion and anti-Black prejudice.

### **Present Experiments**

Across five experiments, I explore the relationship between religiosity—in particular, White religious iconography—and anti-Black attitudes, assessing the potential causality underlying this association through the use of a priming manipulation. In Experiment 1 White participants are primed with either one of two religious images (i.e., White Jesus, a cross) or a non-religious image (i.e., fruit). The primary objective is to investigate whether religious imagery has the same effects on anti-Black attitudes as do religious words and to investigate if certain religious images elicit anti-Blackness while others elicit tolerance (e.g., supernatural agent cognitions versus religious cognitions).

Experiment 2a and 2b are conceptual replications and extensions of Experiment 1 using different religious images as stimuli. In Experiment 2 participants are primed with one of three religious images (i.e., White Jesus, Black Jesus, churches) or a non-religious image (i.e., fruit). The primary objectives of Experiments 2a and 2b are to investigate whether religious imagery

has the same effects on anti-Black attitudes as do religious words, to investigate if certain religious images elicit anti-Blackness while others elicit tolerance, and to explore the possibility that different racial depictions of Jesus Christ (i.e., Black vs. White) may lead to different outcomes in terms of racial attitudes.

Experiment 3 is a conceptual replication and extension of the previous two experiments using two different dependent measures of anti-Black prejudice and the inclusion of a critical control condition (i.e., White male). In Experiment 3, White participants are primed with one of two religious images (i.e., White Jesus, Church) or two non-religious images (i.e., fruit, White males). The primary objective is to assess whether any effects from the previous study reflect differences in the effects of White vs. Black portrayals of Jesus and not simply the effects of being primed with White male figures more generally.

Experiment 4 extends the work of the previous three experiments by focusing on the effects of religious priming on Black participants' anti-Black attitudes. In Experiment 4, Black participants are primed with one of two religious images (i.e., White Jesus, Church) or two non-religious images (i.e., fruit, White males). The primary objective is to investigate whether White supernatural agents such as Jesus will increase Black individuals' explicit and implicit intragroup bias.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Experiment 1

Experiment 1 was designed to conceptually replicate Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (Study 1, 2010) by testing if the activation of Christian concepts in (White) Americans would increase racial prejudice (i.e., *Christian-racial-prejudice hypothesis*). Whereas Johnson et al. used words to activate religious cognitions, in the present study I operationalized religiosity in terms of imagery. The images used in this study, however, were visual representations for the words used in Johnson et al. and others in previous work (e.g., *Jesus, cross*). In addition, unlike Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff, I also included as outcome variables an implicit measure of prejudice (e.g., R-IAT) in addition to explicit (feelings thermometer) and subtle (Racial Argument Scale; RAS) measures of prejudice. Furthermore, Experiment 1 also examined whether priming different religious cognitions through image representations (e.g., *religion cognitions vs supernatural agents cognitions*) would lead to different patterns of anti-Black prejudice.

*H1*: I predict that religious image primes will have the same effect as lexical primes on anti-Black attitudes (i.e., lead to an increase in racial bias), thus replicating Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010).

*H2*: I predict that different religious images will result in different patterns of prejudice. Specifically, I predict that White participants primed with White Jesus will result in a higher level of anti-Black attitudes relative to Whites primed with institutional/concrete religious images (e.g., cross).

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

One hundred and eighteen White participants were recruited from a psychology research pool of a private university located in the Northeast (65 women,  $M_{age} = 18.92$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three priming conditions (supernatural agent: White Jesus; institutional religious object: cross; neutral non-religious object) in a between-subjects design.

### **Materials**

**Prescreen Questionnaire.** In a separate on-line session prior to data collection, participants completed a pre-screen questionnaire with various items including a measure of religiousness assessed on a scale of 1-7 (i.e., “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?”). The mean suggested a sample relatively low in personal religiousness ( $M = 2.89$ ,  $SD = 1.72$ ). A six-item measure of daily spiritual experiences (Fetzer Institute/National Institute on Aging, 1999; see Appendix A), assessed on a scale of 1-6 (higher scores equal *less* spirituality), was also part of the pre-screen questionnaire ( $M = 4.62$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ). Overall the mean suggested a sample relatively low in personal spirituality as well.

**Picture Stimuli.** Stimuli were culled from the internet. The two religious images used for this study were images of Jesus Christ depicted as White (to activate supernatural agent cognitions) or images of crosses (to activate religious cognitions)<sup>2</sup>. The neutral images were of fruit (e.g., oranges). Masks for each image were created by digitally altering the images. Each image had its own mask, created by “stain glassing” the image (a special effects option in Adobe PhotoShop), which clusters adjacent colors and results in a stained glass appearance. The

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<sup>2</sup> Religious stimuli used in all experiments were pretested informally. All religious stimuli were correctly identified as religious. Furthermore, all images of Jesus (White or Black) were correctly identified as being Jesus, all images of crosses were identified as crosses and all images of churches were identified as churches.

masked image was then rotated 180 degrees. Images were selected to be as similar as possible across conditions in size and color.

### **Measures of anti-Black prejudice.**

*Implicit anti-Black bias.* The Race-Implicit Association Test (R-IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998). The R-IAT was used to measure implicit attitudes towards Black individuals. The R-IAT is a computerized task that measures the strength of automatic associations between target categories (e.g., Black faces and White faces) and positive or negative words (e.g., “peace,” “evil”); by measuring how quickly people categorize the stimuli. Specifically, the race IAT used here measured how quickly people categorize Black and White faces with pleasant versus unpleasant words (i.e., adjectives). Implicit racial bias against Black/African Americans is reflected by the degree to which individuals are faster at categorizing Black faces paired with unpleasant words and White faces paired with pleasant words versus Black faces paired with pleasant words and White faces paired with unpleasant words.

*Explicit anti-Black attitudes.* (Feelings thermometer item). In the feelings thermometer task, participants were asked to indicate their feelings toward 13 different social groups, one of which was African Americans. For each group, participants indicated their attitude toward the listed groups by placing an “X” in the appropriate box. The rating scale resembles values on a thermometer. Responses were coded such that a higher number indicates a higher level of warmth or positive feelings towards the target group, whereas lower numbers reflect colder or more negative attitudes towards target groups (i.e., 0 = cold, 10 = warm; see Appendix B).

*Subtle measure of anti-Black prejudice.* The Racial Argument Scale (RAS; Saucier & Miller, 2003; see Appendix C) was used to measure subtle prejudice towards Black Americans.

The RAS contains 13 brief arguments that promote either a pro-Black position or an anti-Black position to address issues related to African Americans. Each argument is followed by a conclusion statement and participants are asked to rate how well the conclusion statement supported the argument on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = very much). This scale covertly measures racism by asking individuals to evaluate the degree to which they believe the arguments are supported by the conclusions, rather than whether or not *they* agree with the arguments and conclusions themselves. The responses to the positive arguments are reverse-coded and the scores totaled to yield scores that could range from a total of 13 to 65. Higher scores indicate higher levels of subtle racism. An example of a positive pro-Black position reads:

*Because the world is a diverse place with many different cultures and people, requiring college students to take courses such as African American Studies is a benefit to them. These courses provide students with better understandings of other ethnic groups, cultures, and value systems. This educational experience can enrich students' lives through cultural awareness.*

Conclusion: Courses like African American studies should be required in the education of all college students.

### ***Procedure***

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three priming conditions, two of which were religious oriented and the other a non-religious prime condition. Participants were first told that they were participating in a study that looked at the cognitive responses of individuals who have been presented with rapidly presented visual stimuli. They were then told that after the presentation of stimuli and a brief delay, they would complete a categorization task that would be followed by some questionnaires. Depending on the condition to which participants were assigned, they were subliminally primed with religious images (i.e., White Jesus or the cross) or neutral images. Participants were instructed to focus attention on a dot probe prior to each trial.

Immediately following the disappearance of the dot, one of the images from their experimental condition was presented for 30 ms<sup>3</sup>. The presentation length of 30 ms was adequate to ensure that participants were unaware of the presentation of target primes. Immediately following the priming image, a stain glassed mask that was flipped 180 degrees appeared for 1,000 ms. The presentation phase lasted 5 minutes and 6-8 images were used for each condition, with each image presented multiple times during the presentation phase. Following the presentation phase, participants complete the IAT. Next participants were then asked to complete a series of thermometer items, and the Racial Argument Scale.<sup>4</sup> Lastly, participants were debriefed and thanked for their time.

## Results

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was used to examine the effects of priming (Christian imagery: White Jesus vs. cross vs. neutral non-religious image) on implicit, explicit and subtle measures of anti-Black prejudice.

*Implicit anti-Black bias.* Due to a programming error results from the IAT were not recorded properly so data for this measure are not included.

*Explicit anti-Black prejudice.* Regardless of whether participants were primed with supernatural agents (White Jesus) or concrete objects (cross) they did not self-report colder feelings toward African Americans on the thermometer scale than did individuals primed with neutral images ( $M_{\text{White Jesus}} = 8.55, SD = 1.50, M_{\text{Cross}} = 8.50, SD = 1.85; M_{\text{Neutral}} = 8.42, SD = 1.36; F(2, 116) = .064, p = .94$  (see Table 1 for cell means).

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<sup>3</sup> The priming duration of 30ms was used based on similar conceptual priming research (15-40ms; see Reis & Judd, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Dependent measures of anti-Black prejudice were not counterbalanced as I was trying to keep the order of the dependent variables similar to Johnson et al. (2010). Dependent variables for all other experiments were also not counterbalanced for this same reason.

**Table 1.** Mean scores (and standard deviations) for all measures by condition for Experiment 1.

	White Jesus (n = 38)	Cross (n= 40)	Neutral (n=40)
Thermometer	8.55 (1.50)	8.50 (1.85)	8.42 (1.36)
RAS	30.05 (7.49)	29.47 (5.40)	26.67 (6.59)

*Subtle measure of anti-Black prejudice (RAS).* A one-way between subjects ANOVA found no effects of priming on participants' subtle anti-Black prejudice ( $M = 29.05$ ,  $SD = 6.59$ ),  $F(2, 116) = 1.42$ ,  $p > .3$  for the three conditions (see Table 1 for cell means).

### Discussion

Experiment 1 was designed to explore if Christian religious image primes would increase individuals' anti-Black attitudes. Furthermore, Experiment 1 was also designed to explore the possibility that different concepts related to religiosity; specifically, supernatural agent cognitions vs. religious cognitions, may lead to different patterns of prejudice. It was predicted that religious images would increase anti-Black attitudes and White participants primed with White Jesus would result in higher levels of anti-Black attitudes relative to institutional/concrete religious images (e.g., cross).

The findings from Experiment 1 did not support the predictions. There is no evidence suggesting that Christian religious imagery increased anti-Black attitudes. Due to the programming error of the IAT, data for implicit negative attitudes towards Blacks were not recorded. Although results were non-significant there may be a few explanations as to why there was no effect of religious priming on explicit anti-Black attitudes. One explanation could be that lexical primes may be stronger than image primes in general, although historically the evidence supporting this has been mixed (see Scarborough et al., 1979 and Vanderwart, 1984 for different

results regarding image primes). Some argue that the visual image must be first transposed into the lexical form, which takes up more cognitive resources leading to more ineffectual priming than a word alone. If lexical primes are stronger than images then words may be more effective at activating religious concepts than images, however, others have argued that image stimuli have an advantage over lexical stimuli because they are dually encoded; they generate both a verbal and image code, whereas lexical stimuli only generate a verbal code (Pavio, 1971).

Another possible explanation for why the primes did not have an effect on individuals' anti-Black attitudes is that having individuals complete the IAT before the self-report measures may have colored the way in which participants answered questions on the two other prejudice measures following the administration of the IAT. Past research (Frantz et al., 2004) has suggested the Race IAT can be a stereotype threat experience for White participants. White participants may be concerned with "failing a test of racism" and thus confirming the stereotype that White people are racist. Because of this concern, this may have increased White participants' motivation to appear more egalitarian in their responses on the measures following the IAT in an effort to not appear prejudice or to alleviate their "White guilt" (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003).

In addition, there may also be too much conceptual overlap between the cross and Jesus Christ in order to allow for meaningful differences to emerge between priming effects in those two conditions. According to Christian doctrine, Jesus Christ died on a cross. The Christian Cross is one of the most recognized symbols of Christianity (McGrath, 2006). The symbol of the cross in Christianity is related to the crucifix and often serves as a reminder that God gave "his only begotten son" for our sins, so when people are exposed to the cross it may also make thoughts or images of Jesus Christ salient as well.

It is important to note that Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010) also failed to find an effect of priming for their explicit measure of prejudice in Study 1 (i.e., thermometer measure), but did find an effect on their subtle measure of prejudice (i.e., the Racial Argument Scale; RAS) in Study 1. However, in Study 2 they did find a significant effect of priming on a different explicit measure (i.e., general negative affect towards African Americans; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005).

In light of the limitations of Experiment 1 outlined above, namely administering the IAT before the other prejudice measures and using stimuli that were, conceptually, too closely related, Experiment 2 was designed to resolve some of the unanswered questions above.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Experiment 2a

Experiment 2a was designed to address the limitations in Experiment 1. For Experiment 2a an image of a church versus an image of a cross was used. In addition, the IAT measure of racial prejudice was removed for this experiment. Like Experiment 1, Experiment 2a's purpose was to conceptually replicate Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010, study 1) by testing if the activation of Christian concepts through the use of image priming could increase racial prejudice in White Americans, as well examining whether priming different religious cognitions (e.g., *religion cognitions vs supernatural agents cognitions*) would lead to different patterns of anti-Black prejudice. Furthermore, Experiment 2a was also designed to examine whether such effects depend on the racial depiction of a supernatural agent (i.e., White Jesus vs. Black Jesus). This question of whether or not different racial depictions of Jesus lead to different patterns of prejudice is an extension of the hypothesis that different religious images may lead to different patterns of prejudice.

*H1*: I predict that religious image primes will have the same effect as lexical primes on anti-Black attitudes (i.e., increase them), thus replicating Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010).

*H2*: I predict that different religious images will result in different patterns of prejudice. Specifically, I predict that White participants primed with White Jesus will result in a higher level of anti-Black attitudes relative to institutional/concrete religious images (e.g., church). As far as the effect of Black Jesus images on White individuals, I predict an increase in anti-Black attitudes because portraying Jesus as Black may be threatening to White individuals. An alternative hypothesis is there may be no effect at all on White

participants' anti-Black attitudes because wide cultural knowledge of a Black Jesus does not exist and there may be no recognition of a Black Jesus as a symbol of Christianity. In order for primes to be effective they must be culturally relevant (i.e., Bargh, 2006).

## Method

### *Participants and Design*

One hundred and forty-four White participants from a psychology research pool of a private university located in the Northeast (86 female,  $M_{age} = 18.90$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions (supernatural agent: White Jesus; supernatural agent: Black Jesus; concrete object: church; neutral non-religious object) in a between-subjects design.

### Materials

**Prescreen Questionnaire.** As in Experiment 1 participants completed a separate on-line session prior to data collection that assessed their personal religiousness and spirituality items. All but 1 of the participants provided a response to these questions, and the means suggested a sample relatively low in personal religiousness ( $M = 2.66$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ) and spirituality ( $M = 4.78$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ).

**Picture Stimuli.** Stimuli were culled from the internet. The three religious images used for this study were images of Jesus Christ (Black or White) or images of churches; neutral images were of fruit. Images were selected to be as similar as possible across conditions in size and color. Images of Jesus depicted as Black versus White were matched as closely as possible in terms of size, shape, and pose (images are available from the researcher upon request). Masks for each image were created by digitally altering the images. Each image had its own mask, created by "stain glassing" the image (a special effects option in Adobe PhotoShop), which

clusters adjacent colors and results in a stained glass appearance. The masked image was then rotated 180 degrees.

**Measures of anti-Black prejudice.** Excluding the R-IAT, the same explicit and subtle measures of anti-Black prejudice as were used in Experiment 1 were used in Experiment 2a (i.e., the thermometer scale and RAS).

*Measures of fear and disgust emotions towards of African Americans* (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005). This measure was included to determine whether or not an increase in anti-Black prejudice reflected a change in a specific emotional response. The emotion measure consisted of two fear items (*frightened, afraid*) and three disgust items (*physically disgusted, grossed out, physically sickened*). An example item reads, “how afraid are you of African Americans, as a group?” All items are rated on a 9-point scale (1 = not at all, 9 = extremely).

### ***Procedure***

The procedures in Experiment 2a are very similar to the procedures used in Experiment 1 with two notable exceptions. The first exception is that participants were randomly assigned to one of four prime conditions, instead of three, three of which were religious oriented and the other was a non-religious neutral condition. The second exception is that participants completed Cottrell and Neuberg’s Measures of Negative Emotion towards African Americans after measures of racial prejudice.

### **Results**

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was used to examine the effects of priming (Christian imagery: Black Jesus vs. White Jesus vs. Church vs. neutral non-religious imagery) on explicit and subtle measures of anti-Black prejudice.

*Explicit anti-Black prejudice.* Regardless of whether participants were primed with supernatural agents (Black Jesus or White Jesus) or concrete objects (Church), individuals did not self-report more cold feelings toward African Americans on the thermometer scale than did individuals primed with neutral images ( $M_{\text{Black Jesus}} = 9.27, SD = 1.15$ ;  $M_{\text{White Jesus}} = 8.78, SD = 1.44$ ,  $M_{\text{Church}} = 9.00, SD = 1.32$ ;  $M_{\text{Neutral}} = 9.06, SD = 1.19$ ;  $F(3, 140) = .867, p = .47$  (see Table 2 for cell means).

**Table 2.** Mean scores (standard deviations) for all measures by condition for Experiment 2a.

	White Jesus (n=36)	Black Jesus (n= 36)	Church (n =35)	Neutral (n=37)
Thermometer	8.78 (1.44)	9.27 (1.15)	9.00 (1.32)	9.06 (1.19)
RAS	30.00 <sub>a</sub> (7.60)	23.56 <sub>b</sub> (6.73)	24.40 <sub>b</sub> (6.82)	25.03 <sub>b</sub> (6.40)
Fear	4.11 (2.64)	3.69 (1.84)	4.53 (2.87)	4.69 (3.00)
Disgust	3.36 (1.44)	3.61 (1.66)	3.38 (1.04)	3.47 (1.66)

Note: RAS = Racial Attitudes Scale. Different subscript letters within a row indicate statistically significant differences. Seven participants failed to respond to the thermometer measure, leaving a final n of 137 for that measure.

*Subtle measure of anti-Black prejudice (RAS).* An ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of priming on participants' racial argument scale scores,  $F(3, 141) = 6.63, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .12$  (see Table 2 for cell means). Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that participants in the White Jesus condition ( $M = 30.00, SD = 7.60$ ) exhibited significantly more prejudice on this measure than did participants in the neutral condition ( $M = 25.03, SD = 6.40$ ),  $p = .02$ , the Black Jesus condition ( $M = 23.56, SD = 6.72$ ),  $p = .001$ , and the church condition ( $M = 24.00, SD = 6.82$ ),  $p = .005$ ). No other significant pairwise comparisons emerged.

I then used an ANCOVA to control for participants' self-reported religiousness and spirituality. This analysis indicated that the RAS difference remained significant: participants primed with White Jesus (adjusted  $M = 30.03$ ,  $SE = 1.16$ ) reported more subtle anti-Black attitudes than did those primed with neutral non-religious images (adjusted  $M = 25.17$ ,  $SE = 1.16$ ), Black Jesus (adjusted  $M = 23.46$ ,  $SE = 1.16$ ), and churches (adjusted  $M = 24.45$ ,  $SE = 1.19$ )  $F(3, 139) = 6.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .123$ .

*Measures of fear and disgust emotions towards African Americans.* Following scoring instructions detailed by Cottrell and Neuberg (2005) and the methods of Jordan et al. (2010), I summed the two fear items and three disgust items to create two separate composite variables. Individuals primed with religious supernatural agents (i.e., White Jesus, Black Jesus) or concrete religious objects did not express more fear or disgust toward African Americans than individuals primed with the neutral image supporting the notion that the increase in subtle anti-Black prejudice caused by priming White Jesus was unlikely due to differential experiences of fear,  $F(3, 141) = 1.11$ ,  $p > .3$  or disgust  $F(3, 141) = .205$ ,  $p > .8$  (see Table 2 for cell means).

### **Discussion**

Experiment 2a was designed to address the limitations of Experiment 1 by further exploring whether Christian religious image primes would increase individuals' anti-Black attitudes. Furthermore, Experiment 2a was also designed to explore the possibility that different religious images, specifically images of supernatural agents vs. institutional/concrete objects may lead to different patterns of prejudice. Experiment 2a also explored the question whether or not different racial depictions of Jesus (i.e., White vs. Black) would lead to different patterns of prejudice.

The findings from experiment 2a provide evidence that exposure to religious images can influence White individuals' anti-Black attitudes. Specifically, the data suggest that exposure to images of Jesus Christ depicted as White increases anti-Black attitudes, conceptually replicating and extending the findings of Johnson, Rowatt, and Labouff (2010), who primed participants using religious words. Images of White Jesus increased anti-Black attitudes among White individuals, whereas images of churches and images of Black Jesus had no effect relative to neutral non-religious stimuli. This effect remained significant when controlling for participants' preexisting levels of religiosity and spirituality. The observed increase in Whites' anti-Black attitudes from exposure to White Jesus does not appear to reflect an increase in fear or disgust towards Black individuals: Participants primed with White Jesus did not express any more fear or disgust toward Black individuals than did other participants. Exposure to religious stimuli did not significantly increase participants' self-reported feelings of coldness toward African Americans via a feeling thermometer item, also replicating Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010) (but inconsistent with the findings of LaBouff et al., 2012, who did find effects for this measure using a contextual priming design).

This experiment is the first, to my knowledge, to demonstrate that exposure to images of a supernatural agent depicted as White can lead to an increase in anti-Black attitudes, thus providing initial evidence that White religious iconography can reinforce White supremacist ideology. Notably, in this experiment images of churches did not increase anti-Black attitudes. I hypothesized that images of churches would lead to an increase in anti-Black attitudes because these images activate concerns about group cooperation and identity (i.e., *religious cognitions* and the group component of religiosity), thus contributing to ingroup/outgroup distinctions that can contribute to prejudice. Although they did not use images to prime participants, LaBouff et

al. (2012) did find evidence suggesting that situational context priming (i.e., passing a religious landmark) can increase anti-Black attitudes (i.e., cold feelings towards Blacks), suggesting that such effects may be stronger or weaker based on the methodology being used (e.g., contextual situational or laboratory study) and the salience (supraliminal vs. subliminal) of the religious context. It is also important to note that the LaBouff et al. (2012) study took place in Europe, whereas the present study took place in the United States. Although the target groups in question in both studies were Black, in the U.S. the target label for our dependent measures was “African American” whereas in Europe the target label was “African.” Given the unique historical legacy of anti-Black racism experienced by African Americans in the United States and the shift in societal norms condemning overt displays of negative racial attitudes, our college student population may have self-reported having warm attitudes towards African Americans on a reactive measure in an effort to appear more egalitarian; the history of attitudes toward Africans in Europe, many of whom are immigrants, is very different.

With regard to images of Black Jesus having no effect on participants’ anti-Black attitudes, it is important to keep in mind that the most commonly and widespread visual representations of Jesus Christ depict him as a White male. Thus, when Jesus is depicted as any race other than White, he may no longer be as readily recognized as a symbol of Christianity, resulting in no effects on participants’ anti-Black prejudice. Results could potentially be different with the use of supraliminal primes versus subliminal primes. Although subliminal and supraliminal primes can lead to the same or similar outcomes (Bargh, 1992), it has also been demonstrated that they lead to different outcomes (Shih et al., 2002). So even though subliminal primes of Black Jesus may not have any effect on White participants’ anti-Black attitudes because of the factors outlined above, supraliminal primes of Black Jesus might have an effect

because White participants will be able to consciously process the image. And although Black Jesus may not be recognized as a symbol of Christianity, participants can consciously see that the figure they know as Jesus (i.e., White Jesus) is being portrayed as Black. In this case, a supraliminal prime of Black Jesus may be symbolically challenging or threatening to White individuals' cultural values which could lead to backlash and intergroup prejudice (Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009) especially among those who strongly identify as White (Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010). Anecdotal evidence can be seen from the opening quotes from Megyn Kelly, as well as the documented reactions of White individuals who expressed anger and dissatisfaction with cinematic works that have casted Black actors to play characters that have either traditionally been played by White individuals or characters that many believe should be White; such as, the character Finn from the motion picture *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (Howard, 2015), Rue from the motion picture *The Hunger Games* (Holmes, 2012) and the entire cast for NBC's rendition of the musical *The Wiz*, in *The Wiz Live* (Green, 2015).

This experiment provides initial evidence that different religious images can lead to different patterns of anti-Black prejudice. Specifically, this experiment provides evidence that depicting Jesus as a White man can increase White individuals' anti-Black attitudes. Furthermore, the results from this experiment suggest that the increase in anti-Black prejudice caused by priming White Jesus was not because of differential experiences of fear or disgust towards African Americans. In an effort to replicate the findings in Experiment 2a, a second experiment (i.e., Experiment 2b) with an online sample was designed.

## Experiment 2b

Experiment 2b was designed as a replication of Experiment 2a with an online sample. Participants were recruited from an online crowd sourcing program from Amazon known as Mechanical Turk.

### Method

#### *Participants and Design*

One hundred and fifty-eight White participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (81 female,  $M_{age} = 39.90$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions (supernatural agent: White Jesus, supernatural agent: Black Jesus, concrete religious object: church, neutral non-religious object) in a between-subjects design.

#### **Materials**

**Picture Stimuli.** The same picture stimuli that were used in Experiment 2a were used in Experiment 2b.

**Measures of anti-Black prejudice.** The same explicit and subtle measures of anti-Black prejudice used in Experiment 2a were used in Experiment 2b (i.e., the thermometer scale and RAS).

#### *Procedure*

The procedures in Experiment 2a were very similar to the procedures used in Experiment 1 with two notable exceptions. The first is that the priming exposure for each condition lasted for 1 minute instead of 5 minutes. The second is that participants did not complete Cottrell and Neuberg's Measures of Negative Emotion towards African Americans after measures of racial prejudice.

## Results

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was used to examine the effects of priming (Christian imagery: Black Jesus vs. White Jesus vs. Church vs. neutral non-religious imagery) on explicit and subtle measures of anti-Black prejudice.

*Explicit anti-Black prejudice.* Regardless of whether participants were primed with supernatural agents (Black Jesus or White Jesus) or concrete objects (Church) individuals did not self-report colder feelings toward African Americans on the thermometer scale than individuals primed with neutral images ( $M_{\text{White Jesus}} = 7.48, SD = 2.42$ ;  $M_{\text{Black Jesus}} = 8.05, SD = 1.90$ ;  $M_{\text{Church}} = 9.00, SD = 2.31$ ;  $M_{\text{Neutral}} = 7.50, SD = 2.60$ ),  $F(3, 155) = .574, p = .63$  (see Table 3 for cell means).

**Table 3.** Mean scores (standard deviations) for all measures by condition for Experiment 2b.

	White Jesus (n=40)	Black Jesus (n= 38)	Church (n =38)	Neutral (n=42)
Thermometer	7.48 (2.42)	8.05 (1.90)	9.00 (2.31)	7.50 (2.60)
RAS	38.11 (9.62)	37.06 (11.74)	38.03 (11.73)	38.05 (10.74)

Note: RAS = Racial Attitudes Scale. Different subscript letters indicate statistically significant differences. Twenty-one participants failed to respond to the RAS measure, leaving a final n of 137 for that measure.

*Subtle measure of anti-Black prejudice (RAS).* Twenty-one participants failed to complete the RAS leaving data for 137 participants. A one-way between subjects ANOVA found no effects of priming on participants' subtle anti-Black prejudice ( $M = 37.95, SD = 10.88$ ),  $F(3, 134) = .109, p > .9$  for the three conditions (see Table 3 for cell means).

## Discussion

The findings from Experiment 2b failed to replicate the finding that Christian religious imagery increased anti-Black attitudes found in Experiment 2a. One explanation as to why

Experiment 2b failed to replicate Experiment 2a is that exposure to the subliminal primes was too short in Experiment 2b (1 minute) compared to the exposure to the subliminal primes in Experiment 2a (5 minutes). Research on priming suggests that longer repeated exposure to the stimuli often has the most success (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007). Furthermore, there were concerns about whether or not the priming actually worked when implemented online. The presentation of the stimuli were originally presented on MediaLab®, whereas the presentation for participants online, a video recording of this presentation was created which did not allow for total control over the duration of exposure to each prime as in Experiment 2a.

To address these limitations, Experiment 3 was conducted in the lab using the same procedures as in Experiment 2. In addition, Experiment 3 was designed to replicate the findings from Experiment 2a using different dependent measures of racial attitudes, measures of general negative sentiment toward African Americans (i.e., explicit measure of anti-Black attitudes) and the Race-Implicit Associations Task (i.e., R-IAT, implicit measures of anti-Black attitudes) for dependent measures of racial prejudice towards Blacks. These measures of anti-Black attitudes were used for two reasons: First, the general negative sentiment toward African American Americans was used in study 2 of Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010) and second, to explore whether the effect found in Experiment 2a would generalize across other measures of anti-Black attitudes.

In addition, Experiment 3 was designed to address another limitation not yet discussed from Experiment 2a. The results found in Experiment 2a, an increase in White participants' anti-Black attitudes, could be explained by an alternative hypothesis. It could be that Whites exposed to any individual from the ingroup (i.e., another White person) may increase anti-Black attitudes,

regardless if that agent is supernatural. If this is indeed the case, then the findings from Experiment 2a may fully or partially be explained by this alternative explanation. Support for this alternative hypothesis is unlikely given the findings from previous research. For example, in a series of experiments Dasguta and Greenwald (2001) repeatedly exposed White participants to either admired Blacks (e.g., Michael Jordan) and disliked White individuals (e.g., Jeffrey Dahmer) or admired Whites (e.g., Tom Hanks) and disliked Black individuals (e.g., O.J. Simpson) to examine what effect these exemplars would have on White individuals' racial attitudes towards Black individuals. They found that only exposure to admired Black individuals and disliked Whites had an effect on White participants' attitudes toward Black individuals. Specifically, they found that this pairing reduced Whites' anti-Black attitudes whereas for participants exposed to pro-White exemplars and disliked Black exemplars, their anti-Black attitudes did not differ from the control group. In other words, the combination of Pro-White exemplars and disliked Black exemplars had no effect on anti-Black bias. If the combined exposure to White individuals whom White people love and Black individuals whom White people hate did not increase White individuals' anti-Black attitudes in Dasguta and Greenwald's experiment, it seems unlikely that exposure to a generic White individual would increase individuals' anti-Black attitudes. In fact, when taken together, the results from Dasputa and Greenwald and the results from Experiment 2a highlight the importance of exploring the effects of White religious iconography on racial attitudes. However, Experiment 3 was designed to rule out the alternative explanation for the results found in Experiment 2a.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Experiment 3

Experiment 3 was designed to address the limitations from Experiments 2a, primarily to determine if the increase in White individuals' anti-Black attitudes was due to White portrayals of Jesus and not simply the effects of being primed with White male figures more generally. For Experiment 3 the image of Black Jesus was replaced with an image of a generic White male. In addition, this experiment used a measure of general negative sentiment toward African Americans (i.e., explicit measure of anti-Black attitudes; Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005) and the IAT (i.e., implicit measures of anti-Black attitudes) for dependent measures of racial prejudice towards Blacks. These measures of anti-Black attitudes were used for two reasons: First, the general negative affect toward African American Americans measure was used by Johnson, Rowatt and LaBouff (2010, study 2) and second, to explore if the effect would generalize across other measures of anti-Black attitudes.

### Method

#### *Participants and Design*

One hundred and eighty-seven White participants were recruited from a mid-size research university (120 female,  $M_{age} = 19.61$  for course credit or for no compensation. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions (supernatural agent: White Jesus, non-supernatural agent: generic White male, concrete object: church, neutral non-religious object) in a between-subjects design.

#### **Materials**

**Prescreen Questionnaire.** As in Experiment 1 and 2a, participants completed a separate on-line session prior to data collection that assessed their personal religiousness and spirituality

items. Twenty-two volunteers did not complete the on-line questionnaire. The means of both measures suggested a sample relatively low in personal religiousness ( $M= 2.78$ ,  $SD= 1.57$ ) and spirituality ( $M= 4.43$ ,  $SD= .80$ ).

**Picture Stimuli.** Stimuli for the two religious images (i.e., White Jesus and churches) and the neutral images (i.e., fruit) used for this experiment were the same used in Experiments 1, 2a/2b. Stimuli for the White non-supernatural agent were taken from NimStim database and all were White American adult men. Masks for each image were created by digitally altering the images. Each image had its own mask, created by the same “stain glassing” process described above. The masked image was then rotated 180 degrees.

#### **Measures of anti-Black prejudice.**

*Explicit measure of anti-Black prejudice.* Cottrell and Neuberg’s (2005) Measures of General Negative Sentiment towards African Americans was used to measure explicit prejudice toward African Americans. This measure is designed to measure general negative sentiment toward African Americans and was assessed with two items (i.e., “How negative do you feel towards African Americans, as a group?” and “How much do you dislike African Americans, as a group?”). Both items were rated on a 9-point scale (1= not at all, 9 = extremely).

*Implicit anti-Black bias.* Race-IAT (for a description see materials in Experiment 1)

*Measures of fear and disgust emotions towards African Americans.* This is the same measure that was used in Experiment 2a.

#### **Procedure**

The procedures in Experiment 3 are very similar to the procedures used in Experiment 2a with two notable exceptions. The first is that one of the four prime conditions included images of White males instead of images of Black Jesus. The second is that the RAS was replaced with

two measures of racial prejudice (i.e., the measure of general negative sentiment towards African Americans and the IAT).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions, two of which were religion-oriented and the other two were non-religious. Participants were first told that they were participating in a study that looked at the cognitive responses of individuals who have been presented with rapidly presented visual stimuli. They were then told that after the presentation of stimuli and a brief delay, they would complete a questionnaire which would be followed by a categorization task. Depending on the condition to which participants were assigned, they were subliminally primed with religious images (i.e., White Jesus or churches) or non-religious images (i.e., a White male or fruit). Participants were instructed to focus attention on a dot probe prior to each trial. Immediately following the disappearance of the dot, one of the images from their experimental condition was presented for 30 ms. Immediately following the image, a stained glass mask that was flipped 180 degrees appeared for 1,000 ms. The presentation phase lasted 5 minutes and 6-8 images were used for each condition, with each image presented multiple times during the presentation phase. Following the presentation phase, participants completed the general negative sentiment items which were followed by the R-IAT. Lastly, participants were debriefed and thanked for their time.

## **Results**

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was used to examine the effects of priming (Christian imagery: White Jesus vs. church; vs. non-supernatural agent: White man; vs. neutral non-religious imagery) on explicit and implicit measures of anti-Black prejudice.

*Explicit anti-Black prejudice (General Negative Sentiment towards African Americans).*

Regardless of whether participants were primed with a White supernatural agent (White Jesus), a

White non-supernatural agent (generic White man) or concrete religious object (church), they did not self-report more general negative affect toward African Americans than did individuals primed with neutral images, although it appeared to be trending toward significance  $F(3, 184) = 2.18, p = .09$  (see Table 4 for cell means).

**Table 4.** Mean scores (standard deviations) for all measures by condition for Experiment 3.

	White Jesus (n=50)	White Man (n= 45)	Church (n =46)	Neutral (n=46)
Negative Affect	2.74 (1.15)	2.67 (1.13)	3.17 (1.79)	2.50 (.81)
IAT	.66 <sub>a</sub> (.40)	.43 <sub>b</sub> (.36)	.42 <sub>b</sub> (.43)	.41 <sub>b</sub> (.44)
Fear	4.12 (2.35)	3.69 (2.11)	3.43 (1.87)	4.36 (2.78)
Disgust	3.32 (1.86)	3.20 (.59)	3.35 (1.20)	3.48 (1.28)

Note: IAT = Implicit Association Task. Different subscript letters within rows indicate statistically significant differences. Due to computer and human errors two participants' IAT data were lost resulting in a final n of 185 for that measure.

*Implicit anti-Black bias (IAT).* Due to computer and human errors two participants' IAT data were lost resulting in a final n of 185 for that measure. ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of priming on participants' IAT scores,  $F(3, 182) = 4.00, p = .009$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .062$  (see Table 4 for cell means). Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that participants in the White Jesus condition ( $M = .66, SD = .40$ ) exhibited significantly more implicit anti-Black bias than did participants in the neutral condition ( $M = .41, SD = .44$ ),  $p = .025$ , the White male condition ( $M = .43, SD = .36$ ),  $p = .041$ , and the church condition ( $M = .42, SD = .43$ ),  $p = .020$ ). No other significant pairwise comparisons emerged.

As in Experiment 2a I then used an ANCOVA to control for participants' self-reported religiosity and spirituality. This analysis indicated that the IAT difference remained significant: participants primed with White Jesus (adjusted  $M = .65$ ,  $SE = .06$ ) had higher implicit anti-Black bias than did those primed with neutral non-religious images (adjusted  $M = .42$ ,  $SE = .07$ ), White men (adjusted  $M = .46$ ,  $SE = .07$ ), and churches (adjusted  $M = .44$ ,  $SE = .06$ )  $F(3, 160) = 3.$ ,  $p = .032$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .054$ .

*Measures of fear and disgust emotions towards African Americans.* Individuals primed with religious supernatural agents (i.e., White Jesus, Black Jesus) or concrete religious objects did not express more fear or disgust toward African Americans than did individuals primed with neutral images: for fear,  $F(3, 184) = 1.33$ ,  $p = .265$ ; for disgust,  $F(3, 184) = .205$ ,  $p = .338$  (see Table 4 for cell means).

### Discussion

The results from Experiment 3 provide further evidence that exposure to religious images can influence White individuals' anti-Black attitudes. As in Experiment 2a, I found that exposure to images of Jesus Christ depicted as White increases White individuals anti-Black attitudes. The results from Experiment 3 also rule out the alternative hypothesis that priming White individuals with White male figures, regardless of whether they are supernatural or not, generally could increase anti-Black attitudes. The results from this experiment also suggest that exposure to religious images such as churches may also increase explicit (but not implicit) anti-Black attitudes; however, this effect only trended toward significance. This marginal finding is somewhat consistent with previous research which found that contextual priming (i.e., being in close proximity to a Church) increased explicit prejudicial attitudes to a number of outgroups in a multinational sample in Western Europe. Lastly, as in Experiment 1, the results from this

experiment suggest that the increase in anti-Black prejudice caused by priming White Jesus was not because of differential experiences of fear or disgust towards African Americans.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Experiment 4

As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, the majority of empirical research investigating the effects of religious priming on prejudice has been conducted with White participants (Hall, Matz & Wood, 2010). Given the absence of empirical investigations on religious priming and its effects on Black respondents' anti-Black attitudes, it remains unclear what, if any, effects religious primes have on Black individuals' racial attitudes. Experiment 4 was designed to address this limitation by exploring the effect of exposure to religious imagery on Black individuals' intragroup bias. It was hypothesized that exposure to White religious iconography likely contributes to some of the variability seen in Black individuals' explicit and implicit intragroup attitudes. This experiment is of particular importance, not only because conducting a religious priming experiment with Black participants may shed light on the complicated and paradoxical questions regarding the relationship between religion and anti-Black prejudice, but also because of the potential disheartening implications of such work. Black individuals' implicit attitudes have been shown to be negatively correlated with their psychological health and over life satisfaction (Ashburn-Nardo, 2010). Thus, if exposure to White religious iconography increases implicit anti-Black attitudes, exposure to such imagery could negatively impact Black individuals' overall psychological well-being.

### Method

#### *Participants and Design*

One hundred and twenty Black participants were recruited and compensated ten dollars to participate in this experiment from the Greater Boston area (71 female,  $M_{age} = 24.90$ ). Participants were recruited from an online advertisement asking for the participation of those

who identify racially as Black/African American. Although all participants self-identified as Black/African American and were born and raised in the United States, the sample was ethnically diverse, 49.1% of the sample self-identified as African American/Black, 25.8% identified as African (e.g., Ghanaian, Nigerian) 17.5% self-identified as Afro-Caribbean (e.g., Jamaican, Haitian), 5% identified with two or more ethnicities (e.g., Italian/African American, Mixed) and 1.6% identified as American<sup>5</sup>. Of the 113 participants who reported their religious affiliation, 85.8% self-reported some affiliation with Christianity (e.g., Baptist, Methodist), 4.4% reported being affiliated with Islam, 3.5% reported not having a religion affiliation, 1.8% identified as Atheist and the remaining 1.8% reported idiosyncratic responses (e.g., truth, God). Participants also self-reported on how religious they see themselves on a single item measure with a scale of 1-7 (i.e., “To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person?). The mean of this measure suggested a sample moderately high in religiousness ( $M= 5.64$ ,  $SD= 1.53$ ). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions (supernatural agent: White Jesus, non-supernatural agent: White male, concrete religious object: church, neutral non-religious object) in a between-subjects design.

## Materials

**Picture Stimuli.** The images used for this experiment were identical to those used in Experiment 3.

### Measures of Intragroup/Intergroup Bias.

*Explicit Attitudes (Feelings Thermometer item).* In the feelings thermometer task, participants were asked to indicate their feelings toward 11 different social groups. For each

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<sup>5</sup> The ethnicity item that was included in the demographic survey was a free response item to allow participants to self-identify ethnically how they wished. Two participants in the sample identified as “American,” however both participants identified racially as Black/African American on a race identification item.

group, participants were presented with a sliding scale from 0 (cold) to 100 (warm) with a neutral midpoint at 50, and were asked to indicate how they felt toward the group by sliding the scale to the appropriate number. The rating scale resembles values on a thermometer. Responses were coded such that a higher number indicates a higher level of warmth or positive feelings towards the target groups whereas lower numbers reflect colder or more negative attitudes towards target groups. In addition to examining thermometer ratings for African Americans and White Americans separately (e.g., Bobo & Zubrinsky, 1996), I also created a composite attitude score by subtracting thermometer ratings for African Americans from those for White Americans (e.g., Craig, DeHart, Richeson & Fiedorowitz, 2012; Sears & Henry, 2003; Sears, Van Laar, Carrillo, & Kosterman, 1997; Uhlmann et al., 2002). Computing a difference score not only allows researchers to control for individual differences (for a longer discussion on the rationale for this adjustment see Wilcox, Sigelman & Cook, 1989) but it also allows a researcher to assess individuals' level of intergroup bias (i.e., anti-Black/pro-White bias; Craig et al. 2014; Sears & Henry, 2003). As identified by Craig et al., (2014), a score of 0 on this relative measure indicates that an individual reported feeling equally warmly/positively toward African Americans and White Americans. Furthermore, positive scores on the difference score measure indicate greater pro-Black feelings, whereas negative scores indicate greater pro-White feelings. In the interest of clarity, I report the results of both the separate thermometer rating items and the intergroup bias difference scores. In addition, although primarily interested in feelings toward African Americans and White Americans, I included another ethnic group in the separate thermometer analysis (e.g., Asian American) to evaluate the specificity of the manipulation (Inbar et al., 2012).

*Intragroup negativity (appropriated racial oppression<sup>6</sup> or “internalized racism”).* The *Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale (AROS; Campon & Carter, 2015)*. The 24-item AROS assessed the beliefs, attitudes, and emotional reactions of participants’ appropriation of racial oppression (i.e., an individual’s racial self-image based on direct and indirect negative sociocultural stereotypical messages communicated throughout one’s life). The AROS consists of four subscales (i.e., Emotional Responses, American Standard of Beauty, Devaluation of Own Group, Patterns of Thinking; see Appendix D): The Emotional Responses (ER) subscale measures emotional responses to internalized racism such as shame, anger, embarrassment, depressive symptoms, and low collective self-esteem (7 items,  $\alpha = .83$ ). An example item reads “In general, I am ashamed of members of my racial group because of the way they act.” The American Standard of Beauty (ASB) subscale measures an individuals’ endorsement and/or adoption of White American cultural standards of beauty (6 items;  $\alpha = .85$ ). An example item reads, “I prefer my children not to have broad noses.” The Devaluation of Own Group (DVOG) subscale measures individuals’ judgments of others of their race based on White cultural standards, values, and beliefs (8 items;  $\alpha = .86$ ). An example item reads, “Whites are better at a lot of things than people of my race.” The Patterns of Thinking (PT) subscale measures thinking that maintain the status quo (3 items;  $\alpha = .70$ ). An example item reads, “Although discrimination in America is real, it is definitely overplayed by some members of my race.” All items in AROS are rated on a 7-point scale (1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree). Higher scores will indicate greater appropriated racism/intragroup negativity.

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<sup>6</sup> Appropriated racial oppression as defined by Campon and Carter (2015) “indicates a kind of cultural learning that corresponds to inclusion and absorption of ideas, customs, beliefs, behaviors and other racial elements... and it involves conscious and subconscious efforts to dissociate from one’s racial group and to identify with White Americans.” (p. 2)

*Implicit intragroup/intergroup bias (IAT)* (for description see Experiment 1)

### ***Procedure***

The procedures in Experiment 4 were very similar to the procedures used in the previous experiments and most closely mirror Experiment 3. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four priming conditions, two of which were religion-oriented and the other two were non-religious. Participants were first told that they were participating in a study that looked at the cognitive responses of individuals who have been presented with rapidly presented visual stimuli. They were then told that after the presentation of stimuli and a brief delay, they would first complete a questionnaire which would be followed by a categorization task. Depending on the condition to which participants were assigned, they were subliminally primed with religious images (i.e., White Jesus or churches) or non-religious images (i.e., a White male or fruit). Participants were instructed to focus attention on a dot probe prior to each trial. Immediately following the disappearance of the dot, one of the images from their experimental condition was presented for 30 ms. Immediately following the image, a stain glassed mask that was flipped 180 degrees appeared for 1,000 ms. The presentation phase lasted 5 minutes and 6-8 images were used for each condition, with each image presented multiple times during the presentation phase. Following the presentation phase, participants completed a series of thermometer items and the AROS, which was followed by the R-IAT. Next participants completed some demographic items (e.g., ethnic background, religious affiliation, self-reported religiosity). Lastly, participants were debriefed and thanked for their time.

## Results

A one-way between subjects ANOVA was used to examine the effects of priming (Christian imagery: White Jesus vs. church; vs. non-supernatural agent: White man; vs. neutral non-religious imagery) on explicit and implicit measures of intragroup bias.

*Explicit Attitudes (anti-Black/pro-White attitudes intergroup bias).* In order to control for individual differences in scale use on the feeling thermometer, a composite attitude score was created by subtracting thermometer ratings for African Americans from those for White Americans. ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of priming on participants' anti-Black/pro-White attitudes,  $F(3, 117) = 4.96, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .167$  (see Table 5 for cell means). Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that participants in the White Jesus condition ( $M = 16.87, SD = 18.03$ ) exhibited significantly less positive attitudes toward African Americans than did participants in the neutral condition ( $M = 31.20, SD = 10.56$ ),  $p = .002$ , the White male condition ( $M = 33.87, SD = 13.28$ ),  $p < .001$ , and the church condition ( $M = 28.90, SD = 16.18$ ),  $p = .011$ . No other significant pairwise comparisons emerged.

I then used an ANCOVA to control for participants' self-reported religiosity. This analysis indicated that the intergroup bias difference remained significant: participants primed with White Jesus (adjusted  $M = 16.89, SE = 2.71$ ) had less positive attitudes toward their ingroup than did those primed with neutral non-religious objects (adjusted  $M = 31.05, SE = 2.71$ ), White men (adjusted  $M = 33.96, SE = 2.71$ ), and churches (adjusted  $M = 28.93, SE = 2.71$ )  $F(3, 117) = 7.69, p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .167$ .

**Table 5.** Mean scores (and standard deviations) for all measures by condition for Experiment 4

	White Jesus (n=30)	White Man (n= 30)	Church (n= 30)	Neutral (n= 30)
Feeling Thermometer (Difference Score)	16.87 (18.03) <sub>a</sub>	33.87 (13.28) <sub>b</sub>	28.90 (16.18) <sub>b</sub>	31.20 (10.56) <sub>b</sub>
Feeling Thermometer (Black separate)	88.97 (13.18)	93.42 (7.19)	90.93 (14.91)	92.43 (12.08)
Feeling Thermometer (White separate)	72.10 (16.71) <sub>a</sub>	58.26 (12.58) <sub>b</sub>	62.03 (15.70) <sub>b</sub>	61.23 (13.83) <sub>b</sub>
Feeling Thermometer (Asian separate)	65.10 (20.41)	66.50 (12.19)	66.40 (17.23)	61.43 (11.31)
AROS (Total)	2.87 (.78)	2.68 (.77)	2.76 (.69)	2.57 (.61)
AROS (DVOG subscale)	2.80 (.90) <sub>a</sub>	2.35 (.77) <sub>c</sub>	2.44 (.67)	2.26 (.56) <sub>b</sub>
AROS (PT subscale)	3.66 (1.26) <sub>a</sub>	2.98 (1.20)	3.00 (1.08)	2.83 (1.31) <sub>c</sub>
AROS (ER subscale)	2.98 (1.13)	3.08 (1.04)	3.24 (1.08)	3.11 (.89)
AROS (ASB subscale)	2.47 (1.20)	2.49 (1.21)	2.52 (.73)	2.23 (.96)
IAT	.44 (.56) <sub>a</sub>	.09 (.42) <sub>b</sub>	.15 (.46)	.12 (.49) <sub>c</sub>

Note: AROS = Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale, DVOG = Devaluation of Own Group, PT= Patterns of Thinking, ER = Emotional Responses, ASB = American Standards of Beauty, IAT = Implicit Association Task. Different subscript letters within rows indicate statistically significant (a/b) or marginal differences (a/c;  $p < .1$ ). Due to computer and human errors six participants' IAT data were lost resulting in a final n of 114 for that measure.

*Explicit Attitudes (Attitudes towards African Americans and White Americans*

*separately*). Regardless of whether participants were primed with supernatural agents (White

Jesus), concrete objects (church) or White men, they did not self-report more cold feelings toward their ingroup (i.e., African Americans) on the thermometer scale than did individuals primed with neutral images ( $M_{\text{White Jesus}} = 88.97$ ,  $SD = 13.18$ ,  $M_{\text{Church}} = 90.93$ ,  $SD = 14.91$ ;  $M_{\text{White Men}} = 93.42$ ,  $SD = 7.19$ ,  $M_{\text{Neutral}} = 92.43$ ,  $SD = 12.08$ ;  $F(3, 117) = .500$ ,  $p = .683$ ). It is important to note that the results reported here are consistent with previous findings that demonstrate that African Americans' self-reported explicit attitudes towards the ingroup are often at or near ceiling (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003; Ashburn-Nardo, Monteith, Arthur, & Bain 2007; Livingston, 2002).

An ANOVA did indicate a significant main effect of priming on participants feelings toward White Americans,  $F(3, 117) = 4.96$ ,  $p = .003$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .114$  (see Table 5 for cell means). Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that participants in the White Jesus condition ( $M = 72.10$ ,  $SD = 16.71$ ) exhibited significantly more warmth toward White Americans than did participants in the neutral condition ( $M = 61.23$ ,  $SD = 13.83$ ),  $p = .027$ , the White male condition ( $M = 58.26$ ,  $SD = 12.58$ ),  $p = .002$ , and the church condition ( $M = 62.03$ ,  $SD = 15.70$ ),  $p = .046$ ). No other significant pairwise comparisons emerged.

*Explicit Attitudes towards Asian Americans.* In order to further examine the specificity of the priming manipulation, I examined whether the priming manipulation, specifically if exposure to White Jesus, affected attitudes towards another racial outgroup other than White Americans (i.e., Asian Americans). ANOVA revealed that regardless of whether participants were primed with White supernatural agents (White Jesus), concrete objects (Church) or White men they did not self-report warmer feelings towards Asian Americans on the thermometer scale than did individuals primed with neutral images ( $M_{\text{White Jesus}} = 65.10$ ,  $SD = 20.41$ ,  $M_{\text{Church}} = 66.40$ ,  $SD = 17.23$ ;  $M_{\text{White Men}} = 66.50$ ,  $SD = 12.19$ ,  $M_{\text{Neutral}} = 61.43$ ,  $SD = 11.31$ ;  $F(3, 117) = .799$ ,  $p = .497$ ).

(see Table 5 for cell means), suggesting that exposure to White religious iconography may only increase positive attitudes towards Whites and not other ethnic groups.

*Intragroup negativity (AROS).* Although ANOVA did not reveal an effect of priming on participants' overall AROS score  $F(3, 117) = .942, p = .423$  (see Table 5 for cell means), there was a significant effect on the Devaluation of Own Group subscale of the AROS  $F(3, 117) = 3.07, p = .030, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .074$ . Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that participants in the White Jesus condition ( $M = 2.80, SD = .90$ ) exhibited significantly more devaluation of their own group than did participants in the neutral condition ( $M = 2.26, SD = .56$ ),  $p = .028$  and marginally more so than participants in the White male condition ( $M = 2.35, SD = .75$ ),  $p = .090$ . ANOVA also indicated a marginal effect of priming on the Patterns of Thinking subscale of AROS  $F(3, 117) = 2.65, p = .052, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .064$ . The means were in the pattern of the prediction ( $M_{\text{White Jesus}} = 3.64, SD = 1.25, M_{\text{Church}} = 3.00, SD = 1.08; M_{\text{White Men}} = 2.98, SD = 1.20, M_{\text{Neutral}} = 2.83, SD = 1.31$ ).

*Implicit anti-Black bias (IAT).* ANOVA indicated a significant main effect of priming on participants' IAT scores,  $F(3, 111) = 3.25, p = .025, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .081$  (see Table 5 for cell means). Post hoc comparisons using Tukey's HSD test indicated that participants in the White Jesus condition ( $M = .44, SD = .56$ ) exhibited significantly more implicit anti-Black bias than did participants in the White male condition ( $M = .09, SD = .42$ ),  $p = .034$ . No other significant pairwise comparisons emerged; however, the difference of the means for implicit anti-Black attitudes between participants in the White Jesus condition and those in the neutral condition ( $M = .12, SD = .49$ ), approached significance ( $p = .065$ ) and were in the direction of predictions.

To control for participants' self-reported religiosity I again used an ANCOVA. This analysis indicated that the IAT difference remained significant even when controlling for participant self-reported religiosity  $F(3, 111) = 3.21, p = .026, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .081$ .

### **Discussion**

Experiment 4 was designed to explore whether Christian image primes would influence Black individuals' intra/intergroup bias. The data revealed that exposure to images of Jesus Christ depicted as White reduces positive attitudes towards the ingroup, as well as increases pro-White attitudes (i.e., greater feelings of warmth towards Whites). This effect remained significant even when controlling for participants' preexisting levels of religiosity. Furthermore exposure to White Jesus did not lead to a general increase in positive attitudes towards all ethnic groups. There was no effect of priming on participants' attitudes towards Asian Americans providing further evidence that exposure to White Jesus increases pro-White attitudes.

The data also revealed that exposure to White Jesus increased Black participants' devaluation of their own group as measured by the Devaluation of Own Group subscale of the AROS. Recall that this subscale measures individuals' judgments of members of their own race based on White cultural standards, values, and beliefs. After being exposed to images of White Jesus, Black participants' judgments of other Black people were more negative than the judgments of Black participants in the control condition. Additionally, exposure to White Jesus marginally increased participants' thinking that maintains the status quo on the Patterns of Thinking subscale of the AROS compared to control. Although the priming manipulation failed to reveal a significant effect on the AROS overall, the effects found on the Devaluation of Own Group and Patterns of Thinking subscales suggest that exposure to images of White Christ do not

influence emotional responses to internalized racism (e.g., shame, anger, embarrassment) or individuals' endorsement and/or adoption of White American cultural standards of beauty.

In addition, exposure to images of White Jesus had an effect on Black participants' implicit pro-White/anti-Black attitudes, namely that exposure to White Jesus increases pro-White/anti-Black bias. Although post-hoc comparison only revealed a marginal effect compared to the control condition, it is important to note that exposure to White Jesus did significantly differ compared to exposure to images of generic White men. This finding suggests that there are qualitative differences between a White supernatural agent who is the son of God and exposure to a generic White male, further supporting the notion that White depictions of Jesus Christ both symbolize and reinforce White supremacy.

This experiment provides initial support that exposure to White religious images can influence Black individuals' explicit and implicit intragroup/intergroup attitudes. Specifically, this experiment provides evidence that depicting Jesus as a White man can increase Black individuals' intragroup bias, explicit Pro-White attitudes, devaluation of the ingroup and implicit pro-White/anti-Black attitudes. It is important to note that the increase in Black participants' intragroup bias was primarily driven by an increase in positive attitudes towards White Americans and not necessarily a reduction in positive attitudes towards the ingroup. However, as mentioned previously, Black Americans self-report explicit attitudes toward their ingroup near ceiling, which may reflect Black individuals' self-protective strategies, which are often adopted by stigmatized groups (Ashburn-Nardo, 2010). As Ashburn-Nardo, highlights:

Indeed, as self-protection from stigma, members of historically oppressed groups may experience greater social pressure than members of historically privileged groups to report strong identification with and pride for their in-groups...yet they live in a culture replete with stereotypic and often negative images of their in-group that, over time, may result in less favorable implicit in-group associations.

Ashburn-Nardo (2010) demonstrates the importance of including explicit, indirect and implicit measures of intragroup bias to get a more complete picture of Blacks' intragroup bias. With the feeling thermometer item alone, we only get a fraction of the story of the influence of White religious iconography on Black participants (i.e., it increases positive attitudes towards Whites); however, with the inclusion of the AROS and implicit measures a more complete picture is painted. Although an increase in positive attitudes to outgroups members is often viewed positively, in societies where there have existed social stratified hierarchies such as the United States, it can often lead to unintended negative consequences (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012). For example, increases in positive attitudes towards Whites have been shown to lead to a number of negative unintended consequences for Blacks (e.g., less identification with the ingroup, underestimation of racial oppression and less participation in collective action that challenges social inequality and benefits the ingroup, Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2010; Wright & Lubensky, 2008). Taken together, the results from Experiment 4 provide compelling evidence that exposure to White religious iconography can reinforce a White supremacist ideology thus negatively influencing Black individuals' intragroup attitudes. Furthermore, the results from this experiment suggest that the increase in intragroup negativity from exposure to White Jesus occurred regardless of participants' self-reported religiosity.

## CHAPTER SIX

### General Discussion

The present research explored whether exposure to Christian images could influence anti-Black attitudes of both White and Black Americans in a United States context. Employing both explicit and implicit measures, I found somewhat consistent evidence that exposure to Christian religious imagery—specifically subliminal exposure to images of Jesus Christ depicted as White—leads *both* White (Experiments 2a, 3) and Black Americans (Experiment 4) to express greater racial bias toward Blacks (3 out of 5 studies). The observed increase in Whites' anti-Black attitudes from exposure to White Jesus did not appear to reflect an increase in fear or disgust towards Black individuals: Participants primed with White Jesus did not express any more fear or disgust toward Black individuals than did other participants (Experiments 2a and 3). Furthermore, the increase in Whites' and Blacks' bias towards Blacks appeared to be due to exposure to White religious iconography and not simply an effect of being primed with White male figures more generally (Experiments 3 and 4), further highlighting, the qualitative difference of White religious supernatural agents and non-supernatural White agents.

The present studies also expanded research on religious primes by investigating whether religious images had similar effects on prejudice as words, as well as exploring whether different aspects of religiosity (i.e., *supernatural cognitions* vs *religious cognitions*) could lead to different patterns of prejudice. The present findings support the conclusion that different conceptualizations of religiosity have different effects on social attitudes and behaviors. Recall that in the prosocial literature, individuals primed with *God* were more likely to help members of the outgroup, whereas individuals primed with *religion* were more likely to help members of the ingroup. Interestingly, the present findings demonstrate that priming with supernatural agents (at

least when depicted as White) leads to *more* rather than *less* bias at an attitudinal level. At first glance, these findings appear contradictory; supernatural agents can lead to helping behavior toward an outgroup in one context but increased racial prejudice in another. Future research is necessary to address this apparent paradox, but for an exploratory explanation for this inconsistency, I turn to the theoretical framework of paternalism (Jackman, 1994). Paternalism is behavior—often expressed as an attitude of superiority—that limits another person’s or group’s liberty or autonomy. Structural and institutional systems of domination as complex as racism embody both paternalistic and negative attitudes to maintain their function (Jackman, 1994, 2005).

For a historical example, take the institution of chattel slavery in the United States, which was commonly justified by Christianity (Cannon, 2008). Racial prejudice and oppression justified by Christianity did so through the use of *both* paternalistic attitudes and anti-Black attitudes. Although many slave owners were ruthless, hostile, and held negative attitudes towards enslaved Africans, there were some who held more “benevolent” attitudes toward enslaved Africans. This latter group of slave owners believed that they were doing God’s work. They believed it was their moral responsibility to help “save” the backward uncivilized African and that slavery was a blessing for these childlike creatures (McGary & Lawson, 1993). Recall that when individuals are primed with God they are more likely to help an outgroup member due to concerns of following God’s moral authority. These moral concerns of doing God’s work may lead to feelings of explicit or implicit moral superiority, which potentially can increase intergroup prejudice (Cohen, Montoya, & Insko, 2006; Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). In addition, helping behavior can be viewed as an example of racial tolerance if directed toward a member of an outgroup, yet research has also demonstrated that prosocial behavior can have

unintended negative consequences. For example, Dixon et al. (2012) highlight that intergroup helping relations are inherently unequal. The act of giving signifies power, which can produce status differences between groups, meaning that helping behavior can have negative effects for disadvantaged groups (Vescio, Gervais, Snyder, & Hoover, 2005). In short, exposure to (White) supernatural agents, at least in the case of God and Jesus Christ, may lead to both paternalistic attitudes (associated with helping behavior) and anti-Black attitudes for White individuals.

### *Implications*

This is the first research, to the author's knowledge, to demonstrate that exposure to images of a religious supernatural agent depicted as White can negatively impact Whites' attitudes towards Blacks, as well as negatively impact Blacks' explicit and implicit intragroup attitudes, and thus providing initial evidence that White religious iconography can reinforce White supremacist ideology. This finding is troubling given how pervasive Christian imagery is in the United States and how commonplace it is to depict this Christian iconography as White, especially in popular media representations. For example, there are many movies and television programs that portray all biblical and religious characters as White; a small sampling includes *The Bible* (2013), *Exodus: Gods and Kings* (2014), *Noah* (2014), *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988), *From the Manger to the Cross* (1913), *Passion of the Christ* (2004), and *The Ten Commandments* (1956). The potential negative effects that these all-White cinematic portrayals of biblical characters may have on racial attitudes suggests film directors should take seriously the call to increase the diversity in casting for such works. In addition, because White religious iconography has the potential to increase implicit anti-Black attitudes for Whites, religious environments or spaces that have religious paintings or pictures of this sort, may be complicating interracial interactions that occur within these contexts.

For Black Americans the implications of this work are equally as troubling, if not more, as they are for Whites. As mentioned earlier, Black Americans tend to be the most religious group in the U.S. with the overwhelming majority identifying as Christian. For Black Americans Christianity has been, and continues to be, a tool used to combat racial oppression in particular, Black Liberation Theology (Taylor, Chatters, & Levin, 2003); however, others have also criticized the Black Church and Black Christianity for the role, albeit unintentional, they have played in the maintenance of White supremacy and Black oppression, both historically (Jones, 1997; Stampp, 1956) and contemporarily (e.g., Akbar, 1996; Wilson, 1998). Many White slave owners converted their slaves to Christianity as a form of social control, that is, Christian indoctrination was seen as an effective method to keep slaves docile and content (Stampp, 1956). Stampp writes,

Through religious instruction the bondsmen [slaves] learned that slavery had divine sanction, that insolence was as much an offence against [White] God as the temporal [White] master... It [Christian doctrine] taught them [slaves] 'respect and obedience to their superiors' made them more 'profitable and servants' and aided the discipline of plantation in a wonderful manner (p. 156-60 as Cited by Wilson, 1998 p. 70; [emphasis added]).

Furthermore, some scholars have argued that Black Christianity continues to negatively impact Blacks by sanctifying material discomfort and suffering while simultaneously emphasizing a better life after death, and by promoting the worship of White Gods; which consciously and unconsciously reinforce associations of Whiteness with godliness and goodness while associating Blackness with ungodliness and badness (Akbar, 1996; Wilson, 1998). Although some of the arguments put forth by those criticizing Black Christianity are well beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to consider some of the criticisms, particularly the worship of White Gods by non-White people when considering the effect of religious iconography on the psychological processes of Black Americans. This is especially true, given that most of the

images of religious iconography that Blacks are exposed to are White (e.g., Jesus, angels, God), even in predominately Black religious establishments.

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

The present research is not without its limitations. For one, our sample consisted of only White and Black individuals. We do not know if the effect of exposure to White supernatural agents extends to respondents of other racial groups. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, it has been theorized that supernatural agents depicted as White both symbolize and reinforce an ideology of White supremacy, thus exposure to such iconography may lead to increases in pro-White bias, as well as anti-Black attitudes among other racial groups such as Latinos and Asian Americans. This might especially be the case among sub-cultures where lighter skin tones are associated with higher status, power, prestige, and higher desirability, whereas, darker and Black skin tones are viewed as inferior and undesirable (Uhlmann et al., 2002).

Another limitation of the current research is that it takes place in what Hood and colleagues (2009) have referred to as the North American Protestant “box”, where most studies on the psychology of religion have been geographically conducted. Future research should step out of this box and conduct research in other regions of the world. However, in regards to the investigation of the effects to exposure to White religious iconography specifically, researchers should be mindful of the sociohistorical context of the country where such research is being conducted. The United States for example has a long complicated and checkered history with race, White supremacy, Christianity tied to slavery, and colonialization. I suspect if the experiments here were conducted in other countries that have a similar history as the United States, or their own unique history of dealing with White supremacy, European colonialism, and

imperialism, the results from those experiments would mirror the results presented here. A particularly interesting future direction in this domain that would expand this work would be to conduct experiments in predominately Black countries that have an extensive history with White supremacy and White colonialism (e.g., Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa and Jamaica) and where a significant number of the population has been converted to Christianity and is exposed to images of a White Jesus. A related vein of research would be to investigate the effects of White religious iconography in non-White areas of the world that have had a substantial presence of Christian missionaries and thus, heavy exposure to White religious iconography. Furthermore it would be interesting to do a comparative study looking at the intragroup attitudes of those that have been converted to Christianity and those who have objected to convert or who have not yet had contact with Western Christian missionaries.

Future inquiry should also explore the effects of exposure to Black religious iconography on Black individuals' implicit intragroup attitudes. Recall that Black individuals commonly self-report explicit pro-Black attitudes near ceiling, while holding more mixed implicit attitudes toward their ingroup. While Black individuals sometimes display outgroup favoritism, they also at times display neither an ingroup or outgroup bias on implicit measures. Exposure to Black religious iconography may increase Black participants' implicit ingroup favoritism; a result that could be viewed positively or negatively (i.e., an absence of ingroup or outgroup bias has been interpreted as a lack of implicit prejudice). However, considering the work on social identity that illustrates that ingroup favoritism has self-esteem enhancing properties that are adaptive (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), as well as the research that demonstrates that negative implicit intragroup attitudes are linked to lower levels of overall psychological well-being for African Americans (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2007), finding ways to increase implicit ingroup favoritism for

members of systematically oppressed groups, such as African Americans, may be an endeavor worth pursuing. Research has shown that even individuals assigned to minimal groups<sup>7</sup> exhibit ingroup favoritism (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2001); however, the prevalence of cultural White supremacy and anti-Blackness in the United States weakens implicit ingroup favoritism for Black people, an otherwise natural occurring bias. In sum, exploring ways to increase Blacks' ingroup implicit attitudes, one in which may be exposure to Black religious iconography, warrants further research.

Another extension of the present research would be to explore the effects of gendered iconography (e.g., prominent in Catholicism) on implicit and explicit gender-related attitudes. Past research has demonstrated a negative relationship between religiosity and egalitarian gender attitudes and gender role expectations (Abouchedid & Nasser, 2007; Bang et al. 2005). This work typically demonstrates that both men and women who are religious are more likely to support a patriarchal society (i.e., males hold primary power; predominate in roles of political leadership, moral authority, social privilege and control of property). Feminist theologians have argued that conservative gender ideology may be explained in part by a male image of God (Christ, 2012; Daly, 1985). Correlational work on the effects of gendered views of God on ideology has demonstrated that individuals who hold a maternal image of God tend to also hold more liberal political views (Greeley 1988). Furthermore Whitehead, (2012) found evidence suggesting that the more masculine individuals believed God to be, the more conservative their gender ideology tended to be. The results from these correlational studies coupled with the fact

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<sup>7</sup> Minimal groups refers to an experimental methodology that randomly assigns participants to ingroups and outgroups, often based on arbitrary, superficial or bogus information. The Minimal Group Paradigm aims to investigate the minimal necessary and sufficient conditions for ingroup favouritism and out-group derogation to occur based on a sense of group membership (for an example see Taifel, 1970)

that 95% of Americans believe in God and almost half of that 95% recognize their God as “He” (Froese & Bader, 2010), illustrates the need for future experimental work in this area.

### **Conclusion**

In *Ebony* magazine, in the late 1950’s, Martin Luther King Jr. had a column called “Advice for the Living” where people asked the civil-rights leader questions spanning a wide array of topics. In one edition, King was asked, “Why did God make Jesus White, when the majority of peoples in the world are non-White?” King replied,

The color of Jesus’ skin is of little or no consequence. The significance of Jesus lay, not in His color, but in His unique God-consciousness and His willingness to surrender His will to God’s will. He was the Son of God, not because of His external biological make-up, but because of His internal spiritual commitment. He would have been no more significant if His skin had been black. He is no less significant because His skin was white.

The point King and many who are asked a similar form of this question attempt to make, is that Jesus transcends race and the color of His skin is of “little or no consequence.” However the work presented here suggests otherwise; the color of Jesus’ skin is of consequence, specifically in that White depictions of Jesus can lead to negative attitudes towards Blacks. Although the results here provide evidence that priming of White supernatural agents influence Whites’ anti-Black attitudes and Blacks intragroup bias, there remain many unanswered questions regarding the mechanisms underlying the relationship between religion and racial prejudice.

Researchers have explored some of the possible social and psychological processes that may help explain the relationship between the two constructs—such as religious group identification leading to ingroup/outgroup distinctions, religious conventionalism and racism (i.e., values of social conformity and respect for tradition underlie both religiosity and racism), and the activation of religious concepts potentially activating other related concepts associated with racial prejudice (e.g., Protestant Work Ethic). The evidence provided here suggests that

exposure to White supernatural agents may activate and reinforce a White supremacist ideology, which could be responsible, at least in part, for the relationship between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes. That said, I do not suggest that exposure to White religious iconography is the sole cause of anti-Black attitudes, nor do I propose that the influence of religious iconography always has negative effects. To the contrary, as noted previously, the effects of such priming seem to depend on the precise conceptualization of religiosity (e.g., religious cognitions vs. supernatural agent cognitions), the racial depiction of the religious icon (e.g., White vs. Black Jesus), the salience of the priming itself (e.g., supraliminal vs. subliminal), and the precise outcome measure assessed (e.g., helping behavior vs. generalized racial attitude). The present findings add to our understanding of the complex relationship between religiosity and anti-Black attitudes, while also identifying additional research questions for future exploration.

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**Appendix A: Measure of Daily Spiritual Experiences** (assessed on a scale of 1-6; higher scores equal *less* spirituality). All six items should be summed together for each participant.

The list that follows includes items you may or may not experience. Please consider if and how often you have these experiences, and try to disregard whether you feel you should or should not have them. In addition, a number of items use the word 'God.' If this word is not a comfortable one please substitute another idea that calls to mind the divine or holy for you.

1. I feel God's presence.
  - 1 - Many times a day
  - 2 - Every day
  - 3 - Most days
  - 4 - Some days
  - 5 - Once in a while
  - 6 - Never or almost never
  
2. I experience a connection to all of life.
  - 1 - Many times a day
  - 2 - Every day
  - 3 - Most days
  - 4 - Some days
  - 5 - Once in a while
  - 6 - Never or almost never
  
3. I find strength in my religion or spirituality.
  - 1 - Many times a day
  - 2 - Every day
  - 3 - Most days
  - 4 - Some days
  - 5 - Once in a while
  - 6 - Never or almost never
  
4. 5. I find comfort in my religion or spirituality.
  - 1 - Many times a day
  - 2 - Every day
  - 3 - Most days
  - 4 - Some days
  - 5 - Once in a while
  - 6 - Never or almost never
  
5. I feel God's love for me, directly.
  - 1 - Many times a day
  - 2 - Every day
  - 3 - Most days
  - 4 - Some days
  - 5 - Once in a while
  - 6 - Never or almost never
  
6. I feel God's love for me, through others.
  - 1 - Many times a day
  - 2 - Every day
  - 3 - Most days
  - 4 - Some days
  - 5 - Once in a while
  - 6 - Never or almost never



## Appendix C: Racial Argument Scale

Items

### **Positive Arguments**

Because the world is a diverse place with many different cultures and people, requiring college students to take courses such as African American studies is a benefit to them. These courses provide students with better understandings of other ethnic groups, cultures, and value systems. This educational experience can enrich students' lives through cultural awareness.

*Conclusion:* Courses like African American studies should be required in the education of all college students.

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Articles written about athletes consistently describe White athletes as "intelligent," "hard-working," and "crafty" and describe African American athletes as "talented," "flashy," and "athletic." These biased descriptions serve to promote the stereotype that African American athletes are not as intelligent as White athletes and fail to credit African American athletes for their intelligence, discipline, and work ethics.

*Conclusion:* Biased descriptions of athletes should be avoided to stop perpetuating the stereotype that African American athletes are less intelligent than White athletes.

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The U.S. government is built on a representative democracy that means that politicians are elected to represent their constituents in making the country's decisions. However, the political construction of power in the United States does not allow adequate representation of African Americans, as shown by the few African American politicians who have attained political positions in the highest levels of our government.

*Conclusion:* The political parties should allow and support the rise of African American politicians within the parties to guarantee fair representation of African Americans in the government of this country.

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Sickle cell anemia is a disease that is inherited by many African American children. The disease is potentially fatal, but research to combat the disease has not been as well-funded as research concerning ailments that influence Whites as well. The differences in funding are inexcusable, especially since sickle cell anemia is a deadly disease, killing many African Americans every year.

*Conclusion:* Research to combat sickle cell anemia needs to be as well-funded as research for other diseases.

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*Waiting to Exhale* and other major motion pictures starring primarily African American casts have been too infrequent in U.S. theaters. Too often, African American actors and actresses have been relegated to minor roles in Hollywood productions, or to roles as villains, and it is about time that African Americans like Angela Bassett and Denzel Washington can achieve starring roles.

*Conclusion:* African Americans should be represented in motion pictures in starring roles more frequently than they were in the past.

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*Recent educational studies have shown that African Americans who do poorly in school may do so because of language difficulties and cultural differences. It has been argued that the use of familiar language and relevant cultural examples in the education of African American children can help to improve the performances that African American children show in school.*

*Conclusion:* School systems should incorporate material into their curricula that is sensitive to African American culture in order to better educate African Americans.

### **Negative Arguments**

Experts have argued that SAT scores for African Americans may be lower than for Whites due to the poorer opportunities available to African Americans for education. However, the SAT is a valid predictor of college performance and no concessions should be made for African Americans. Lower scores mean poorer performance, and a sliding scale would only promote future failure for African Americans with low SAT scores regardless of why they get low SAT scores.

*Conclusion:* African Americans should not be given leniency for low SAT scores in the college admissions process.

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Rodney King was the African American motorist who was beaten by police officers in Los Angeles in an incident captured on video. The incident was broadcast as an unmotivated racial assault on King by the police, but this may not be entirely accurate. King was beaten following a long car chase and resisted arrest upon his capture, and the physical response by the police may have been somewhat warranted.

*Conclusion:* Rodney King may have at least partially provoked the beating he received from the Los Angeles police officers.

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It has been argued that welfare programs are too often exploited by African Americans in this country. Welfare offices in every state appear packed with African Americans applying for and collecting welfare benefits. These high numbers of African American welfare recipients are disproportionate for their numbers in the general population and other racial groups are suffering because they cannot receive benefits.

*Conclusion:* The numbers of African Americans receiving welfare should be limited to provide benefits for others.

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President Bill Clinton issued an apology to African Americans for the institution of slavery that existed in this country more than 130 years ago. Clinton's apology was inappropriate because he and the present government have no connection with the long-abolished practice of slavery and the apology may instead incite current tension in race relations.

*Conclusion:* President Clinton should not have apologized to African Americans for slavery.

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Christians celebrate Christmas, the Jewish celebrate Chanukah, and some African Americans celebrate Kwanzaa, a holiday originating from African culture, during the winter "holiday season." Many people had never heard about Kwanzaa until recently and suggest that since it appears to be a "new" holiday, it must be a second-tier holiday seeking to emulate Christmas without much inherent significance.

*Conclusion:* Kwanzaa is not a holiday on the same level of importance as Christmas.

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It has been shown that White Americans score 15 points higher on IQ tests than African Americans. This difference in IQ scores has even been shown when other variables such as education levels and socioeconomic status are taken into account.

*Conclusion:* Whites are more intelligent than African Americans.

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The United Negro College Fund helps to pay the tuition and expenses that allow African Americans to go to college. While no doubt benefiting African American students, this organization is unconstitutionally biased in that it does not offer financial assistance to White students as well. Meanwhile, thousands of White students continue to miss out on furthering their education due to financial limitations.

*Conclusion:* The United Negro College Fund should be forced, by law, to provide financial resources to both White and African American students.

## **Appendix D: The Appropriated Racial Oppression Scale (AROS)**

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements, on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

### **Factor 1: Emotional Responses**

- 54. There have been times when I have been embarrassed to be a member of my race
- 34. I wish I could have more respect for my racial group
- 04. I feel critical about my racial group
- 49. Sometimes I have a negative feeling about being a member of my race
- 39. In general, I am ashamed of members of my racial group because of the way they act
- 68. When interacting with other members of my race, I often feel like I don't fit in
- 13. I don't really identify with my racial group's values and beliefs

### **Factor 2: American Standard of Beauty**

- 27. I find persons with lighter skin-tones to be more attractive
- 52. I would like for my children to have light skin
- 22. I find people who have straight and narrow noses to be more attractive
- 17. I prefer my children not to have broad noses
- 42. I wish my nose were narrower
- 02. Good hair (i.e. straight) is better

### **Factor 3: Devaluation of Own Group**

- 69. Because of my race, I feel useless at times
- 38. I wish I were not a member of my race
- 64. Whenever I think a lot about being a member of my racial group, I feel depressed
- 55. Whites are better at a lot of things than people of my race
- 09. People of my race don't have much to be proud of
- 58. It is a compliment to be told "You don't act like a member of your race"
- 59. When I look in the mirror, sometimes I do not feel good about what I see because of my race
- 14. I feel that being a member of my racial group is a shortcoming

### **Factor 4: Patterns of Thinking**

- 36. People of my race shouldn't be so sensitive about race/racial matters
- 51. People take racial jokes too seriously
- 06. Although discrimination in America is real, it is definitely overplayed by some members of my race