

Performative “Wokeness”: Exploring Blacks’ perceptions of White Allies who confront

anti-Black racism

A thesis

submitted by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Psychology

TUFTS UNIVERSITY

August 2017

ADVISER:

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Abstract

How does the racial identity of someone who confronts racial bias effect how the message is perceived? Earlier work on persuasion and confrontation has examined aspects of the messenger, message, and perceiver in the effectiveness of confronting racial bias. Given that past research has focused on non-stigmatized individuals' (e.g. Whites, men) perceptions of stigmatized individuals (e.g. Blacks, women), the current experiments focused on Blacks' perceptions of White messengers. In Experiment 1, Black and White participants evaluated a Black or White messenger who wrote an article making an extreme, mild, or no claim of racial bias. We hypothesized that Black messengers giving extreme messages will receive more backlash than White messengers among White perceivers. However, this pattern should reverse for Black perceivers, with White messengers receiving greater backlash than Blacks. Findings did not support the hypotheses. Experiment 2 was designed to address limitations and unresolved issues in Experiment 1. Findings from this study provided evidence for a race-specific evaluative backlash against White messengers who make mild claims. Furthermore, perceptions of the messengers' group-based guilt fully mediated the three-way interaction between messenger race, participants race, message extremity and backlash. Overall, these findings identify some conditions under which White individuals can or cannot effectively discuss racial bias amongst stigmatized individuals.

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In a 2016 poll, a majority of Americans indicated that more changes need to be made in order for Black and White Americans to have equal rights, starkly contrasting from two years prior when less than half of Americans believed that more changes needed to be made (Pew Research Center, 2016). Whether this change can be attributed to the media’s increased coverage of racist incidents such as the water crisis effecting Flint, Michigan, a predominantly Black city, or the murders of nine Black Americans in a South Carolina church by a White supremacist, people are moving away from the “post racial America” fantasy that was once widely adopted shortly after the inauguration of former president Barack Obama. However, even when discrimination is blatant, Blacks and members from other stigmatized groups are met with harsh criticism when making mention of possible prejudice or bias (Kaiser & Miller, 2003). Stigmatized individuals are often met with labels of trouble maker or complainer when confronting bias relevant to their group; whereas allies, non-stigmatized individuals (e.g., Whites, men) who confront on behalf of stigmatized individuals, are seen as more credible and less of a complainer (Shelton & Sewart, 2004; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001; Eliezer & Major, 2011; Cadieux & Chasteen, 2015; Czopp & Monteith, 2003).

Past literature on confrontation focuses largely on non-stigmatized individuals’ perceptions of stigmatized individuals who confront; as well as non-stigmatized individuals’ perceptions of other non-stigmatized individuals who confront. However, there is a gap in the literature examining how non-stigmatized individuals, who are confronting on behalf of stigmatized individuals, might be perceived by stigmatized individuals. The current work examines the context in which anti-black racism confrontations by White allies are well received

amongst stigmatized individuals.

Stigmatized Individuals who confront

To conceptualize how individuals might respond to racial bias confrontations, we consulted work on how message and messenger characteristics affect perceiver impressions. Group membership of the messenger (e.g. race and gender) has been shown to influence persuasion effectiveness, such that stigmatized individuals (e.g. Blacks and women) are less impactful during confrontational encounters (Gulker, Mark & Monteith, 2013; Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Petty, Fleming, & White, 1999), compared to non-stigmatized individuals. In addition, stigmatized individuals who confront bias in their own defense (e.g. attributing a failing grade to discrimination), are seen as complainers who are overreacting and/or operating in their own interests, compared to non-stigmatized individuals who ostensibly receive no external benefits from confronting (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Similarly, Black individuals who confront a general idea of bias (e.g. Blacks have been discriminated against throughout history), with no ostensible self-interest, are still viewed negatively by White perceivers, compared to White individuals who confront (Schultz & Maddox, 2013).

Along with the group membership of the messenger, message characteristics can further exacerbate negative confrontational outcomes. Messages that are more hostile (i.e. combative and aggressive), accusatory, and intense are more likely to be perceived negatively by the target, compared to when the messages are less hostile, accusatory, and intense. (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). These negative impressions increase when the hostile message is delivered by a Black (vs. White) individual (Czopp et al., 2006). Research by Schultz and Maddox (2013) showed that Black messengers face a race-specific evaluative backlash when confronting racial bias: participants more negatively rated Black compared with

White messengers when expressing extreme messages that, while not hostile, contained stronger, more assertive, and more blunt statements. This backlash was not shown in the control (non-confrontation) condition in which no racial bias claim was made, when messengers expressed mild claims of racial bias, or when the messenger was White, suggesting that backlash is specific to an extreme confrontation of racial bias by a stigmatized group member. Furthermore, results from Experiment 2 showed that participants who strongly believed in meritocracy and heard low-quality arguments were more likely to evaluate Black messengers more harshly (Schultz & Maddox, 2013).

The current work aims to replicate past findings as well as extend the literature by examining how message extremity effects Black individuals' perceptions of White allies. In addition, we examine how beliefs held by the perceiver influences perceptions of non-stigmatized messengers.

Non-stigmatized individuals (Allies) who confront

Confronting bias does come at a slight cost for non-stigmatized individuals. Across two experiments, Eliezer and Major (2011) found that participants evaluated bystanders who confronted discrimination on behalf of someone else more negatively than bystanders who did not confront. Similarly, heterosexual men who chose to confront antigay bias were viewed as a complainer, disliked more, and were more likely to have their sexual orientation misperceived, compared to those who chose not to confront (Cadieux & Chasteen, 2015).

One reason why allies are regarded more positively than non-stigmatized individuals might be because of the assumption that they are not acting within their own self-interest, as their group is unlikely to be seen as the beneficiary of their actions (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). Tajfel and Turner's research on social identity theory (1979) suggest that individuals are most likely to act

within their own groups' best interest. Persuasion theories suggest that when individuals confront in favor of their own group's interest (e.g. a Black individual saying Black lives matter), others are less likely to process the message fully; whereas, individuals who argue against their group's best interest (e.g. a White individual saying Black lives matter) often elicit greater message processing and thus greater acceptance (Petty, Fleming, Priester, & Feinstein, 2001).

The literature on confrontation largely suggests that there are far fewer costs to confronting bias for non-stigmatized individuals, compared to stigmatized confronters, but more costly for those who do confront compared to individuals who do not confront. When the costs of confrontation are high, individuals are less likely to confront on behalf of others. In addition, individuals who believe that they will personally benefit from confronting on behalf of someone else are more likely to confront (Good, Moss-Racusin, & Sanchez & 2012).

In the context of stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, the aim of confronting is to change negative attitudes and personal biases about stigmatized groups that translate into unequal treatment. Because allies are seen as risking more than they would gain during these confrontations, they are viewed differently than stigmatized individuals who would expectantly benefit from these confrontations. However, the research on non-target confrontation largely explores non-stigmatized participants' perceptions of other non-stigmatized individuals who confront. Thus, it is unclear whether or not stigmatized individuals' will perceive White confronters as completely altruistic rather than self-serving.

Stigmatized Individuals Perceptions of Allies

Although one can anticipate that Blacks will be highly likely to endorse confrontations of anti-black racism, there may be reasons to believe that Whites who confront anti-black racism are not always immune to backlash from Blacks. Shortly after the 2016 Presidential election, a

trend involving White allies wearing safety pins arose in attempts to confront bias and show solidarity with people of color, as well as women, who might face intimidation or threat following the election results (Hawkins, 2016). These seemingly well-meaning allies faced a fury of backlash from minorities who believed the action was “performative wokeness” and “an emblem of White guilt”. That is, because Whites made up a large percentage of the voters responsible for the election results, Whites who were not in favor of the election results experienced guilt about being a member of their racial group. A writer for the website Mic.com noted that, “[The safety pin] signifies almost nothing at all. It is a self-administered pat on the back for being a decent human being.” (Phillip, 2016). Thus, anecdotally, there is reason to believe that the psychosocial benefits of confronting (e.g. assuaging white guilt; being seen as a good person by minorities) might in fact outweigh the costs for allies.

People have a high desire to view themselves as good and virtuous (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Blasi, 2004). Thus behaving, or being a member of a group that’s behaving, in a way that contradicts a sense of moral self, leads to negative emotions (Monin & Jordan, 2009). These feelings have been shown to push people to engage in actions that figuratively cleanse themselves of their groups past transgressions and reassert their moral selves (e.g. wearing a safety pin as a symbol of solidarity) (Tetlock et. al, 2000). Instead of being seen as a pro-social act, racial bias confrontations from a White ally can be perceived by Blacks as a compensatory act, resulting from an individuals’ guilt regarding past wrongdoings and the subsequent desire to be seen as good and moral.

In the context of White allyship, it is unclear whether or not simply speaking out against racial injustice is enough to have a positive impact on stigmatized individuals. Rather it is possible that this particular form of advocacy might have an adverse effect on perceptions of

allies. Thus, the same exact behavior from a White ally can be interpreted as a seemingly sympathetic and positive behavior by other White individuals, but might incite backlash from Black individuals.

The current research

There's a broad range of research on what is considered confrontation. Previous studies have focused on stigmatized individuals who claim that they, themselves, were the victims of discrimination (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Similarly, these confrontations usually manifest in the form of a messenger vs. perceiver in which the messenger is addressing the behavior of the individual being confronted (e.g. a Black individual confronts a White coworker about an insensitive racial remark). The racial confrontation scenario of current interest differs in that the messenger is not directly addressing the negative actions of the perceiver, but rather confronting the general idea of racism and ongoing societal issues involving anti-black racial bias. Non-stigmatized individuals often see the mere discussion of systemic racism, sexism, and other forms of bias as a personal accusation (Crittle & Maddox, 2017). Thus, rather than exploring the messenger/message recipient dynamic, we explore confrontation in terms of the messenger and the perceiver. In addition, previous studies have focused on White individuals' perceptions of Black messengers (Schultz & Maddox, 2013; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Czopp & Monteith, 2003). The current work focuses on Black individuals' perceptions of White messengers. Understanding the factors that limit White allyship can lead to ways for non-stigmatized individuals to be more positively received as allies, removing some of the burden of confronting from stigmatized individuals.

The present work attempted to replicate findings from Schultz and Maddox (2013) amongst White perceivers as well as extend the current research on confrontation and allyship.

We hypothesized that Black messengers would experience evaluative backlash relative to White messengers when presenting extreme arguments. Our novel prediction was a reversal of this pattern among Black perceivers: White messengers who make extreme claims of racial bias will face backlash relative to Black messengers. Experiment 2 is a replication of Experiment 1 that seeks to address unresolved issues involving the materials in Experiment 1. Furthermore, Experiment 2 explores whether perceptions of the messengers' racial guilt acts as a mediator between messenger race, participant race, message extremity, and negative impressions.

Experiment 1

Experiment 1 examined the relationship between racial identity and the potential for backlash by exploring how a White (vs Black) messenger was viewed by a Black perceiver. We also explored whether or not backlash is exacerbated based on the extremity of the racial bias message being expressed. To examine these issues, Experiment 1 simulated an online interaction. Participants read an article written by a Black or White man. In the article, the messenger wrote a short opinion piece that either extremely or mildly claimed societal discrimination toward Blacks or did not make claims of discrimination (control).

We expected the results to reveal a three-way interaction between messenger race, participant race, and message extremity, such that stigmatized group members (i.e. Black perceivers) would be more likely to perceive a non-stigmatized group member (i.e. White messenger) more negatively, and therefore rate them less favorably than the Black messenger when each claimed discrimination, especially when the claim was extreme. We did not expect any differences in evaluations for messengers in the control condition, regardless of race.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 396 (196 Black, 200 White; 162 female)

individuals aged between 18-72 years ($M = 33.64$, $SD = 10.16$) who completed the study online via Amazon Mechanical Turk for \$2 compensation. They were randomly assigned to the conditions in a 2 (messenger race: Black or White) \times 2 (participant race: Black or White) \times 3 (message extremity: extreme, mild, or control) between-subjects design. The method, materials, and procedure were based on those used by Schultz & Maddox (2013).

Materials

Messenger race manipulation. Participants viewed a blog purportedly written by a male confederate who was either Black or White, shown in a photograph. Photo stimuli consisted of four males (two Black and two White) that had been used in a previous study (Minear & Park, 2004).

Extremity of message manipulation. Participants viewed a blog that included a written post in which the author either extremely, mildly, or did not claim that racial bias was a problem on the Tufts University campus (see Schultz & Maddox, 2013). Participants in the extreme and mild condition read a statement that focused on “Culture Houses on Campus”. Both statements focused on the need for an Africana house on campus, but the extreme speech used more forthright and blunt statements (e.g. “I think that it is important for Blacks to be able to connect with a Black community, especially because Tufts is a predominantly White campus. I definitely think that it is unnecessary for White people to have their own house. I mean everywhere is a White house”). In the mild condition, the message was less direct and assertive (e.g., “I think that it is good that Tufts offers an Africana house. I think that it is important for Black students to be able to connect with a Black community. I don’t know if there is a White house or not”). The blog in the control condition discussed dorm life on college campus with no mention of race (e.g. “Dorm life is a great part of the college experience.”).

Based on pre-testing from previous Schultz & Maddox (2013), participants rated speech for quality and extremity (on a 7-point scale from *not at all* to *very much*). Participants rated the extreme message ($M = 4.06$) as more extreme than the control speech ($M = 1.89$), $t(28) = 3.53$, $p = .001$, $r = .55$, and the mild speech ($M = 3.08$), $t(28) = 2.12$, $p < .05$, $r = .37$. The mild speech was non-significantly more extreme than the control speech, $t(28) = 1.62$, $p = .116$, $r = .29$. In terms of quality, the extreme speech ($M = 3.18$) and the mild speech ($M = 2.44$) did not vary in argument quality, $t(45) = 1.52$, *ns*.

Procedure

Because the goal was to compare the reactions of Black and White perceivers, participants first took a pre-screening survey asking them to indicate their race along with other demographic questions. Participants who indicated either Black or White as their race were given a link to the experiment; participants who indicated a race other than Black or White were thanked and prompted to exit the browser.

Participants read instructions that they would be taking part in a study exploring online interactions. They were then told that they would read an article and would subsequently write a comment in response. Next, participants viewed a two-paragraph article that included the manipulation of the independent variables. Next, participants were asked to complete a number measures, described below. After the study, participants were debriefed and thanked.

Measures

Impression ratings indices. Participants rated the messenger on 15 items measuring positive impressions and on 6 items assessing negative impressions (on 7-point scales from *not at all* to *very much*). Negative items assessed whether the messenger was hypersensitive, racist, a complainer, hostile, emotional, and argumentative. Positive items assessed whether the

messenger was likable, friendly, honest, easy to get along with, intelligent, independent, responsible, optimistic, respectable, considerate, nice to converse with, made a good impression, would be a good friend, would be a good coworker, and had a good personality (Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Positive items were reverse scored and combined with the negative items to create a negativity index ($\alpha = .82$).

Persuasiveness. Participants rated the speech on four items measuring persuasiveness on 7-point scales (*not at all to very much*). Items assessed participant's opinions of the speech (i.e., how much it was persuasive, convincing, high in quality, and how much they liked it; $\alpha = .95$; Schultz & Maddox, 2013).

Results

Negative impressions. A 2 (messenger race: Black or White) \times 2 (participant race: Black or White) \times 3 (message extremity: extreme, mild, or control ANOVA yielded three significant main effects. There was a significant main effect for message extremity, $F(2,382) = 31.19, p = .000, \eta^2 = .140$. Simple effects tests revealed that participants rated messengers who made extreme ($M = 3.45$), $t(223) = -8.02, p = .001$ and mild claims ($M = 3.33$), $t(264) = -7.54, p = .001$ more negatively than those who made no racial claim ($M = 1.99$). There was not, however, any significant difference between the extreme and mild conditions, $t(295) = -.633, p = .53$. Additionally, a main effect of the participant race indicated that White participants ($M = 3.38$) were more likely to negatively rate the messenger compared to Black participants ($M = 2.68$), regardless of messenger's race $F(1,382) = 11.17, p = .001, \eta^2 = .028$. Finally, a main effect of messenger race indicated that the Black messenger was rated more negatively than the White messenger $F(1, 382) = 6.27, p = .01, \eta^2 = .016$.

Based on previous research, we predicted an evaluative backlash for Black vs. White messengers expressing extreme messages from a White perceiver. In our novel hypothesis, we expected a reversal – evaluative backlash toward White vs. Black messengers – from a Black perceiver, possibly moderated by extremity of message. However, results did not support our predictions. There was no significant interaction between participant race and messenger race, $F(1,382) = 1.80, p = .18, \eta^2 = .01$, nor was there a significant three-way interaction between messenger race, participant race, and extremity of message $F(2, 382) = 1.49, p = .23, \eta^2 = .01$.

There was however, a significant interaction between the extremity of the message and the race of the participant $F(2, 382) = 3.82, p = .02, \eta^2 = .02$. In an unexpected finding, White participants gave the most negative ratings to messengers in the mild condition ($M = 3.83$), compared to Black participants ($M = 2.78$), $F(1, 167) = 20.14, p = .000, \eta^2 = .11$. There was no difference between White participants in the extreme condition ($M = 3.59$) and Black participants in the extreme condition ($M = 3.29$), $F(1, 95) = 1.58, p = .21, \eta^2 = .02$, or between White ($M = 2.12$) and Black participants ($M = 1.85$) in the neutral condition, $F(1, 126) = 2.52, p = .30, \eta^2 = .01$.

Persuasiveness. Participant race significantly influenced persuasiveness ratings, $F(1, 382) = 15.21, p = .000, \eta^2 = .038$, such that White participants rated the arguments as less persuasive than Black participants. There was a significant main effect for message extremity, $F(2,382) = 31.19, p < .05, \eta^2 = .140$, such that participants rated the argument presented in the mild ($M = 3.48$), $t(264) = 7.05, p = .000$ and extreme condition ($M = 3.71$), $t(223) = 4.96, p = .15$ as less persuasive than the control condition ($M = 4.49$), regardless of race. No other main effects or interactions reached significance (all $ps > .05$).

Discussion

This study diverges from previous research (Schultz & Maddox, 2013) by showing an unexpected backlash against messengers who made mild claims of racial bias, rather than extreme claims of racial bias. More importantly, the study did not support the hypothesis of a backlash against White messengers by Black participants. These findings could be due to several methodological differences across investigations. While the current study was conducted using an online sample of participants, the original study was conducted at Tufts, a Northeastern, liberal-leaning campus where the topic discussed in the blog (cultural houses on predominantly White campuses) is a more relevant topic for the college participants. A topic relevant to today's racial climate and society as a whole (i.e., not limited to college students) was selected for Experiment 2. Also, participants in the original Schultz & Maddox (2013) study viewed a videotaped speech delivered by a confederate, while the participants in the current study read a blog post that was transcribed from the original speech. Because of this it is difficult to determine whether or not the quality of the racial message condition was being manipulated as well as the extremity.

Also, researchers were unable to obtain ratings of the current photos used for this study. In Experiment 1, photos were obtained from a lab computer with the assumption that there were available statistics accompanying the materials. Unfortunately, the database that the photo stimuli were taken from is no longer accessible. Factors such as, attractiveness, hostility, etc., might play a role in how perceivers view the messenger and subsequently receive the message. Pre-testing new stimuli will ensure that the photos used do not significantly differ from one another on these other dimensions.

Experiment 2

Experiment 1, did not support our initial hypothesis of an evaluative backlash against Black messengers from a White perceiver nor for White messengers from a Black perceiver. Experiment 2 was designed to address the limitations of Experiment 1. For Experiment 2 we pretested new stimuli to ensure that the faces used did not significantly differ in terms of characteristics that might affect perceiver's perceptions and subsequent ratings of the messenger. Also, participants read about a topic involving a current societal issue (i.e. Black Lives Matter). The articles used were pre-tested in terms of message quality and extremity. In addition to our original hypotheses we explore the mechanisms that might be driving the potential backlash against White messengers.

Stigmatized Individuals Perceptions of Allies Revisited

As discussed above, prior research suggests that Blacks and women who claim discrimination may be perceived negatively compared to Whites and men because audiences see them as confronting out of self-interest. It is possible that a similar mechanism underlies Blacks' perceptions of White ally confronters. Research suggests that people react emotionally when informed about their group's transgressions and therefore experience group-based guilt. (Branscombe et al., 2002; Smith, 1993; Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003, Lickel et al., 2005). This form of guilt centers attention on the self, rather than the group that has been harmed (Leach et al., 2002). Another symptom of group-based guilt is an individuals' discomfort in the fact that their in-group is responsible for the oppression of others, resulting in an attempt to make amends (Barkan, 2000). Because prosocial behavior involves putting other's before one's own interests, engaging in prosocial behavior for a self-interested gain (i.e. reducing feelings of guilt), can be viewed as less morally pure than engaging in prosocial behavior free from self-interested

motives (Newman & Cain, 2014; Zlatev & Miller, 2016).

A study by Newman & Cain (2014) provided evidence for the tainted altruism theory which suggests that the presumed presence of self-interest in the charitable domain was viewed negatively. Results showed that individuals who conducted pro-social acts that resulted in personal and societal benefits were seen as less moral than non-pro-social acts of self-interest that produced no societal benefit. Similarly, research has shown that people are judged harshly if it is assumed that they would only engage in a prosocial action if they benefited from doing the act (Lin, Zlatev, & Miller, 2016).

For Blacks, White allies who confront anti-black racism might be perceived as using the confrontation to mitigate their group-based guilt and thus benefiting from the confrontation. Experiment 2 examines whether perceptions of the messengers' racial guilt mediated the relationship between messenger race, participant race, message extremity and backlash.

Hypothesis 1. Past work indicates that stigmatized individuals elicit more negative reactions when making claims of racial bias, when the messenger is non-stigmatized, and when the message is extreme (Schultz & Maddox, 2013). Therefore, we expect to replicate this finding of a messenger race by message extremity interaction amongst White participants. We also propose that this interaction will occur amongst Black participants who interact with a White messenger with extreme claims.

Hypothesis 2. We hypothesize that amongst Black participants, perceptions of the messengers' group-based guilt will act as a mediator in the interaction between messenger race and message extremity.

Method

Participants and design. Participants were 400 (201 Black, 199 White; 234 female, 164

male, 2 participants did not indicate a gender) individuals who completed the study online via Amazon Mechanical Turk for \$1.50 compensation. They were randomly assigned to the conditions in a 2 (messenger race: Black or White) \times 2 (participant race: Black or White) \times 3 (message extremity: extreme, mild, or control) between-subjects design.

Stimulus Materials

Messenger race. Participants viewed an article purportedly written by a male confederate who was either Black or White, shown in a photograph. Photo stimuli consisted of four males (two Black and two White) taken from the Chicago face database (Ma, Correll & Wittenbrink, 2015; see Appendix B). All confederates wore plain, solid shirts and sit at the same distance from the camera to reveal their head and upper torso. Confederate's faces did not vary significantly in perceived attractiveness ($M_{Black} = 3.93$, $M_{White} = 3.86$) or perceived hostility ($M_{Black} = 4.30$ vs $M_{White} = 4.20$).

Extremity of message. Participants viewed a blog that included a written post in which the author either extremely, mildly, or did not claim that racial bias was a problem that Blacks faced in America. Participants in both the mild and extreme condition read an article about "The value of Black life in America" which focused on the historical injustices that Black Americans have endured. The extreme claim used more severe examples (i.e. violent White racists) compared to the mild condition that focused on serious, but less extreme examples (i.e. environmental racism). The extreme condition also included more forthright and blunt statements (e.g. "If you agree with the system the way it currently is then by definition, you are a racist.") In the mild condition, the message was less extreme and assertive (e.g., "If you agree with the system the way it currently is, then you might not be as inclusive as you would like to think."). The article in

the control condition discussed dorm life on college campuses with no mention of race (e.g. “Dorm life is a great part of the college experience.”).

Participants rated speech for quality and extremity (on a 5-point scale “*not at all extreme to very extreme*”). Participants rated the extreme message ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .84$) as more extreme than the mild message ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.28$), $t(45.91) = -2.60$, $p < .05$, $r = .11$. (on a 5-point scale “*terrible to excellent*”). In terms of quality, the extreme message ($M = 3.87$) and the mild speech ($M = 4.07$) did not differ statistically in argument quality, $t(57) = .844$, *ns*.

Procedure.

The procedures were the same as Experiment 1.

Measures

Impression rating indices. The Impressions scales were the same as those used in Experiment 1. However, because preliminary analyses revealed that positive ($\alpha = .95$) and negative impressions ($\alpha = .97$) followed different patterns, we discuss them separately.

Persuasiveness. The persuasiveness scale was comprised of the same items as those used in Experiment 1 ($\alpha = .93$)

Guilt perception. Participants rated the speech on four items measuring perceptions of the messenger’s guilt on 7-point scales (*not at all to very much*). Items assessed participant’s perceptions of the extent to which the messenger feels personally responsible for racism, ashamed of their race, guilty about being a member of their race, and abused their privilege as a person from their race ($\alpha = .911$; Swim & Miller, 1999).

Results

Negative impressions. A three-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the effects of messenger race, participant race, and message extremity on negative impressions. We predicted

that among Black perceivers, White messengers who make extreme claims of racial bias will face the backlash relative to Black messengers. There was a significant main effect for message type, $F(2, 388) = 28.13, p = .000, \eta^2 = .13$. Overall, participants rated messengers who made mild ($M = 3.33, SD = 1.56$) and extreme ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.59$) messages more negatively than those in the control condition ($M = 1.99, SD = .93$). There was a main effect for participant race such that White participants had more negative impressions of messengers ($M = 3.21, SD = 1.67$) compared to Black participants ($M = 2.48, SD = 1.27$), $F(1, 388) = 25.94, p = .000, \eta^2 = .06$. Negative impressions did not vary by messenger race, $F(1, 388) = .85, p = .356, \eta^2 = .002$.

There was a significant two-way interaction between participant race and message extremity, such that White participants had more negative impressions of mild messages ($M = 3.95, SD = 1.63$) compared to Black participants ($M = 2.62, SD = 1.16$), $t(120.04) = -5.43, p = .000$. Similarly, White participants had more negative impressions of extreme messages ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.50$) compared to Black participants ($M = 2.99, SD = 1.45$), $t(128) = -3.33, p = .001$. There was also a significant interaction between messenger race and extremity, such that White messengers in the control condition ($M = 2.58, SD = .97$) were viewed more negatively than Black messengers in the control condition ($M = 2.03, SD = .89$), $t(133) = -3.02, p = .001$.

There was a significant three-way interaction between extremity of message, participant race, and messenger race, $F(2, 386) = 2.96, p = .049, \eta^2 = .02$. There was a statistically significant simple two-way interaction between messenger race and participant race for the mild condition $F(1, 131) = 4.54, p = .04, \eta^2 = .03$, but not for the neutral or extreme condition, $p > .05$. Simple comparisons revealed a significant effect for Black participants who read a mild message, $F(1, 65) = 6.39, p = .014, \eta^2 = .09$, but not for White participants who read a mild message, $F(1, 65) = 2.68, p = .45, \eta^2 = .01$. Next, we conducted a simple effects comparison for Black

participants who interacted with either a Black or White messenger with a mild message. Black participants rated White messengers in the mild condition ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.15$) significantly more negatively than Black messengers in the mild condition ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 1.07$), $F(1, 65) = 6.39$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = .09$.

Positive Impressions. A three-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of participant race, messenger race, and extremity on positive impressions of the messenger. There was not a significant main effect of argument extremity or messenger race. However there was a significant main effect for participant race $F(1,388) = 25.34$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .06$, such that Black participants had more positive impressions of messengers ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.22$) compared to White participants ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.36$).

There was a significant two-way interaction between participant race and extremity, such that Black participants had more positive impressions of mild messengers ($M = 5.44$, $SD = .99$) compared to White participants ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(120.21) = 3.90$, $p = .000$. Similarly, Black participants had more positive impressions of extreme messengers ($M = 5.24$, $SD = 1.43$) compared to White participants ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 1.45$), $t(128) = 3.87$, $p = .000$. There was also a significant interaction between messenger race and extremity, such that Black messengers in the control condition ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 1.27$) were viewed more positively than White messengers in the control condition ($M = 5.09$, $SD = 1.15$), $t(133) = 3.02$, $p = .003$. There was no statistically significant three-way interaction between participant race, messenger race, and extremity on positive impressions, $F(2, 388) = 1.59$, $p = .21$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

Persuasiveness. A three-way ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of participant race, messenger race, and extremity on persuasiveness of message. There was a main effect of extremity $F(1, 388) = 8.18$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .04$, such that extreme messages ($M = 1.68$,

$SD = 1.71$) and mild messages ($M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.66$) were seen as more persuasive than neutral messages, ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 1.52$). There was not a significant difference between extreme and mild messages, $t(263) = .945$, $p = .345$.

There was a significant main effect of participant race, $F(1, 388) = 39.18$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .09$, such that Black participants rated the messengers as more persuasive ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.57$) than White participants ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.61$). There was no statistically significant three-way interaction between participant race, messenger race, and extremity on persuasiveness, $F(2, 387) = 1.08$, $p = .34$, $\eta^2 = .01$.

The Mediating Role of Group-based Guilt Perceptions

We next conducted a mediation analysis testing whether the effect of messenger race on negative impressions was mediated by perceptions of the messenger's group-based guilt. Because our three-way ANOVA showed a significant effect amongst Blacks who were exposed to mild confrontations, we limited our analysis to this particular subset of participants. We first created a dummy code to represent the categorical predictor for messenger race. The Black messenger condition was coded as "0" and the White messenger condition as "1". Next, we mean centered the continuous variable for guilt perceptions. Results revealed a significant direct effect of messenger race on negative impressions ($b = .275$, $p < .001$). When controlling for guilt perceptions, the previously significant effect of messenger race on negative impressions was no longer significant ($b = .07$, $p = .807$). There was a significant indirect effect of guilt perceptions on negative impressions through messenger race, $b = .619$, BCa CI [0.312, 1.13]. This represents a relatively large effect, $\kappa^2 = .269$, 95% BCa CI [.137, .466].

These results indicate that White messengers who made mild claims of anti-black racism were viewed more negatively by Black participants compared to Black messengers. Furthermore,

the increase in perception of the messengers' guilt mediated the relationship between messenger race, participant race, extremity condition and negative impressions of the messenger.

Discussion

Experiment 2 extends previous work by exploring Black perceivers' perception of White allies who confront anti-Black racism. Consistent with predictions we witnessed a messenger race by message extremity interaction amongst Black participants. However, we found this backlash in the mild condition rather than the extreme condition. Furthermore, Experiment 2 also investigated whether one characteristic of the perceiver, the extent to which they believe the messenger feels racial guilt, might be driving the backlash that the White ally receives. The effect of messenger race, participant race, and message extremity on negative impressions was no longer significant after controlling for perceptions of guilt. We did not replicate findings of a backlash against Black messengers from a White perceiver.

General Discussion

This study examined how the interaction between racial group membership, message characteristics, and the perceiver's racial group membership influences reactions to racial bias confrontations. Expanding on past research, the current experiments focused on contexts in which Whites who confront racial bias might experience backlash. Furthermore, Experiment 2 explored one potential mechanism driving the backlash against White allies. Our main findings from Experiment 1 showed that Black participants were rated more negatively overall, but this was not specific to participant race (White) or message extremity (extreme). We also found that White participants rated messengers in the mild condition more negatively than any other condition, again diverging from our hypothesis of a backlash towards Black messengers with extreme confrontations. We also did not find evidence of an evaluative backlash against White

messengers who made extreme claims amongst Black participants. Our main findings for Experiment 2 were: (a) there is an evaluative backlash by Black participants against White messengers who make mild claims, diverging from our hypothesis of a backlash against Whites making extreme claims (b) For Black perceivers, perceptions of the messengers' group-based guilt mediate the effect of messenger race and message extremity on negative impressions of the messenger. We did not find support of our hypothesis of a backlash against Black messengers making extreme claims amongst White participants.

Interaction between Messenger race and message extremity

Our finding of an interaction between messenger race and message extremity was not consistent amongst Black and White participants. Experiment 1 found that Black messengers were rated more negatively overall compared to White messengers amongst Black and White participants,. Experiment 1 and 2 also shows that White participants rated messengers more negatively overall. However, we did not find support for the literature on confrontation that suggests that Black messengers who confront are perceived more negatively than White messengers by a White audience (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006; Czopp & Monteith, 2003) especially when the message is extreme (Schultz & Maddox, 2013).

Consistent with our predictions, we found that, after being exposed to claims of anti-Black racism, Black perceivers more negatively rated a White messenger compared to a Black messenger. Past research has found that Black messengers face a race-specific evaluative backlash when confronting racial bias such that White participants more negatively rated Black compared with White messengers, when expressing extreme messages (Schultz & Maddox, 2013). Experiment 2, suggests that White messengers also face a race-specific evaluative backlash when confronting racial bias. The unique combination of messenger race (White),

perceiver race (Black) and message extremity (mild) drives backlash, evident in the fact that negative impressions were not seen towards White messengers in the extreme or control condition.

Perceptions and Evaluations of Messenger

The present work extends research on group-based guilt by exploring how those who perceive racial guilt react when they are exposed to White allies. Backlash was only found amongst Blacks who witnessed a White messenger who made mild claims. As predicted, the interactions effect between messenger race and message extremity was fully mediated by perceptions of the messengers' group-based guilt.

One possibility is that people view group-based guilt as a self-focused emotion rather than an other-focused emotion, placing emphasis on the wrongdoings of the advantaged rather than the suffering of the disadvantaged (Leach et al., 2002; Montada & Schneider, 1989; Salovey & Rosenhan, 1989). Thus, the confrontation is actually perceived to be motivated by personal interest. Additionally, the combination of perceptions of guilt (i.e. tainted altruism) matched with a mild confrontation (which could be seen as far less costly than extreme confrontation) can have a negative effect on Blacks' perceptions of allies. Backlash against White allies might be least likely to occur when the claim is extreme and/or the confrontation is more costly.

The current research suggests that when the perceiver is Black, perceptions of group-based guilt is associated with more negative impressions of White messengers who make mild claims. When group-based guilt was accounted for, the effect of messenger race on message extremity went away. The current work extends the literature on allyship and confrontation by looking at how characteristics of the stigmatized perceiver (who the ally is confronting on behalf) influence evaluations of the messenger.

Limitations and Future Directions

There are some limitations of the current work to consider. In order to get the mild and extreme messages to vary significantly, two different examples of racism were used. In the mild condition, the Flint, Michigan water crisis was used as an example of racism (institutional), while the Charleston church massacre was used as the extreme example of racism (individual). It is possible that individuals are more willing to accept claims of individual racism (i.e., one person is racist towards another person) compared to institutional racism (i.e., Policies and laws are in place that negatively affect stigmatized individuals on a societal level). This could also be a reason that backlash was not shown in the extreme condition amongst Black and White perceivers. In the Schultz & Maddox (2013) study, both racial claims are more institutional (i.e., It's a lot harder for Black people to succeed in school...) compared to individual.

Past research shows that Black confronters are labeled as a complainer and thus less legitimate after confronting. Some of the items on the negative impressions scale included the extent to which the messenger was, "hypersensitive, a complainer, and a trouble maker". Because Black perceivers have a different perception of White messengers (compared to Whites perceptions of Blacks messengers), these items might not have been as appropriate in measuring negative impressions of White messengers. Thus, it might have beneficial to have a different negative impressions scale for White and Black messengers.

Lastly, the backlash that White messengers received is relative to the negative impressions of Black messengers. Average negative ratings for both White and Black messengers were lower than the midpoint on the negative impressions scale, suggesting that in general Whites and Blacks who confronted were not viewed extremely negatively by Black perceivers. However, the differences in those ratings varied significantly.

Future studies should investigate an other-focused approach to confronting racial bias that places emphasis on the suffering of the disadvantaged as a way to mitigate the evaluative backlash that White allies might face. Research should also further explore the actual and perceived psychosocial motivations of White allies who confront.

Conclusions

This work has implications for understanding how stigmatized individuals may respond to non-stigmatized individuals who speak on their group's lived experiences. Our findings suggest that mild claims of racial bias lead to more negative evaluations than do extreme claims, and therefore mild claims may be less effective. Furthermore, our findings suggest that characteristics of the perceiver, whether or not they perceive the messenger as having group-based guilt, may contribute to backlash, and therefore it will be important to determine ways to mitigate potential negative effects arising in this context.

Strategic alliances (between stigmatized and non-stigmatized groups) and Coalition organizations (the gathering of different organizations in order to work towards one common goal) can be extremely vital when attempting to make change on a national level. The consequences of non-stigmatized allies not being viewed favorably by minorities can prove detrimental to the movement. This experiment, along with future studies, can potentially identify factors that might impede positive interactions between stigmatized and non-stigmatized racial group members who have the same goals in mind (discussing and reducing racial bias). This work can be beneficial in the context of advocacy organizing and bringing together multiple groups (with differing racial identities) in order to move towards a common goal. Often, non-stigmatized individuals are interested in contributing to effective social change, but are unsure of what steps to take in becoming an effective ally. White allyship is crucial from a practical

standpoint in terms of communicating important messages around racial disparities to their peers in the racial majority. It is also important to relieve some of the burden long held by members of stigmatized groups who are compelled to advocate for themselves, largely alone, while experiencing the stress associated with discrimination. When society begins to share this burden, we increase the likelihood of meaningful social change.

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Table 1

Correlations Matrix for Dependent measures, Experiment 1.

	Negative Impressions	Positive Impressions	Persuasiveness	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Negative Impressions	1			394	3.04 (1.57)
Positive Impressions	-.723**	1		394	4.51 (1.40)
Persuasiveness	-.596**	.753**	1	394	3.72 (1.97)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2

Correlations Matrix for Dependent measures, Experiment 2.

	Group-based Guilt	Negative Impressions	Positive Impressions	Persuasiveness	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean (SD)</i>
Group-based Guilt	1	.			400	2.31 (1.48)
Negative Impressions	.418**	1			400	3.00 (1.47)
Positive Impressions	-2.44**	-.632**	1		400	4.94 (1.33)
Persuasiveness	-.113*	-.448**	.783**	1	400	4.56 (1.66)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 1. Negative Messenger Impression by Participant Race and Race of Messenger in the Control condition for Experiment 1.

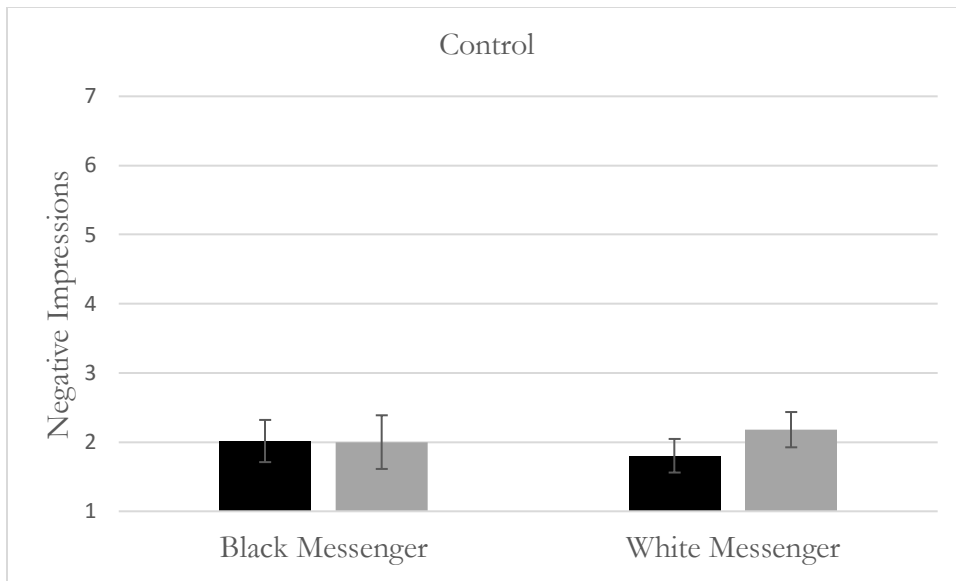


Figure 2. Negative Messenger Impression by Participant Race and Race of Messenger in the Mild condition for Experiment 1.

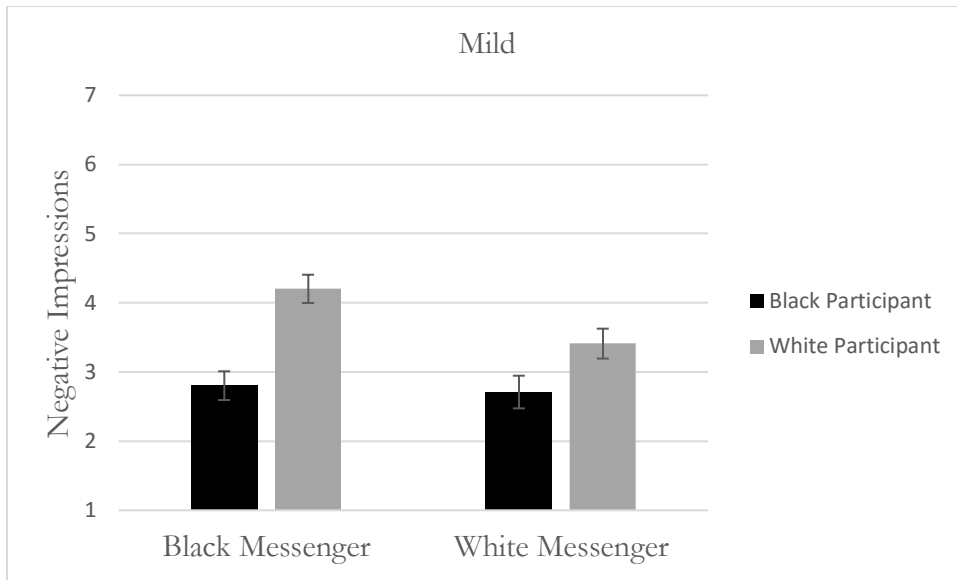


Figure 3. Negative Messenger Impression by Participant Race and Race of Messenger in the Extreme condition.

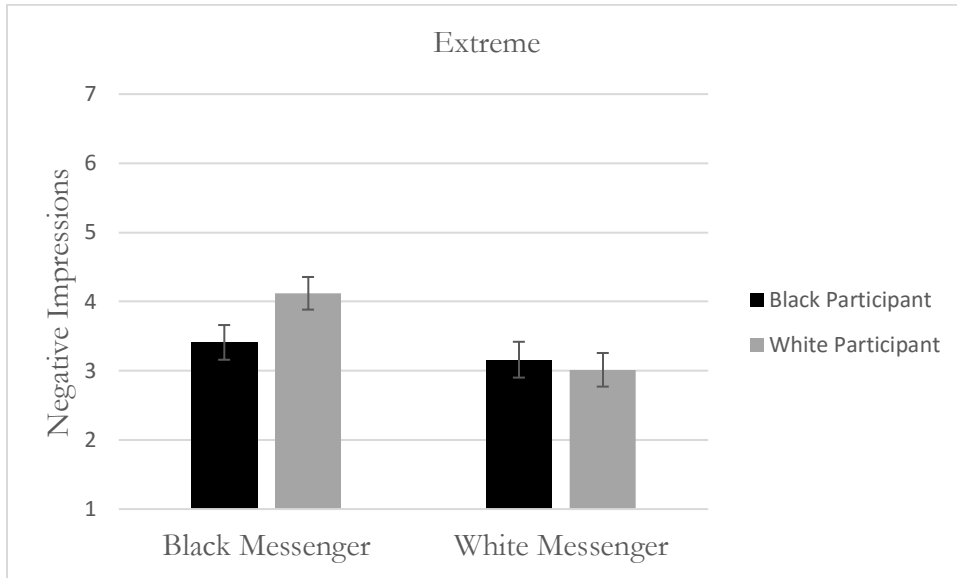


Figure 4. Negative Messenger Impression by Participant Race and Race of Messenger in the Control condition for Experiment 2.

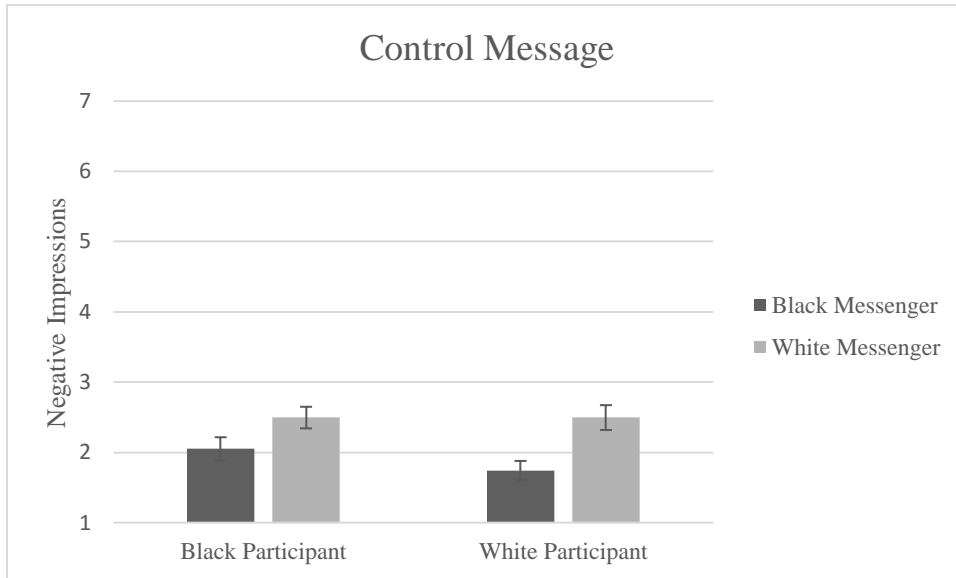


Figure 5. Negative Messenger Impression by Participant Race and Race of Messenger in the Mild condition for Experiment 2.

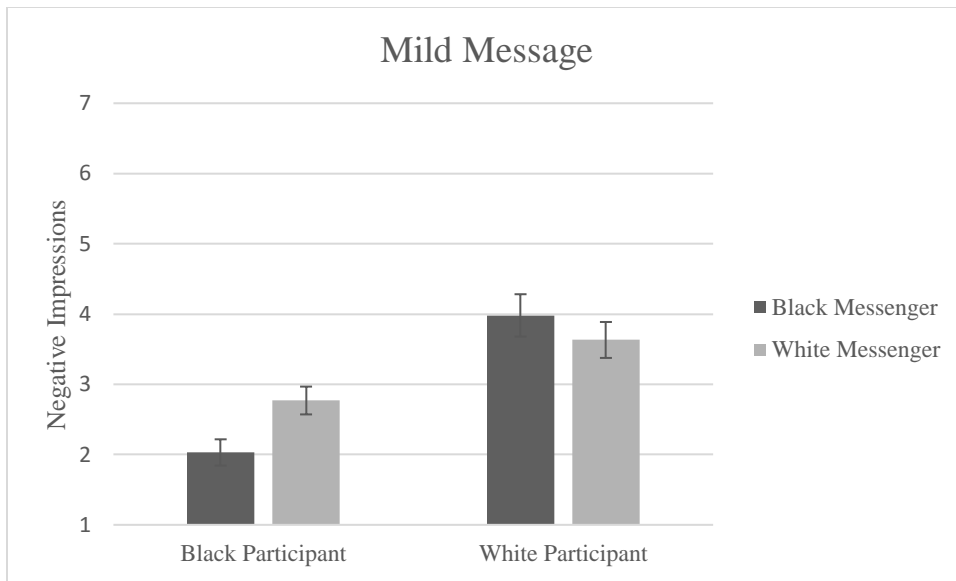


Figure 6. Negative Messenger Impression by Participant Race and Race of Messenger in the Extreme condition for Experiment 2.

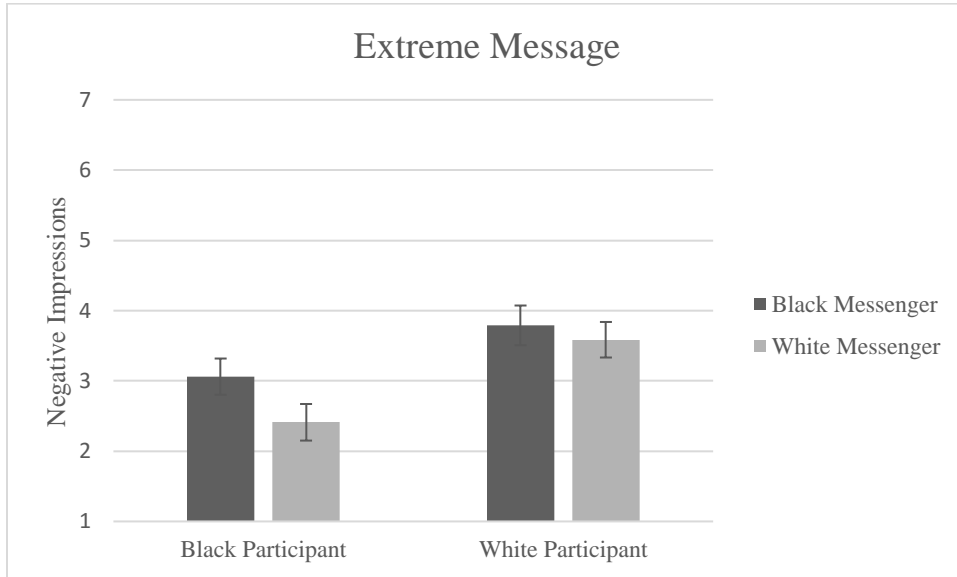
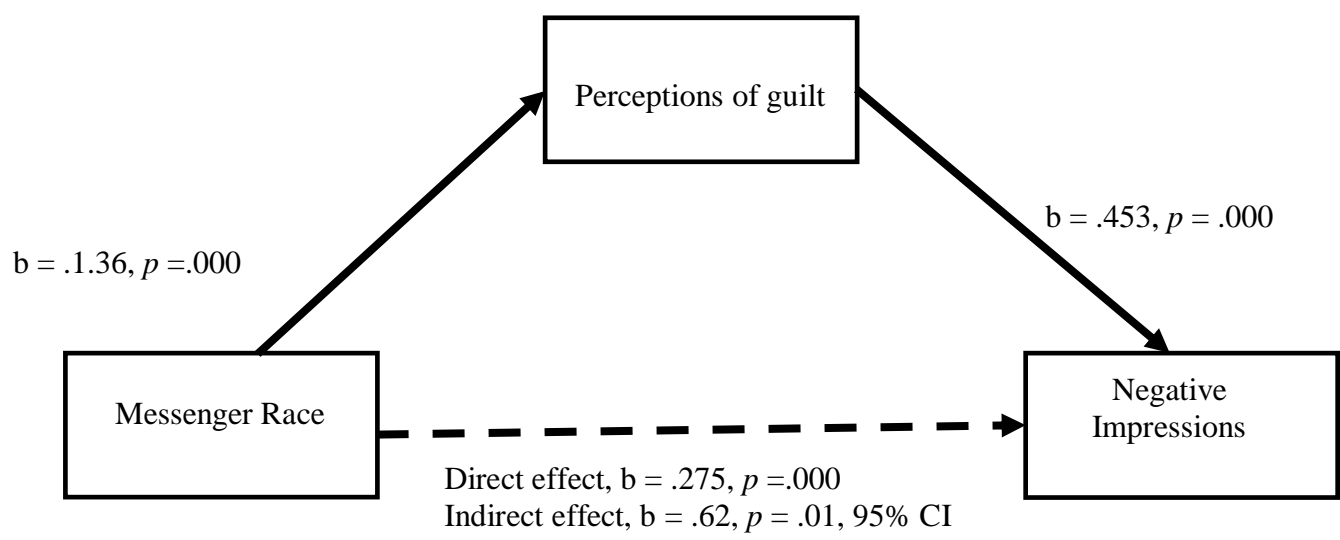


Figure 7. Negative Impressions by Race of Messenger, Mediated by Perceptions of Messengers' Guilt (as rated by Black participants within the mild condition).



Appendix A: Subset of Experiment 1 Article Stimuli (Extreme message with White messenger)

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Brendan Baker
Writer, Tufts University

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Culture Houses on Predominantly White Campuses



Culture houses have been a big topic of conversation on college campuses. I don't know too much about all of the houses, although I do know that there is an Africana one. I'd imagine cultural houses makes it easier to make friends, although dorms provide that opportunity as well. I'm sure it makes it easier to meet other people with the same interests or backgrounds that you have. I think that it is good that colleges offer an Africana house. It's important for Blacks to be able to connect with a Black community, especially if they attend a predominately white campus. I definitely think that it is unnecessary for White people to have their own house. I mean everywhere is a White house. It just seems ridiculous to have a special house dedicated to White culture. I feel like there are white people everywhere, so why do they need their own place? Blacks need a place where they don't feel like the minority.

It's the same thing as why whites don't need a history month. Blacks suffered a lot and are not given much credit or recognition in history books. Accomplishments by Blacks need to be celebrated because they aren't anywhere else. Whites get recognition for everything, so it doesn't make sense for them to need a special time to celebrate their culture. Black people deserve something for all the pain that they've been through.

But, I also like the idea of a cultural house because it gives Blacks a sense of community and a place to study without any judgments. It's a lot harder for Black people to succeed in school because of all the pressures and feelings of not fitting in. I think a culture house gives Blacks a safe place to hang out.



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Appendix B: Subset of Experiment 1 Article Stimuli (Mild message with Black messenger)

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Jamal Jones
Writer, Tufts University

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Culture Houses on Predominantly White Campuses

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-
- 4
- 49
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Culture houses have been a big topic of conversation on college campuses. I don't know too much about all of the houses, although I do know that there is an Africana one. I'd imagine it makes it easier to make friends, although the dorms provide that opportunity as well. I'm sure it makes it easier to meet other people with the same interests or backgrounds that you have. I think that it is good that Tufts offers an Africana house. I think that it is important for Black students to be able to connect with a Black community. I don't think it's necessary for whites to have their own house. I'm not sure why they would need one. The campus is predominately white, so it's probably not necessary for whites to have a house. People need a place where they don't feel like a minority.

I think that Blacks, along with other groups, suffered a lot and they are not given much credit or recognition. Accomplishments by Blacks need to be celebrated because they aren't anywhere else. Everyone deserves to celebrate their culture and I think Blacks have been stopped from expressing their culture, but I guess other groups have too. Whites definitely get a lot of recognition, so I don't think they really need anything special.

But, I also like the idea of a cultural house because it gives Blacks a sense of community and a place to study without any judgments. I think school is really hard, especially for minorities, but it must be nice to live with a social support group. I feel like culture houses could benefit most people. I think a culture house gives Blacks a safe place to hang out.

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Appendix C: Experiment 1 Photo Stimuli



Appendix D: Subset of Experiment 2 Article Stimuli (Extreme message with White messenger)

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Brendan Baker

Associate Editor, Political Insider

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The Value of Black Lives

During the 2015 national Democratic debate, Presidential candidates were asked to respond to the question that so many Americans have difficulties answering **“Do Black Lives Matter or Do All Lives Matter?”**. Since the 2014 shooting death of Mike Brown in the city of Ferguson, MO, social justice organizations have sought to spark a national dialogue about race relations in America (e.g. Black Lives Matter).

Though America’s treatment of Black Americans has evolved from a blatant violent bigotry to a more inconspicuous racism, the need to confront racial bias remains **relevant, mainly because the term “All Lives Matter”, is actually a flat out lie.** It’s stating a conclusion that all lives mattered the same throughout history. **But they haven’t.** Historically, Blacks have persisted through the fear, anger, anguish and devastation of having their lives diminished, disrespected, and **ended. When the first slave ships started transporting Blacks to America in the 17th century, black lives did not matter.**

When the Constitution accounted Black individual as two-thirds of a person and allowed the institution of slavery to perpetuate for another 85 years, black lives did not matter.

When Dylann Roof walked into one of the oldest Black churches in 2015 and slaughtered 9 people who were attending a prayer service, **Black Lives didn’t matter.**

When you counter with “All Lives Matter,” you completely ignore the entire history of our nation and the current realities of its institutional racism. You repeat a bigoted declaration masquerading as a feel-good slogan.

People are **upset with the statement “Black Lives Matter” because** they often misconstrue racism as the mere mention of race, white privilege, and discrimination. Some of the problem is ignorance, a stubborn refusal to wrestle with race as a factor in how people of color are seen, treated and remembered in this country.

If you agree with the system the way it **currently is then by definition,**



4.9K



4



49



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Appendix E: Subset of Experiment 2 Article Stimuli (Mild message with Black messenger)

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Jamal Jones

Associate Editor, Political Insider

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The Value of Black Lives

During the 2015 national Democratic debate, Presidential candidates were asked to respond to the question that so many Americans have difficulties answering, **“Do Black Lives Matter or Do All Lives Matter?”**. Since the 2014 incident involving Mike Brown in the city of Ferguson, MO, social justice organizations have sought to spark a national dialogue about interactions in America (e.g. Black Lives Matter).

Though America’s treatment of Black Americans has improved greatly over the years, the need to confront injustice remains relevant, mainly **because the term “All Lives Matter”, is not 100% accurate. It’s stating a conclusion that all lives have mattered the same throughout history. But they haven’t.** Historically, Blacks have persisted through the hardship and oppression that they’ve faced. **When the first slave ships started transporting blacks to America in the 17th century, black lives did not matter.**

When the Constitution accounted Black individual as two-thirds of a **person and allowed that “peculiar institution” to perpetuate for another 85 years, black lives did not matter.**

When over 100,000 Flint, Michigan residents were exposed to **poisonous water in 2014 and had to fight for clean drinking water for the following 3 years, Black Lives didn’t matter.**

When you counter with “All Lives Matter,” you minimize the entire history of our nation and the current realities of its institutional biases. People repeat this intolerant declaration, masquerading as a feel-good slogan.

People are **upset with the statement “Black Lives Matter” because they often misconstrue racism as the mere mention of race, white privilege, and discrimination.** Some of the problem is not knowing, a choice to not wrestle with race as a factor in how people of color are seen, treated and remembered in this country.

Agreeing with the system the way it currently is, means not being as



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Appendix F: Experiment 2 Photo Stimuli

