

A “BAD APPLE” OR A “SPOILED BARREL”? : OBSERVING OVERT RACISM PREDICTS  
DIVERGING PERCEPTIONS OF RACISM AND RACE RELATIONS IN AMERICA

by

Matthew O. Wilmot

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## EXAMINING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following served on the Examining Committee for this thesis. The decision of the Examining Committee is by majority vote.

External Examiner	Dr. Leanne S. Son Hing Professor
Supervisor	Dr. Hilary B. Bergsieker Assistant Professor
Internal Members	Dr. Steven J. Spencer Professor  Dr. Richard P. Eibach Associate Professor
Internal-external Member	Dr. Kimberly Lopez Assistant Professor

## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

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## ABSTRACT

Blacks and Whites draw different interpretations of the blatant racism that they witness, even when their reactions appear to be identical. Across three studies, we hypothesized that Blacks would endorse the idea that societal racism is unchangeable and pervasive. Separately, Whites would believe that individual prejudice is immutable but rare. In Study 1, we constructed a measure of people's lay theories of societal racism and established its construct and predictive validity. Blacks who endorsed an entity theory of societal racism were more likely to estimate a high prevalence of racism in the US and expect people who enter into hierarchy-maintaining careers (i.e., police) to become more racist. In Studies 2 and 3, we manipulated the presence of overt racism by having participants read about discrimination in the workplace. In both studies, Blacks and Whites differentially endorsed the two types of lay theories of racism (individual and societal). Differential endorsement of lay theories of racism predicted opposing estimates about the prevalence of racists and reported self-efficacy with regards to pursuing a current goal. All three studies lend an account for why witnessing blatant racism may accentuate intergroup tensions.

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Now that we've got that out of the way, let's talk science.

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## INTRODUCTION

“Slavery defined what it meant to be black (a slave), and Jim Crow defined what it meant to be black (a second-class citizen). Today mass incarceration defines the meaning of blackness in America: black people, especially black men, are criminals. That is what it means to be black.”

- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, p. 197

As argued in the quote above, prejudice against Blacks can be seen as persisting through stages of redefining what it means to be Black. Periods of subjugation in American history have mirrored each other in how Black Americans are treated relative to White Americans and, thus, appear to betray the trust of those at the bottom of the racial hierarchy in a system that wields power to make change. As Michelle Alexander states, while change has led to an improvement in an overall standard of living for Black Americans, the negative descriptions with which society tags them (e.g., criminal, lazy, suspicious-looking) creates a host of unequal outcomes that reinforce the belief that they are second-class citizens. From the perspective of many Black Americans, reflecting on this history of how racism has endured by adapting its expressions to the norms of different eras, it may seem that an essential racist character is deeply encoded in America’s cultural DNA and gives rise to these diverse historical manifestations of racial exclusion.

Black Americans point to societal racism when they protest against the treatment of their racial group. The level of disfavor that institutions express toward Black Americans has not only been documented throughout American history (e.g., *redlining* – the discriminatory practice of banks and insurance companies refusing to grant loans to people living in certain geographic

areas, historically the result of racial segregation of residential areas) but has evolved over time. Recognized as a threat to their social identity, Black Americans may endorse beliefs about the hostility they encounter. From a psychological perspective, the remnants of slavery and Jim Crow segregation are embedded not only in the knowledge of stereotypes about Black Americans but also in the expectations of treatment that members of this stigmatized population may be socialized to adopt. In the book, *Between the World and Me*, Ta Nehisi Coates speaks about the socialization of black boys and girls to “be twice as good, which is to say accept half as much” (2015, pp. 91). The lesson of teaching black children to expect less is reinforced by Black adults’ learning and sharing of stories that involve prejudice and discrimination. The consequences of transmitting this perspective, however, may be evident in the responses Black Americans exhibit when they are the targets of racial bigotry.

### **The Story Told For Black Americans**

Changes in the expression of racial bigotry have led to a change in focus when addressing its causes and consequences for Black Americans. From the perspective of White Americans, the change from acceptance to abhorring explicit racial bias has confined the debate about the prevalence and acceptance of racism to its persistence in subtle and less conspicuous forms. Underscored in the investigations of social psychologists from the 1980s onward was an interest in the burgeoning conflict between abiding by (or internally accepting) norms against racial prejudice and harboring latent racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Katz & Haas, 1988; McConahay, 1986). The study of racial attitudes held by White Americans soon became devoted to the vestiges of a past era where explicit racial prejudice was condoned.

Concurrent with this development in studying Whites, the study of Black Americans’ responses to racial prejudice has been focused on their dealings with subtly-expressed racism or

environments that could potentially be biased against them (Crocker & Major, 1989; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Penner et al., 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dtilmann, & Crosby, 2008; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). As new research focused on this form of racial bias, the unspoken implication was that we are no longer in a period of American history in which eliminating overt racism is the primary objective. Blatant prejudice is not seen as the primary problem it once was for the psychology of Black Americans because it is assumed to no longer be a primary form of racism among White Americans. As a result, experimental tests of the effect that overt racism has on Black Americans' responses is sorely lacking in the literature. It is as if, to social psychologists, overt racism is no longer a serious problem in the daily life of Americans in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Recent events and empirical research, however, suggest this unspoken consensus may be seriously misguided. Overt racism still pervades the social exchanges between Blacks and the rest of America. A recent survey of 802 African American US adults revealed that half of them had personally experienced racial slurs and 42% had encountered racial violence (NPR, 2017). Pew Research Center conducted a survey about the experiences of African Americans in online spaces and found that 60% faced race-related harassment in these settings (Pew Research Center, 2017). Whether in person or through anonymous interactions over the Internet, Black Americans still report that overt racism is expressed (and sometimes welcomed) by others in environments that are perceived to be unsafe for them. Because of the specificity and frequency of this treatment, some Black Americans may conclude that societal racism is still a problem and may never go away.

## **The Prejudiced Personality**

As far back as the work conducted by Allport, theories about the nature of prejudice have been focused on prejudice in individuals, whether it is studied in its explicit or implicit form (Allport, 1954; Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2009; Duckitt & Sibley, 2006; Dunbar, 1995; Schaller, Boyd, Yohannes, O'Brien, 1995). Even from the targets' perspective, the effect of prejudice has been studied as a form of internalized responses to the value that others' apply to one's group (Allport, 1954; Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014; Shelton, 2000). Whether it is applying psychological constructs such as self-esteem, self-reported anxiety, perceived belonging, and/or subjective well-being to measuring physiological states, overt racism is conceived to only have an effect on the stigmatized individual's sense of self. Consequently, even studies that investigate the target's perspective may limit analysis to those responses that are directed intrapersonally (e.g., feelings) or interpersonally (e.g., ratings of interracial partner; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005). To our knowledge, no research has looked at how the individual's perception of the environment (i.e., society) changes when explicit racial prejudice is present.

Traditionally, perceptions of the perpetrator have been focused on personality traits possessed by the person. The notion of a prejudiced personality has been a long-standing topic of interest in social and personality psychology because it is easier to account for and observe the behavior of participants in controlled environments where only their racial prejudice can be expressed. For example, traits such as social dominance orientation, RWA, and need for structure have been cited as predictors of people's attitudes toward outgroups in their society (Kimmelmeier, 2010; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). The Big 5 personality traits single out those who score low on openness to experience as being

narrow-minded, conservative, and suspicious--facets that are negatively correlated with appreciation of human diversity (Han & Pistole, 2017). Believing that racism is a part of a person's character is a more parsimonious explanation of their behavior when other situational factors are not easily detected. Once the behavior is witnessed by others, this interpretation is made to make meaning of the action, the individual is reprimanded severely, and everyday living is resumed.

The prejudiced personality is further reinforced by the belief that the norms which govern social relations in America are prescriptively egalitarian. Statements that promote a valuing of diversity can lead many to believe that prejudice cannot occur, despite incidents that would suggest the opposite (Dover, Major, & Kaiser, 2016; Kirby, Kaiser, & Major, 2015). When a person expresses prejudice, people will not only react with anger and dismay but with shock because they presume that others are acting, in good faith, to maintain the prescriptive norms set by their place of employment. Believing that these norms are internalized by most people, the conclusion drawn is that the perpetrator harbors latent prejudices. In this instance, that individual is characterized as a "bad apple" (Gilman & Thomas, 2016).

Recent work in social psychology has attempted to understand how people construe prejudice (Carr, Pauker, & Dweck, 2012). Carr et al. (2012) presented a new measure of a belief that people hold about prejudice – its changeability. The belief that prejudice is a deeply rooted, unchangeable character trait is labeled the entity theory of prejudice, and it is captured by endorsement of items such as "People can learn how to act like they're not prejudiced, but they can't really change their prejudice deep down." This contrasts with the incremental theory of prejudice, which construes prejudice as a set of contingent attitudes that someone can change, especially if they are exposed to corrective information and experiences. The incremental theory

is captured by endorsement of items such as the following: “No matter who somebody is, they can always become a lot less prejudiced.” In their research, White participants’ theories about the changeability of prejudice were related to but distinct from other lay theories (Studies 1 a-d) and were unrelated to their racial attitudes (Studies 1-5). Most interesting, White participants’ entity theories of prejudice predicted less desire for (and more anxiety during) interactions with a Black confederate. The message evident in their research was straightforward: Understanding people’s apparently prejudiced responses requires considering their beliefs about the changeability of people’s prejudice.

The tendency to define prejudice in individual-dispositional terms, such as by adopting the entity theory of prejudice, may protect majority-group members from the threat that their group will be perceived as racist. Even well-intended, egalitarian people who hold a fixed view of prejudice can appear to behave like those to whom they are attitudinally opposed (i.e., racists). Both Shapiro and Neuberg (2012) and Wilmot, Eibach, and Spencer (in prep) have shown that White people’s theories of prejudice shift when they are motivated to appear non-prejudiced and in response to events that threaten their self-image as non-racist. Wilmot et al. (in prep) showed that, when White participants viewed a high status White ingroup member express blatantly racist statements, which threatened to undermine the non-racist self-image of their White ingroup, they defended their ingroup-image by endorsing an entity theory of prejudice and decreasing their estimates of the prevalence of such prejudice in the population. Other research has supported the notion that Whites can flexibly define prejudice to ameliorate self-relevant threats (Unzueta & Lowery, 2008).

**Limitations of the prejudiced personality.** As previously mentioned, priority has been placed on examining and intervening on prejudice that is displayed by individuals with relatively

less attention to how societal prejudice accounts for behavior. It can be argued that this preference is unintentional because the majority of psychological studies that are about stereotyping and prejudice recruit samples of White participants and measure their prejudice or perceptions of it without considering the active role that Blacks play in the intergroup setting (Shelton & Richeson, 2006). Black Americans' perceptions of prejudice are important to consider in light of their experiences with it across levels of assessment (e.g., interpersonal and societal level). The focus of research on individual prejudice may imply that the maintenance of prejudice in America is orchestrated by a generation of racists who will eventually be phased out. Careful consideration of the perspectives that Black Americans bring may yield insights into an alternative way of interpreting and responding to incidents of racism.

### **Lay Theories of Societal Racism**

Across American history, Blacks have been defined in markedly different ways, but despite these different definitions, their underlying evaluation has been profoundly negative. This history can be read to reasonably suggest that the prejudice of society can take on new forms, but the underlying result is still the same: Black lives are viewed as less valuable to the system than White lives. Black Americans' awareness of their societal devaluation may foster a defensive response in situations that threaten their self-esteem (Crocker, Luhtanen, Broadnax, & Blaine, 1999). The belief that an entity larger than the self is a primary cause of the hardships that you and others like you experience can be reinforced whenever any form of threat is detected. The end result is the shaping of the mind to be vigilant for cues of societal prejudice, both explicit and implicit.

Reflecting on this history of racially exclusionary practices, many Black intellectuals and activists have theorized that there is an inherent, and possibly permanent racist essence at the



core of American culture that can be overcome only through truly revolutionary change. For example, Black legal scholars who formulated critical race theory adopted a position of “racial realism,” which emphasizes that racism is a core dynamic in American culture which persists through mostly superficial changes (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Derrick Bell (1992), a leading theorist within this critical race tradition, captured this insight in his “permanence of racism” thesis, which indicates that America is “a society in which racism has been internalized and institutionalized to the point of being an essential and inherently functioning component of that society - a culture from whose inception racial discrimination has been a regulating force for maintaining stability and growth and for maximizing other cultural values” (LeMelle, quoted in Bell, 1988, p. 777). Elaborating on these points, Bell writes,

[R]acism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of [U.S.] society.

Because this is true, not only will we not overcome in the sense that all of us believed so fervently in the 1960s, black people will never achieve full equality with whites. At the best, we can hope for what I have called temporary 'peaks of progress,' short-lived periods of improved conditions that last a few years until white dominance reasserts itself. (in Delgado & Stefancic, 2005, p. 309).

As a result of living in two different Americas, there may lie a disparity between Blacks’ and Whites’ perceptions of societal racism. This disparity may be seen in how they respond differently to policies related to race. Blacks are acutely sensitive to the context in which racial policies are implemented, whereas Whites are not. For example, Purdie-Vaughns et al. (2008) demonstrated that portraying a company as color blind was seen as an indication of the company’s racism if that portrayal was coupled with a less diverse picture of employees and predicted Black candidates reporting that they would not feel valued by the company and that

they would likely not apply for a job there. Although there were no explicit (or subtle) mentions of prejudice, Black candidates inferred that the information about the work environment would suggest that views that did not align with a “White” perspective will be excluded. Recognizing the unspoken dominance of a “White” perspective may invite Blacks to believe that societal racism is unchangeable because less attention will be paid to how this environment can be a breeding ground for racist behavior.

Although Black Americans’ perceptions of societal racism has been an unexplored topic in social psychology, other fields like sociology and legal studies have paid more attention to societal racism. Critical race studies have proposed that the largest situational factor (i.e., social institutions) can explain why racism at an interpersonal level persists (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). DeCuir and Dixon (2004) argue that racism is the foundation of the United States of America and the social structure on which the country stands. Because of how America was built, racism is viewed as a permanent part of American civic life.

The idea that racism is not an aberration but rather is an inherent, possibly permanent fixture of the American sociopolitical system may resonate with the lived experience of many members of the Black community who have witnessed up close how the legacy of racial exclusion that began with slavery, later persisted in the form of Jim Crow segregation, and extends into the present in the form of mass incarceration of Black citizens. Indeed, the continuity of the lived experience of racial exclusion through successive eras of American history is something that many in the Black community can likely trace in their own family heritage. As Alexander (2012) writes,

An extraordinary percentage of black men in the United States are legally barred from voting today, just as they have been throughout most of American history. They are also

subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents once were (pp. 1-2).

Under the lens of critical-race theory, instances of racial micro-aggression (i.e., encounters that involve subtle and/or blatant racial prejudice) are interpreted to be symptomatic of a fundamental systemic problem. Racist attitudes and behavior that are rampant in an organization can be representative of this problem. Furthermore, Bonilla-Silva (2015) argues that America treats Whiteness as a property, which places value on the views of Whites over those of other racial groups. Consequently, racism is usually dealt with on a case-by-case basis rather than via a social system overhaul, which can prevent sustainable change. Only when under crises that place the system at the forefront of public viewing can real change be expected.

In contrast to what is proposed by critical race theorists, we typically witness what could be called the “bad apple” accounts of racism in the mainstream media. Rather than address the societal problems that may underlie prejudice, an individual, usually a leader, who makes bigoted comments is scapegoated (Gilman & Thomas, 2012). This response may quell the public’s fears that racist behavior may be a system problem (Wilmot, Eibach, & Spencer, in prep). Instead, blame may be placed on the individual and reinforced by questions about their mental health. These beliefs can lead people to support the idea that prejudice is a personal problem that cannot be changed (Wilmot, Eibach, & Spencer, in prep).

Although the racist behavior of a select person is reported through the media, the chronic display of messages that say Blacks are not valued in America continue to fly under the radar. Whether this hostility comes in the form of others’ perceptions that Blacks are not beautiful (Clark & Clark, 1939), are comparable to apes (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008),

and are less innocent than Whites (Goff, Jackson, Di Leone, Culotta, & DiTomasso, 2014; Rattan, Levine, Dweck, & Eberhardt, 2012), the racist messages in society are rarely considered in the analysis of behavior of a single individual. Consequently, when focus is directed toward the individual, Black Americans may conclude that societal racism has not been affected and may become pessimistic about improvements in the culture. They may perceive that this person is an example of numerous others who express racist views because the setting allows for prejudice to persist. To our knowledge, no work has been done to investigate beliefs about the changeability of societal racism and the relationship it has with other conclusions that Black Americans make (e.g. such as their perceptions of the prevalence of racism in the US).

### **Overview of Studies**

We address this question by conducting a series of three studies investigating lay beliefs about the changeability of societal racism and the consequences it poses for the emotions and perceptions that Black Americans report when faced with blatant racism. In our studies, societal racism is referred to as the bias exhibited through informal interactions between members of various groups within a racial hierarchy as well as racially biased impacts of formal structures in the society. It encompasses, but is not limited to, individual expressions of racism. We make this distinction between beliefs about societal racism and individual racism in our first study by testing the psychometric properties of a new scale that measures lay people's beliefs about the changeability of societal racism. We expect that this measure will be established as a distinct and meaningful construct for the analysis of Black Americans in the stereotyping and prejudice literature. In this study and across the other two, responses by Black Americans will be compared to White Americans to determine if there are race-related differences in their beliefs

about the changeability of societal (versus individual) racism in response to witnessing acts of blatant racism.

Our second study will be an experimental test of the effect that reading about racial discrimination will have on Black Americans' beliefs about the changeability of societal racism and the residual effect of that belief on perceptions about the prevalence of racism. We expect that this event will not only lead to Black Americans believing that societal racism is less changeable but also lead them to increase their estimates of the frequency with which racism occurs where they live. Next, this study will test the emotional expressiveness towards the racial event by gauging how angry Black Americans report feeling after reading about blatant racism. We expect that Black Americans will report higher levels of anger than if they read about an egregious event unrelated to racism. Finally, we will examine Blacks' self-efficacy for the goals they are currently pursuing after reading about blatant racism. We expect that if reading about blatant racism leads to the belief that prejudice in society is less changeable, this belief may undermine Blacks' self-efficacy for the goals they are currently pursuing.

For our third study, we conduct a replication of the primary aforementioned hypotheses with a more representative sample. Testing these hypotheses with a representative sample will not only aim to establish the internal validity of the results but also the generalizability of the results to the explanation of why publicized individual instances of racism can potentially create rifts between Whites and Blacks. We believe that these studies will provide insight into the problems of misunderstanding and disbelief that racism creates when it is interpreted differently between racial groups. It is through this elucidation of explanations for the behavior we witness during these events, however, that more effective solutions can be generated.

## CHAPTER 1: SCALE VALIDATION STUDY

We developed a measure of people's lay beliefs about the changeability of societal racism for three reasons. First, the rhetoric surrounding systemic racism is becoming increasingly common in public circles and, thus, raises the question as to the meaning of these beliefs in conversation. Endorsing an *entity theory of societal racism* would suggest that a person doesn't believe racism can be removed from society. That individual may expect society to maintain a level of bias – large or small – that keeps certain racial groups at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Endorsing an *incremental theory of societal racism* would suggest that a person believes that the level of racism in society is changeable (for better or for worse).

Second, this measure may capture variability in the responses that Black Americans endorse when addressing direct or indirect forms of discrimination. For example, a Black male who is asked for identification by a police officer may show a variety of behaviors (i.e., vigilance, confrontation) that are not solely determined by feelings of stereotype threat. His belief may be that societal racism cannot change even if he's an executive of a Fortune 500 company. This conviction is informed not only by his previous experiences with law enforcement but also a culturally specific understanding of how Black men are treated by the police (Plaut, 2010). To the extent that this reality is derived, in part, by the belief that societal racism cannot be changed, this measure will be instrumental in capturing this racial narrative.

Finally, the construction of this measure will allow for future investigators to capture the distinct experiences of societal racism that Black Americans report and how these events can govern their behavior. Lay theories of societal racism will offer predictions specific to this population that have not been investigated in previous research. This work reinforces the increasing need to focus on the perspectives and understandings shared by targets of oppression

instead of assuming that they are passive recipients of psychological events (Shelton & Richeson, 2006). The following hypotheses (reported below) are specific to Black Americans.

**Convergent Validity.** People's lay theories of societal racism can be viewed as similar to other measures used in prior investigations: belief in conspiracy theories of race (BCR; Crocker, Luhtanen, Broadnax, & Blaine, 2002), attribution styles questionnaire (ASQ; Peterson, Semmel, von Baeyer, Abramson, Metalsky, & Seligman, 1982), and Carr et al.'s (2012) lay theories of individual prejudice measure. Crocker et al. (1999) constructed a measure that assessed the tendency for Black Americans to believe in conspiracy theories regarding the US government's treatment of their group (e.g. "The government deliberately makes sure that drugs are available in poor neighborhoods to harm racial minorities."). The authors found that the more that Black Americans endorsed these beliefs, the greater their reported self-esteem. By providing a situational attribution for the problems one faces, Black Americans were able to protect their positive view of self. Expecting societal racism to not change may require, in part, the agentic role of government in maintaining the racial hierarchy. The disparities between Black Americans and other racial groups on life outcomes results from the need to maintain social order in the United States. In the scale-validation study of this investigation, it is hypothesized that the more that Black Americans endorse an entity theory of societal racism, the more likely they will also endorse conspiracy theories that center on intentional efforts made by the US government to oppress them.

People's lay theories of societal racism may align with how they typically reason about the causes of negative life events. Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale (1978) posited that people's reasoning of events could be systematically decoded into three basic dimensions: locus of causation (internal vs. external), breadth of impact of the event (local vs. global impact), and

changeability of the event (temporary vs. stable impact). The ASQ was constructed on the basis of this model and has been applied towards predicting health outcomes (Jowsey, Yen, & Matthews, 2012). In our measure, the focus of participants' beliefs will be on the existence of a social order involving relations between racial groups and the American social institution at large. These are reflected in statements that acknowledge the existence of something other than the person (i.e., race) that controls how they are treated (external) and that convey doubt that these relations will improve (stable). Considering the structure of these statements, we expect that those participants who endorse an entity theory of societal racism will be more likely to make external and stable causal attributions about negative life events.

We will examine the relation between participants' lay theories of societal racism and their lay theories of individual prejudice for two reasons. First, our lay theories of societal racism measure uses a format similar to Carr et al.'s (2012) lay theories of individual prejudice. Both measures are about the changeability of prejudice, although on a different level, so we expect that they will be correlated.

Our second reason for assessing the relation between these two measures is because the Carr et al. (2012) measure was originally validated on a sample of predominantly White participants. This poses a limitation in the generalizability of their predictions because Black Americans' lay theories of prejudice may be worth considering alongside our hypotheses about the impact of their lay theories of societal racism. We expect that Black Americans' lay theories of individual prejudice will be more distinct from their lay theories of societal racism than Whites' because of their direct experiences with racism at multiple levels.

**Discriminant Validity.** Our scale-validation study seeks to establish the uniqueness of people's lay theories of societal racism from alternative explanations. This step helps to



distinguish the measure from other scales that could potentially account for its variance in scores. We selected scales that were believed to be conceptually related to this measure insofar as they operationalize attitudes related to the social hierarchy: Social dominance orientation scale (SDO-16; Ho et al., 2015), general system justification scale (SJS-G; Kay & Jost, 2003), and the modern racism scale (MRS; McConahay, 1986). We expect our measure will be distinct from each of these scales.

Lay theories of societal racism, the SJS-G, and the SDO-16 measure have notable distinctions in the objectives that they were constructed for despite their focus on the system. Kay and Jost (2003) constructed the general system justification scale to analyze the level of trust that people held toward the system and the legitimacy that was attached to it. Their theory suggests that trusting the system satisfies the need for control, notably under circumstances where personal control is threatened (Landau, Kay, & Whitson, 2015). Built upon this foundation, people who score high on the general system justification scale are more likely to ascribe legitimacy to government actions (Laurin, Shepherd, & Kay, 2010; Shepherd & Kay, 2012). We surmise, however, that this variability in system justification tendency may not overlap much with our lay theories of societal racism for Whites. Among Whites the beliefs that society is fair for them and just can easily be a separate issue from whether it is racist for others. For Blacks, however, who are much more likely to face the implications of societal racism, the belief that racism is systematic is likely to be related to their belief that systems in society are illegitimate and unfair.

Social dominance orientation (SDO) and lay theories of societal racism are constructs that acknowledge a hierarchy existing within capitalist societies. For Blacks, racial hierarchies define the set of opportunities they can expect, and those who see hierarchies as changeable and

strive to change them should see racism as changeable as well. In contrast, Whites' views of hierarchies are less likely to be driven by their views of race as they see hierarchies reflecting many factors including social class, education, and gender, as well as race. We expect, for Whites, that SDO and lay theories of societal racism will show at most a modest correlation.

Finally, for the relation between level of racism and lay theories of societal racism, although we obviously expect Black Americans to express less anti-Black racism than White Americans, when we examine just Black Americans, we expect those who are higher in pro-White racism to more strongly justify a racist system and to believe more strongly in a racial hierarchy within society, so we expect them to believe in an entity theory of societal racism. Black Americans who completely reject racist beliefs are more likely to challenge the legitimacy of the racist systems within society, reject and fight against racial hierarchies, and believe in a changeable theory of societal racism. In contrast, for White Americans, because their view of hierarchies and their views of the legitimacy of the system are determined by a combination of race, class, gender and other factors, we expect that their level of racism will be much less tied to their beliefs in whether systematic racism is changeable.

**Predictive validity.** Seeing societal racism as stable may explain some of the markers of vigilance that Black Americans report through measures of their perception of the intergroup environment. As noted in Steele et al. (2002), blatant racism is associated with heightened vigilance against future threats, especially those related to imminent threats. In the past, researchers have associated this vigilance with personality or social identity constructs (e.g., stigma consciousness, level of identification, rejection-sensitivity; Mendoza-Denton, Downey, Purdie, & Davis, 2002; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Pinel, 1999) with only one study analyzing it as a measure of people's estimates (Stangor, Sechrist, & Swim, 1999).

Germane to our investigation, we believe that we can measure this type of sensitivity to threats through how commonplace Black Americans think racism is. We would expect that believing racism to be systematic and unchangeable reinforces the expectation that one will be treated negatively because one is Black. Sentiments of that nature would reflect this vigilance because assuming the worst (i.e., racism) would leave a person on guard for events that confirm their suspicion.

If Black Americans who endorse an entity view of societal racism explain the racism in America as systemic, then they will be more likely to make situational attributions of racist behavior displayed by people. Black Americans will conclude that a racist system will exert a greater influence on how people working within the system treat them. More specifically, careers that have been stereotyped to treat Black Americans as second-class citizens (e.g., law enforcement, mortgage loan officer) will be the target of focus. This supposition is developed based on social dominance theory, which has asserted that people self-select into and are molded by institutions that are high (or low) in hierarchy maintenance (Fischer, Hanke, & Sibley, 2012). The authors of this meta-analysis attempted to shift the focus from dispositional variation in SDO to contextual differences in the expression of SDO which, they showed, altered people's attitudes about social hierarchy.

Finally, we are interested in how differences in beliefs about the changeability of societal racism can predict goal-directed behavioral intentions for Black Americans. Both the existence of societal racism and the indication that it is not removable can be a detriment to Black Americans' expectations of goal success while living in America. What undercuts this motivation is the belief that no matter how hard one tries to optimize one's potential, racial projects carried out by governing officials and lay persons alike may derail the journey towards

that reality. Previous research has demonstrated that the more unfair people perceive the system to be, the less willing they are to invest in long-term goals (Laurin, Fitzsimons, & Kay, 2011). Related to this work, lay theories of societal racism would suggest that people not only see the system as unfair in treating subordinated racial groups but also expect it to continue. If this is true, then Blacks who hold an entity theory of societal racism will be less inclined to invest in long-term goal pursuit. We do not expect this correlation to be present in White Americans because the advantages they accrue from the system would help to facilitate goal pursuit.

Applying their reasoning to the current work, we expect that Blacks who endorse and entity theory of systemic prejudice to be more attuned to the culture that shapes people's support of the hierarchy than members of high-status social groups. We expect that Blacks who have entity theories of systemic racism will think that people who engage in hierarchy-maintaining professions will become more racist. In addition, we expect that Blacks who have entity theories of systemic racism will perceive dimmer prospects to attain the goals which they are pursuing.

In conclusion, Whites who hold entity theories of systemic racism will have less reason to focus on hierarchy-maintaining occupations and will expect these occupations to change people's racism less, and because racism will not impede their goal pursuit (and may even aid it) there is unlikely to be an association between their theories of systemic racism and their beliefs in their ability to pursue their goals.<sup>1</sup>

## **Method**

### **Participants**

We recruited 437 people (267 women, 170 men; 233 White, 204 Black;  $M_{age} = 27.6$ ,  $SD = 8.3$ , range 15-84 years) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowd-sourcing website to participate in our scale-validation study. To be eligible to participate, an MTurk worker had to

report their race/ethnicity as being either White/European American or Black/African American, even though workers were provided the option of self-identifying as bi-racial, multi-racial, and other (please specify). Workers who did not meet that criteria were excluded from participating in the study. Further exclusions from the final sample were based upon either participants failing to complete our pivotal measure – lay theories of societal racism – or at least 5 of the 10 measures ( $n = 13$ ).<sup>2</sup> Taking into account these criteria, we obtained a final sample of 424 participants (260 women, 164 men; 227 White, 197 Black;  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.6$ ,  $SD = 8.3$ ). For participation, participants received \$1.25 for completing a ~ 45-minute survey.

## Measures

**Lay theories of societal racism.** Participants completed our new measure of people's lay theories, an 8-item assessment of their beliefs about the changeability of societal racism (See Appendix A). Items such as “Racism cannot be removed from society” and “When people think they are removing racism from society, they really are just hiding it” were developed to assess the level of agreement with racism being a core feature of America's past and present culture. Responses on these items were scored on a Likert scale from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 6 (*very strongly agree*).

**Lay theories of individual prejudice.** Participants completed the Carr et al.'s lay theories of individual prejudice measure (Appendix B). The lay theories of individual prejudice is a 5-item measure ( $\alpha = .82$ ) gauging the extent to which people believe that a person's level of prejudice is malleable (e.g. “People have a certain level of prejudice and there's not much they

<sup>2</sup> Participants were also excluded if they did not complete these measures and had either low engagement scores and/or short (below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile)/long (above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile) completion times. Exclusion criteria included those who withdrew consent to use data or failed instructional manipulation check; however, no participants met that criteria. Engagement scores were calculated by subtracting seriousness scores from distraction scores, resulting in final scores ranging from -3 to +3, with participants scoring -2 or lower being recommended for exclusion.

can do to change that”). Participants’ responses were scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 6 (*very strongly agree*).

**Social dominance orientation.** Participants completed the 14-item Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO-14; Ho et al., 2015; see Appendix C). The SDO-14 scale ( $\alpha = .95$ ) gauges the extent to which people prefer hierarchy and inequality among social groups. Responses were scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly oppose*) to 7 (*strongly favor*) so that, with the exception of items that needed to be reverse coded, higher scores represented a strong preference for social hierarchy and inequality.

**System justification.** Participants completed the 8-item General System Justification Scale (SJS-8; Kay & Jost, 2003; see Appendix D). The SJS-8 scale ( $\alpha = .84$ ) constitutes a measure of people’s tendency to attribute legitimacy to the US sociopolitical system. Responses on this measure were scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 9 (*strongly disagree*). All responses (except items #3 and #7) were reverse scored so that higher scores indicate greater system justification.

**Modern racism.** Participants completed the 7-item Modern Racism scale (MRS; McConahay, 1986; see Appendix E). The MRS scale ( $\alpha = .91$ ) gauges the extent to which people hold negative attitudes toward Black Americans based on the belief that they violate values of meritocracy. Responses were scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

**Belief in race-related conspiracy theories.** Participants completed a measure assessing their belief in government conspiracy theories against Black Americans (Crocker et al., 1999; see Appendix F). For our validation study, we replaced statements containing “Black Americans” with the term “racial minorities”. The original measure was designed to only assess the beliefs

held by Black Americans and our desire was to use a term that included other racial groups thought to be intentionally disenfranchised by the US government (e.g., Hispanic and Native Americans). Participants indicated their level of agreement with statements regarding government conspiracies to harm racial minorities (e.g. “The government deliberately makes sure that drugs are available in poor neighborhoods to harm racial minorities.”). All eight items were scored on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

**Perceived prevalence of racism.** All participants were instructed to complete a histogram measuring the prevalence of racism in the US (see Appendix G). Participants adjusted four bars to indicate the perceived percentage of people in the US who could be categorized under each level of prejudice. Levels of prejudice ranged from 1 (*very unbiased*) to 4 (*very biased*).

**Perceived impact of careers on prejudice.** Participants were assigned to complete an evaluation of 10 careers we pre-selected. In previous research, occupants of these careers have been shown to vary in their preference for maintaining social hierarchical structures (Fischer et al., 2012; see Appendix H). For example, public defenders were shown to score low in social dominance orientation while police officers scored high on the same measure. Unique to this study, participants rated the degree to which engagement in each careers would result in a decrease, increase, or no change in prejudice at the level of the person. Responses were scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*much less prejudiced*) to 7 (*much more prejudiced*).

**Attribution style.** We included the Attribution Styles Questionnaire (ASQ; Peterson et al., 1982; see Appendix I), a qualitative assessment of people’s causal attribution of 12 life events. We selected four negative life events (e.g. “You lost your job.”) and asked participants to imagine the event happening to them. After reading each event, participants were instructed to

write down what they believed to be the cause of the event (internal vs. external), how pervasive of an impact this event would have on their life (local vs. global), and how long will the impact of this event be (stable vs. temporary). Responses were coded by two trained research assistants.

**Personal project engagement.** We adapted questions about people's level of investment in current personal projects from research by Laurin et al. (2011) to measure participants' level of motivation towards goal pursuit. Participants were asked to think about a goal and then answer four questions that assessed their self-reported number of committed hours toward the goal ("How much time do you expect to spend next week pursuing that goal?"), interest in working towards this goal ("How interested are you in working towards this goal?"), ability to resist temptation ("How interested are you in resisting these temptations?"), and efficacy of goal pursuit ("How effective do you perceive this strategy to be?"). Responses to questions about their interest in the goal, ability to resist temptation, and efficacy of goal pursuit were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1(*not at all*) to 5(*extremely*).

## **Procedure**

After consenting, participants were instructed to complete an eligibility form. Within that form, participants provided their race identity, which was our key criteria for inclusion in the survey. Only Black or White participants were permitted to continue onto the questionnaires. After the eligibility survey, participants completed the aforementioned measures in a randomized order. With the exception of our key measures (i.e., lay theories of societal racism, lay theories of individual prejudice, perceived impact of careers on prejudice, perceived prevalence of racism in the US, and personal project engagement), participants were randomly assigned to complete half of the measures included in the study. This resulted in some analyses being conducted on smaller subsamples than others (i.e., modern racism and belief in conspiracy theories of race).



After completing the measures, participants were debriefed, probed for level of engagement, and then thanked for their time.

## **Results**

### **Reliability and Factor Analyses: Lay Theories of Societal Racism**

Across all participants, we analyzed the reliability of our lay theories of societal racism measure. We computed the relations between the items (i.e., inter-item correlation) and the overall consistency of the measure (i.e., Cronbach's alpha). Of the eight items used in our measure, four required reverse coding (R) prior to analysis so that higher scores on this measure indicated that a person held an entity theory of societal racism.

The overall reliability of our lay theories of societal racism measure was quite good ( $\alpha = .84$ ; Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Positive item-total correlations were evidenced across all items, ranging from moderate (Item #1;  $r = .40$ ) to strong (Item #8;  $r = .72$ ), showing that each item was reliably predicting variation on the latent construct. The inter-item correlations showed a large range of magnitude, from weak ( $r = .16$ ) to strong ( $r = .73$ ). No item correlations had a magnitude lower than  $r = .10$  or had a negative correlation, so we retained all of the items. The lay theories of societal racism construct thus showed adequate reliability.

We also considered whether our measure of lay theories of societal racism was a unitary construct. All eight items significantly loaded onto one factor in a factor analysis that allowed correlated factors (i.e., principal component analysis with an oblique rotation), which accounted for 47% of the variance. The one-factor solution explained more variance than would be expected by chance (i.e., eigenvalue greater than 3), but the two-factor solution did not (i.e., the eigenvalue for the second factor was 1.2).

## **Convergent Validity**

**Attribution style.** What people consider to be the causes and effects of a given event (i.e., their attributional style) may be a reflection of their lay beliefs about the changeability of salient phenomena. In this study, people who endorse an entity theory about societal racism may have drawn upon external and stable factors (i.e., institutional racism) to justify why they experience certain hardships (i.e., unemployment). With this in mind, the responses participants gave to the Attribution Styles Questionnaire scenarios were coded and compared to their scores on the lay theories of societal racism measure.

Four coders rated the answers that participants provided to the scenarios on three dimensions: locus of causality (internal vs. external), duration of effect (temporary vs. stable), and scope of effect (local vs. global). For each response, coders gave either a score of 1 (internal, temporary, local) or 2 (external, stable, global) for responses that fit into one of the dimensions. Responses that could not be classified were assigned a score of -1 and not included in the analyses. Across ratings, coders had a very good inter-rater agreement of 89% (Hallgren, 2012). All coders were blind to the race or lay theory of prejudice associated with the participant in order to offset potential systematic bias in scores.

For the analyses, scores on each dimension were combined and qualitatively classified as a single attribution style (e.g. external, stable, and global attribution), then recoded into a binary variable of 0s or 1s. Responses that fit with an external, stable, and local (or global) attribution style were recoded as a 1 to detect the presence of a reasoning hypothesized to be related to an entity theory of societal racism. Other styles were scored as 0. In order to test the correlation between participants' theories of societal racism and their attribution style, scores on both measures were run in a ANOVA with theories of societal racism being the dependent variable.

Lending support to the hypothesis, the results revealed that participants who made attributions that fit with believing in external and stable attributions of negative events (vs. other attributions) also believed in an entity theory of societal racism,  $t(338) = -2.3, p = .023$ . When adding in participants' theories of individual prejudice into the equation, the relation between theories of societal racism and attribution style remained,  $b = 0.22, SE = 0.08, t(337) = 2.6, p = .011$ . The findings suggest that making external, stable, and local/global attributions of negative events may be a tendency that correlates with a general belief that societal racism is less changeable.

**Racial differences.** Comparisons by racial group were made to observe for potential differences in the relationship between an entity theory of societal racism and attribution style. Upon conducting a regression analysis, we did not find a significant difference in relations between attribution style and theories of societal racism for each racial group ( $t < 1$ ). White participants' scores on the theories of societal racism measure were marginally related to their attribution styles while Black participants' scores were not. In particular, Whites who held an entity theory of societal racism were more likely to infer that external and stable factors explained negative life events,  $b = 0.24, SE = 0.12, t(183) = 2.0, p = .047$ . Blacks did not reliably show this tendency as a function of their lay theories,  $b = 0.22, SE = 0.15, t(153) = 1.4, p = .152$ , but it followed the same pattern.

### **Discriminant Validity**

As a first test of our measure's distinctiveness, we considered items from both the lay theories of individual prejudice and the lay theories of societal racism measure and examined whether these two scales were a unitary construct. When constraining the bank of items to a one-factor solution, the single factor explained 40% of the variance (i.e., eigenvalue greater than 5). A principal components analysis with oblique rotation that constrained items into a two-factor

solution explained an additional 15% of the variance (i.e., eigenvalue for second factor was 2.1). A three-factor solution explained 11% of the variance (eigenvalue for third factor was 1.5). As a preliminary test, items in our lay theories of societal racism measure appeared to measure a construct that is distinct from Carr et al.'s (2012) lay theories of individual prejudice.

The final measure of lay theories of societal racism comprised the following items:

1. When it comes to race relations, society can easily change. (R)
2. Although over time the form of race relations can change, racial biases in society will always continue.
3. Society can appear unbiased, but if you look deeper you can always see racial bias.
4. The level of racism within society has changed a great deal. (R)
5. Racism cannot be removed from society.
6. When people think they are removing racism from society, they really are just hiding it.
7. It is possible for racial bias within society to be eliminated. (R)
8. With enough effort even the deep-seated racism in society can be changed. (R)

Next, we computed descriptive statistics and correlations to test how distinct participants' lay theories of societal racism were from their lay theories of individual prejudice and other politically-relevant measures (See Tables 1 & 2). Participants who held an entity theory of societal racism were likely to believe in an entity theory of individual prejudice,  $r(417) = .48, p < .001$ . For the SJS-8, participants' scores on the lay theories of societal racism showed a weak, but significant negative correlation with their level of endorsement of the system's legitimacy,  $r(417) = -.12, p = .011$ . The same pattern emerged when we analyzed the relation between participants' theories of societal racism and their level of social dominance orientation,  $r(417) = .11, p = .028$ . Finally, participants' entity theory of societal racism showed a weak, non-significant negative correlation with their level of prejudice,  $r(207) = -.01, p = .853$ , and a weak,

non-significant positive correlation with their level of endorsement of government conspiracies against racial minorities,  $r(207) = .08, p = .283$ .<sup>3</sup> The modest magnitude of the correlations between our lay theories of societal racism measure and the aforementioned scales lends support to the distinctiveness of participants' beliefs in the changeability of societal racism.

**Racial differences.** Although we established the unitary construct of people's theories about the changeability societal racism, there remain questions as to the distinctiveness of this construct from people's theories about the changeability of individual prejudice because of the absence of two constructs appearing in our factor analysis of items from both scales. We theorized that Black and White participants differ in their distinguishing between racism that is changeable/unchangeable at both the individual and the societal level. Specifically, Blacks (more than Whites) would hold beliefs about the changeability of societal racism that are related but independent from their beliefs about the changeability of individual prejudice. To test this hypothesis, we ran factor analyses separately for both racial groups. Our results revealed that, for Black Americans, both a one-factor (eigenvalue greater than 3) and two-factor solution (eigenvalue was 2.4) were sufficient in explaining the variability in scores across the two measures. For White Americans, only a one-factor solution explained the variability (eigenvalue greater than 3).

In accordance with our theorizing about racial differences in sensitivity towards societal racism, however, we compute additional tests of discriminant validity between Blacks and Whites. As can be seen in Table 2, Blacks ( $M = 3.75, SD = 0.85$ ) were more likely to endorse an entity theory of societal racism compared to Whites ( $M = 3.53, SD = 0.75$ ),  $F(1, 420) = 7.92, p = .005, \eta^2_p = .019$ . We performed analyses that compared the two races on the relation between their theories of societal racism and other attitude measures.

<sup>3</sup>Participants were randomly assigned to complete either the belief in conspiracy theories of race measure (BCR) or the modern racism measure (MRS) and not both.

Using correlation and multiple-regression analyses, we found that both Black and White participants showed a strong, positive correlation between their entity theory of societal racism and their entity theory of individual prejudice, with Whites,  $r(221) = .57, p < .001$ , showing a stronger relation between the two constructs than Blacks,  $r(194) = .37, p < .001, b = 0.14, SE = 0.05, t(415) = 2.8, p = .006$ . For the remaining comparisons, we sought to partial out the effect of participants' lay theories of individual prejudice so that the unique relation between lay theories of societal racism and other attitude measures could be determined. The following correlations computed were partial correlations.

White participants' entity theory of societal racism measure showed small, non-significant positive correlations with both their level of prejudice,  $r(104) = .07, p = .487$ , system justification,  $r(210) = .06, p = .401$ , and social dominance orientation,  $r(210) = .07, p = .333$ . The relation between entity theories of societal racism and beliefs in conspiracy theories of race relations was also non-significant, albeit a negative correlation,  $r(103) = .006, p = .951$ . In contrast, Black participants showed a different pattern of relationships between their lay beliefs about societal racism and their other attitudes. More specifically, their entity theory of societal racism showed a strong, negative correlation with their level of prejudice,  $r(92) = -.40, p < .001$ , and their social dominance orientation,  $r(182) = -.26, p < .001$ . Blacks showed a moderate, negative correlation between their entity theory of societal racism and endorsement of system-justifying beliefs,  $r(182) = -.24, p = .001$ . Through multiple regression, we found these racial differences in correlations were found to be statistically reliable,  $|b/s| > 0.20, SEs < 0.11, ts > 2.9, ps < .004$ . Similar to Whites, however, Blacks showed a near-zero, negative correlation between an entity theory of societal racism and their belief in conspiracy theories of race,  $r(88) = -.03, p =$

.760. In total, these correlations suggest that Blacks' lay theories of societal racism have a unique set of relationships with their other attitudes that is not shown in Whites'.

### **Predictive Validity**

As our first test of the predictive validity of the lay theories of societal racism measure, we observe the relationship between participants' beliefs about the changeability of societal racism and their perceptions of how prevalent they believed racism to be in the US. We created a weighted-percentage total that would be indicative of what percentage of people in the US were believed to be prejudiced. Because the anchors on the histogram ranged from 1 to 4, percentages given to the higher anchor were assigned a numerical weight of 1, those given to the second highest a score of 2/3, third highest a score of 1/3, and the lowest anchor a score of 0. This approach ensured that higher scores on the prevalence measure would represent a larger estimate of the prevalence of racists in the US. Our aim was to test the hypothesis that holding an entity theory of societal racism would be associated with an estimated higher percentage of prejudiced people in the US, even after controlling for other measures.

**Perceived prevalence of racism.** For this analysis, we measured the correlation between our lay theories of societal racism measure and participants' weighted scores on the histogram, controlling for the attitude measures mentioned previously (i.e., SDO-14, SJS-8, MRS, and lay theories of individual prejudice). The relation found between the two measures supported our hypothesis in that participants who endorsed an entity theory of societal racism predicted a large estimate of the prevalence of racists in America, even after controlling for participants' theories of individual prejudice,  $r(413) = .18, p < .001$ , social dominance orientation,  $r(413) = .26, p < .001$ , level of system justification,  $r(414) = .24, p < .001$ , and modern racism,  $r(204) = .32, p < .001$ .

**Racial differences.** Quite unexpectedly, when we controlled for participants' lay theories of individual prejudice, system justification tendency, and social dominance orientation, only White participants still showed a positive correlation between their entity of societal racism and their perceptions as to how prevalent racism is in the US,  $r(204) = .19, p = .005$ . Black participants did not show a significant partial correlation between the two measures,  $r(177) = .09, p = .23$ . The preliminary evidence suggests that Whites' entity theories of societal racism may uniquely predict their beliefs about how common racism is in the US while Blacks' theories of societal racism and attitudes toward the system and social hierarchies may greatly influence their perceptions.

**Perceived impact of careers on prejudice.** Our second test of the predictive validity involved observing the correlations between our lay theories of societal racism measure and people's beliefs about the degree to which others' change their level of prejudice upon going into certain careers. We predicted that participants who endorsed an entity theory of prejudice would believe that people going into hierarchy-maintaining careers (e.g., police, urban developer) would become more racist because of their belief in the prejudicial nature of the institution. Controlling for other measures, participants who held an entity theory of societal racism were more likely to perceive that people will show an elevation in their level of prejudice when they become a police officer ( $r = .15$ ), attorney ( $r = .11$ ), mortgage loan officer ( $r = .12$ ), news pundit ( $r = .13$ ), politician ( $r = .13$ ), high-school teacher ( $r = .13$ ) and urban developer ( $r = .14$ ). All of these correlations were significant at either the .05 or .01 alpha level. There were no significant correlations between lay theories of societal racism and the other careers ( $r_s < .01$ ).

We also conducted a test of discriminant validity by noting the correlations between Carr et al.'s lay theories of individual prejudice and the same careers to see if a different pattern



would emerge. Aside from forecasting an elevation in an individual's level of prejudice upon becoming a high-school teacher,  $r(378) = .12, p = .02$ , participants' entity theory of individual prejudice did not significantly correlate with the other careers ( $r_s < .1$ ). Taken together, these results suggest that people's lay theories of societal racism and their lay theories of individual prejudice predict different hypotheses about the trajectory of others' racial prejudice when in certain occupations.

**Racial differences.** For both racial groups, we separately tested the relation between participants' entity theory of societal racism and their expectations of the degree of change in prejudice that a person undergoes when in a hierarchy-maintaining career. A positive correlation between participants' entity theory of societal racism and their belief that people become more prejudiced in hierarchy-maintaining careers was present in Blacks,  $r(184) = .23, p = .002$ , but not in Whites,  $r(211) = .02, p = .743$ , when it came to an urban developer. Figure 1 shows that this pattern replicated with police officer (Blacks'  $r = .18$ ; Whites'  $r = .08$ ), mortgage loan officer (Blacks'  $r = .15$ ; Whites'  $r = .08$ ), and high-school teacher (Blacks'  $r = .17$ ; Whites'  $r = .03$ ). Only the relation between participants' entity theory of societal racism and perceived change in prejudice for people becoming urban developers was significantly different across races,  $b = -0.18, SE = 0.09, t(395) = -2.1, p = .034$ .

Regardless of implementing control variables (i.e., lay theories of individual prejudice, SDO, and SJT), the results maintained within the range of marginal to statistical significance in the patterns hypothesized. The results attest to the idea that the function of seeing societal racism as an entity that cannot change may relate to Blacks' beliefs about how working in hierarchy-enhancing roles within the system makes people racist. For Whites, however, seeing societal racism as unchangeable does not relate to this belief.

**Personal project engagement.** Previous work by Laurin et al. (2012) on the positive relation between commitment to personal goal pursuit and perceptions of system legitimacy inspired our analysis of a relationship between goal pursuit and beliefs about the changeability of societal racism. Unique to our study, we tested the overall relationship between the two measures and whether it differed by participant race.

Correlations between the four questions that measured commitment to goal pursuit found that scores on one were positively associated with scores on another, with correlations ranging from  $r = .29$  to  $r = .54$ . When we tested the relationship between these questions and our lay theories measure, there were no significant results ( $p$ -values  $> .30$ ). Subsequent to this analysis, we examined the correlations for Blacks and Whites separately.

**Racial differences.** Blacks and Whites did not differ in the relation between an entity theory of societal racism and level of personal project engagement across the four types of project investments,  $F(3, 1128) = 1.3, p = .258, \eta^2_p = .004$ . When we examined each type of personal-project engagement separately, however, as shown in Figure 2, Black' self-efficacy was found to vary in accordance with their belief in the changeability of societal racism more so than Whites' reports,  $b = 0.14, SE = 0.07, t(376) = 2.1, p = .038$ . The more that Black participants believed that societal racism was unchangeable, the lower they rated their efficacy for accomplishing personal goals,  $b = -0.16, SE = 0.08, t(174) = -1.9, p = .063$ . White participants did not show this same relation between their lay beliefs about the changeability of societal racism and their level of engagement in current projects,  $b = 0.12, SE = 0.10, t(202) = -1.2, p = .245$ . We did not observe any significant interactions between the participant's race and their lay theories of societal racism in predicting scores on each of the remaining three items ( $ps > .26$ ).

So, there is modest evidence to suggest that, for Black Americans, holding an entity theory of societal racism may hamper the belief that one's goal pursuit will return dividends.

### **Discussion**

The first study measured the psychometric features of a scale we developed that captures people's lay theories about the changeability of societal racism. We established these properties through analyzing the distinctiveness and convergence of this scale with people's attributional styles, tendency to endorse an entity/incremental theory of individual prejudice, prefer social inequality, to justify the current system of government, their beliefs in conspiracies related to race, and their level of racism. Our results revealed that participants' lay theories of societal racism was conceptually distinct from these attitude measures in that the correlations were not strong enough to suggest multi-collinearity with one or more pre-existing attitudes. In general, the findings were consistent with our preregistered predictions.

Furthermore, we tested how well lay people's theories of societal racism predicts their perceptions about the prevalence of racism in America, and their beliefs about the changeability of individual racism in hierarchy-maintaining careers. Only Black participants who held an entity theory of societal racism were more likely to estimate a greater prevalence of racism in the US, expect people who select hierarchy-maintaining careers to become more racist over time, and to make external attributions for outcomes. Our lay theories of societal racism measure's ability to account for the variance in these outcomes, while controlling for other measures, elevates its consideration to be used in future research because it may inform our understanding of the impact that racist events have on views of the system.

## CHAPTER 3: CONCURRENT THREATS AND THEORIES PT 1

### Study 2

In our early work (Wilmot et al., in prep), we tested the hypothesis that Whites responded to seeing a White-male CEO who was racist defensively. Despite seeing the CEO's blatant racism, Whites reported that racism in society was less prevalent and they responded by seeing individual racism as more entity based, in effect characterizing the CEO as a bad apple. The defensiveness of these beliefs was demonstrated when Whites were randomly assigned to be self-affirmed before seeing the White CEO. When self-affirmed, Whites did not report racism as being less prevalent in society or individual racism and more entity based.

Similar to Whites, we believe that Blacks are motivated to respond to an identity threat by using lay theories as a tool for constructing their reality. We expect that Blacks, however, will be more likely to endorse an entity theory of societal racism after having read about a White-male CEO who made blatantly racist remarks. Unique to this study, we used a new measure for the prevalence of racism by asking participants to indicate how often these news events (e.g. blatant prejudice vs. embezzlement) happen in their city so that we could test the generality of our results on a related measure. In addition, we added a measure assessing participants' level of emotion in order to test the range of responses to this news event. It is our hypothesis that, after reading about discrimination, Blacks will be more likely to perceive this problem to be prevalent where they live and, consequently, will express more anger. We hypothesized the effect of our manipulation on Blacks' reported levels of anger will be mediated by both their lay theories of societal racism and their perceptions of the frequency of racism. Finally, we tested the effect of witnessing overt racism on Blacks' reported level of engagement in personal projects via their level of endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism because

of the relation found between this potential mediator and dependent measure in the validation study.

## Method

### Participants

For Study 2, we recruited 328 people (218 women, 110 men, 188 White, 140 Black,  $M_{age} = 29.52$  years,  $SD = 3.19$ ) from Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to participate in a study similar in layout to Study 1. Participants were provided the same purpose as that mentioned in Study 1. Additional MTurk workers ( $n = 15$ ) were excluded if they did not identify themselves as Black or White in our demographics questionnaire, even though workers were provided the option of self-identifying as bi-racial, multi-racial, and other (please specify). For their participation in the study, eligible participants received \$1.25 for their time.

**Exclusion criteria.** Prior to analysis, we excluded any cases in which participants failed all our attention-check questions ( $n = 37$ ), did not reach the manipulation phase or those that met three or more of the following criteria: failed attention-check questions (i.e., “What was the title of the article you read?”; “What was the name of the newspaper that the article is sourced from?”; “What comments did the CEO make in the article?” ), short (below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile) or long (above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile) completion time ( $n = 1$ ; 2%), or reported low engagement (subtracted seriousness scores from distraction scores;  $n = 5$ ; 13%). Scores for engagement were calculated using the same procedure in Study 1. This screening process truncated our sample to 291 participants (169 White, 122 Black; 191 women, 100 men;  $M_{age} = 29.5$ ,  $SD = 4.5$ ).

### Procedure

Participants completed the study within approximately 25-30 minutes. Prior to implementing the manipulation, they filled out questions about their engagement with news media. Additionally, participants completed demographic questions. Then, they completed

questionnaires assessing their opinions about social issues unrelated to race relations (i.e., fine-arts education, environment sustainability, & U.S. government). These questions served to bolster our cover story.

As part of our manipulation, participants were instructed to read two unrelated news articles documenting high-profile events. All participants received the same first article which covered a discovery made by an oceanographer at the University of Washington. The second article contained our manipulation. Half of the participants were assigned to the control incident in which they read about an event involving controversial statements about embezzlement in the workplace made by a Boston Globe chief editor (e.g., “*Just because an employer is transferring entrusted premiums from your pocket...doesn’t mean they engaged in embezzlement*”). The other half were assigned to the racist incident where they read about prejudicial comments made by the same chief editor (e.g., “*These minorities are the cause of their own troubles and I shouldn’t have to bail them out because of discrimination*”). Participants were told that they would be answering questions about either the first or second article. All participants were assigned to the second article. Participants, then, completed questions that contained our dependent measures. First, they were instructed to complete a critique of the article by (1) summarizing the main points highlighted by the author, (2) indicating whether they detected any disturbing content, and (3) proposing a course of action to be taken. Second, participants were instructed to complete a questionnaire purported to assess how their beliefs affect their perception of the assigned article. In this questionnaire were statements that measured participants’ beliefs about the malleability of personality, malleability of prejudice (individual and societal), and their level of prejudice. Participants then were instructed to report the frequency with which events similar to the article they responded (i.e., embezzlement vs. discrimination) occur in their city/region. Subsequently,

participants reported their level of emotion (i.e., anger, sadness, shame, and guilt) in response to the article. Then, they completed measures that assessed their level of investment in a goal they are currently pursuing. Finally, participants were asked whether the article they read contained prejudicial comments (i.e., manipulation check; “In the article you read, were there prejudicial comments made?” Yes or No), probed for suspicion, debriefed, and thanked for their time.

## **Materials**

**News articles.** Prior to implementing the study, we borrowed a news story, titled *Volcanic Sea Vents Make Racket*, from the University of Washington News that would serve as the first article (see Appendix J). We created two versions of the second article by borrowing a template from the Boston Business Journal website and editing the words and format of the article through Adobe Photoshop CS6. Across the two versions of the second article, we placed two images of the focal target beside the content to indicate that the race and sex of the target was a White male. We chose have a White male target make the comments because of the known stereotype that White men are prone to express prejudice (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2008). The target was assigned the name Stephen Immerman and the title of Chief Editor of the Boston Globe. What differed between the two articles was their title (i.e., “Embezzlement in the Workplace” vs. “Discrimination in the Workplace”) and whether they addressed prejudicial (or embezzlement) comments made by the target (see Appendices K1 & K2).

**Measures.** Participants completed several measures pertaining to the constructs of focus: lay theories of individual/societal prejudice, lay theories of personality, modern racism, and the frequency with which the media event they read about occurs in their city/region. Similar to Study 1, participants completed the lay theories of individual prejudice ( $\alpha = .82$ ) and lay theories of societal racism ( $\alpha = .93$ ). In addition, they completed a 5-item measure that gauged their lay

theories of personality ( $\alpha = .89$ ; e.g., “Everyone is a certain kind of person, and there’s not much that can be done to really change that.”; Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997; see Appendix L) on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 6 (*very strongly agree*).

After completing the lay theories measures, participants were asked to report how often this type of event occurs in their city/region on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*all of the time*). Second, we asked them to report the degree to which they would experience four negative emotions (i.e., shame, sadness, anger, guilt) had such an event occurred on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 5 (*very likely*).

Third, we assessed participants’ belief in conspiracy theories about race relations using the 8-item Belief in Conspiracy Theories of Race measure ( $\alpha = .95$ ; Crocker et al., 1999), ranging on a 7-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Finally, participants completed the same Modern Racism Scale ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and personal project engagement measures used in the validation study.

## **Results**

### **Manipulation Check**

We tested and found that our manipulation was effective in heightening participants’ attention to the presence of prejudicial remarks. Through a chi-squared analysis, we found that article condition significantly predicted whether participants noted that prejudicial comments were made,  $\chi^2 = 108.6$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants in the discrimination condition (88%) were more likely to report having noticed prejudicial comments than those in the embezzlement condition (21%). In the discrimination condition, Whites (85%) were marginally less likely to notice that prejudicial comments were made compared to Blacks (95%),  $\chi^2(1) = 3.5$ ,  $p = .061$ .



## Correlational Analyses

Correlational analyses were conducted to investigate the relations between the lay theories of societal racism, lay theories of individual prejudice, and measures of race-related political attitudes (see Table 3). Participants' entity theories of societal racism were positively correlated with their theories of individual prejudice,  $r(289) = .51, p < .001$ , theories of personality,  $r(289) = .22, p < .001$ , and their belief in conspiracy theories about race relations,  $r(289) = .30, p < .001$ . Theories of societal racism showed a non-significant negative relation with level of racism,  $r(289) = -.10, p = .084$ . We, then, controlled for measures of race-related attitudes and theories of personality, and the other lay theory of prejudice in our main analyses.

## Effects Theorized for Whites

**Lay theories of individual prejudice.** The effect of overt racism that Wilmot et al (in prep.) found in White participants was the focus of our first set of tests (i.e., lay theories of individual prejudice and frequency of occurrence). Our first test provided support of this hypothesis in that White and Black participants endorsed an entity theory of individual prejudice to differing degrees across news-article conditions,  $F(1, 287) = 11.6, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .039$ . This pattern held even when controlling for the influence of participants' level of prejudice ( $p = .003$ ), theories of societal racism ( $p < .001$ ), and theories of personality ( $p = .001$ ).

Upon further analysis, we found that White participants were more likely to endorse an entity theory of prejudice in the discrimination condition than in the embezzlement condition,  $t(287) = 5.3, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.76$  (See Figure 3). For Black participants, there was a non-significant trend in the opposite direction,  $t(287) < 1, p = .97$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.006$ . Our results suggest that White participants flexibly change their theories of prejudice at the individual level when responding to threat by a stereotypic ingroup member.

**Frequency of occurrence.** To augment this hypothesis, we tested the effect of our two-way model on participants' beliefs as to how often similar events to the one reported in the news article occur where they live. Black and White participants showed different responses to the manipulation that were statistically significant,  $F(1, 286) = 16.8, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .055$ . Whites ( $M = 2.94, SD = 0.73$ ) believed that prejudice as displayed by the CEO in the discrimination condition was less common than did Blacks ( $M = 3.46, SD = 1.29$ ),  $t(142) = 3.1, p = .003$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.53$  (see Figure 5). In contrast, Whites ( $M = 2.72, SD = 0.85$ ) were more likely to report that embezzlement was more common in their city/region compared to Blacks ( $M = 2.35, SD = 0.79$ ),  $t(144) = -2.7, p = .007$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.38$ .

### **Effects Theorized for Blacks**

**Lay theories of societal racism.** Our second set of tests observed Black participants' endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism following a news event about discrimination. As predicted we found that Blacks' beliefs in an entity view of societal prejudice differed from Whites' depending on which news article they read,  $F(1, 287) = 38.9, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .12$  (see Figure 4). This result held after controlling for theories of individual prejudice ( $p < .001$ ), theories of personality ( $p < .001$ ), level of prejudice ( $p < .001$ ), and belief in conspiracy theories about race relations ( $p < .001$ ).

Blacks were more willing to endorse an entity theory of societal racism after reading about discrimination in the workplace compared to after reading about embezzlement in the workplace,  $t(287) = 9.5, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.78$ . Whites showed this pattern; however, the effect was much smaller and was not statistically reliable,  $t(287) = 1.6, p = .12$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.25$ . These findings support the idea that Blacks respond to overt racism by seeing systemic prejudice as less changeable.

## **Level of Anger**

Our third hypothesis investigated both Black and White participants' emotional responses to the discrimination and embezzlement articles. We constrained our focus towards the level of anger participants felt because this emotion is a common emotional response by stigmatized groups to intergroup threats (Gill & Matheson, 2006; Kamans, Otten, & Gordijn, 2010). We expected that Blacks in the discrimination condition would report a greater level of anger than those in the embezzlement condition. In contrast, we did not expect any differences in reported level of anger for Whites.

The difference in reported levels of anger across conditions differed for Black versus White participants,  $F(1, 287) = 21.5, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .070$ . As can be seen in Figure 6, Blacks in the discrimination condition showed a marginally greater level of anger than Blacks in the embezzlement condition,  $t(120) = 2.0, p = .051, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.38$ . Unexpectedly, Whites reported a greater level of anger in the embezzlement than in discrimination condition,  $t(167) = -5.0, p < .001, \text{Cohen's } d = 0.69$ . We analyzed participants' reported anger controlling for their other reported emotions to control for overall emotionality and found similar results.

## **Psychological Processes among Blacks**

For the last set of analyses, we examined whether participants' lay theories of prejudice (individual and societal) as manipulated by the articles they read predicts participants' perceptions of how frequently discrimination (vs. embezzlement) occurs in the participants' city/region. We then further assessed whether lay theories of prejudice and frequency of similar events play a mediating role in our manipulation's predicted effect on participants' level of anger. We decided to test this specific pathway because of the order in which these variables were presented in the study. It was our expectation that Blacks who read about discrimination

would report a heightened level of anger through affecting their endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism and their belief in the frequency with which these events occur in their area.

**Frequency of occurrence.** We found that Black participants' lay theories of societal racism predicted their perceived frequency of occurrence of the event in the article differently depending on which article they read,  $b = -0.23$   $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(118) = -2.1$ ,  $p = .041$ . In the discrimination condition, the more they endorsed an entity theory of societal racism, the more they perceived discrimination to often occur where they lived,  $r(57) = .27$ ,  $p = .040$ . In contrast in the embezzlement condition, there was not a reliable relation between their theory of societal racism and the frequency with which they thought embezzlement occurred where they lived,  $r(61) = .11$ ,  $p = .389$ . The data suggest that Blacks' perceptions of how common discrimination is within their city/region is influenced by their belief in the changeability of racism they incur at the societal level, but their beliefs about embezzlement is not.

**Level of anger.** We next examined whether Blacks' lay theories of societal racism, which would impact their perceptions of how prevalent similar events occurred where they lived, which would, in turn, affect how angry they felt. The effect of reading about discrimination on Blacks' anger was at least partially explained by the effect of this manipulation on their theories about whether societal racism was changeable, which, in turn, predicted their beliefs about how prevalent discrimination was in the area where they lived,  $b = -.11$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $CI [-.22, -.02]$ . We did not see this same pattern among White participants,  $b = -.003$ ,  $SE = .004$ ,  $p = .57$ ,  $CI [-.013, .005]$ . The causal model remained the only model to significantly predict anger when other alternative pathways were taken into account. These results suggest that reading a news article about discrimination may lead Blacks to become angrier because it affects their theories

about the changeability of societal racism which affects their beliefs about the frequency of discrimination (see Figure 8).

### **Personal Project Engagement**

We compared Black and White participants' level of engagement in personal goals after they read about discrimination (or embezzlement) in a news-article. Similar to the validation study, we used four items to measure goal pursuit (i.e., hours of commitment, interest in goal, resistance toward temptation, and self-efficacy) and the items showed moderate to strong positive correlations with each other. Through a repeated-measures ANOVA, we found that Blacks differed from Whites in the variability of goal-related responses to the news-article condition,  $F(3, 285) = 10.7, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .101$ . Blacks showed differences in levels of goal investment after reading about discrimination than when they read about embezzlement,  $F(3, 118) = 17.4, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .306$ . Whites reported comparable levels of personal project engagement regardless of which article they read,  $F(3, 165) < 1, p = .688, \eta^2_p = .009$ .<sup>4</sup>

The next objective was to determine which element of Black participants' goal engagement was most affected by the news-article manipulation. As Figure 7 shows, Blacks' reported self-efficacy was lower after having read about discrimination in the workplace than when they read about embezzlement,  $F(1, 120) = 20.4, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .145$ . Which article they read did not affect their interest ( $p = .133, \eta^2_p = .019$ ), resistance to temptation ( $p = .561, \eta^2_p = .003$ ). Unexpectedly, Blacks in the discrimination condition reported more hours committed to accomplishing the goal compared to those in the embezzlement condition,  $F(1, 120) = 4.9, p < .028, \eta^2_p = .039$ . Overall, these analyses provide preliminary evidence that overt racism may hamper Blacks' motivation to pursue current goals, specifically their belief that they can accomplish their desired outcomes.

Finally, we tested the hypothesis that the greater number of hours committed and the reduction in self-efficacy in Black participants after reading about discrimination could be explained by an elevated endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism. Our analyses showed that the Blacks' lay theories about the changeability of societal racism and their level of self-efficacy showed different patterns of relations with each other that depended on the news article they read,  $b = -0.35$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $t(118) = -3.2$ ,  $p = .002$ . The relation between Whites' lay theories of societal racism and their reported self-efficacy did not differ across conditions,  $b = -0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(165) = -1.2$ ,  $p = .201$ . For Blacks, we did not observe a significant interaction when we substituted in the number of hours committed as a dependent measure,  $b = -0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t(118) < 1$ ,  $p = .413$ . Furthermore, Blacks' correlations between lay theories of societal racism and self-efficacy were statistically reliable in the discrimination condition, showing that an entity theory of societal racism predicts a drop in self-efficacy,  $r(57) = -.49$ ,  $p < .001$ , (see Figure 9). The relation between the two measures was positive and not reliable in the embezzlement condition,  $r(61) = .05$ ,  $p = .722$ . The findings of this analysis suggest that, for Blacks, observing blatant prejudice results in their belief that societal racism isn't changeable, and an entity theory of societal racism predicts their belief that they cannot accomplish a current goal.

## Discussion

Study 2 was our first experimental test of the causal effect of an overtly racist remark on Black participants' theories about the changeability of societal racism. In support of our theorizing, our results revealed that a single event of explicit bigotry can predict Blacks' support for an entity view of racism in society. Blacks' attention to societal racism represents the blatant racism experience to being publicly devalued by a White male in a position of power. The

response to threat was captured in our assessment of Black participants' estimates as to how prevalent this type of event is where they live. This perceptual response was accompanied by expressing greater levels of anger than when embezzlement was the topic of emphasis. We also found evidence that Blacks' increased anger after reading about overt racism could be explained by their beliefs that societal racism was unchangeable and that such acts of racism were common where they lived.

Consistent with these findings, Blacks also reported a lower level of self-efficacy towards accomplishing their goals after having read about discrimination. This measure of goal engagement, which is related to the extent to which an individual can enact desired outcomes within their environment, appeared to be a determining factor in Blacks' decisions about the amount of energy they would expend on their goal. Unexpectedly, we found that Blacks were more likely to commit a greater number of hours towards their goal after they read about discrimination but not embezzlement. We did not, however, find any effect on other items (i.e., temptation, and interest), which may suggest that overt racism may specifically impact the perceived commitment and likelihood that Black Americans will accomplish their goals.

Our results present a compelling proposition about the causal paths between seeing overt racism and Black Americans' expression of anger toward this event or reported self-efficacy in pursuing personal goals. Because both our previous studies were conducted via recruitment of Mechanical Turk workers, concerns about the generalizability of responses from this sample are important to consider. We addressed these concerns in Study 3 by recruiting a larger and more representative sample of Black and White Americans who comprise diverse educational, gender, and economic backgrounds.

The effect that seeing overt racism has on Blacks' and Whites' perceptions of the prevalence of racism in their city/region is an intriguing finding in terms of comparisons made within racial groups; however, our findings did not allow for rigorous comparisons between racial groups. Environment factors (e.g., residential segregation) can yield differences in exposure to discrimination (vs embezzlement) between Black and White Americans. Despite being a conservative test that included a one-item measure, Study 3 will replace this measure with the histogram used in the validation study to allow for the test of racial differences. Included in the study, as well, is a third independent variable – presentation order – that will help explore the possibility of a similar, alternative order that explains the findings of this study (i.e. reporting prevalence of racism first vs. lay theories first). The addition of this variable would require us to collect a large enough sample of Black Americans to detect any reliable effects due to this added factor.



## CHAPTER 5: CONCURRENT THREATS AND THEORIES PT 2

### Study 3

The present study recruited, through Qualtrics™ panels, Black and White Americans who were representative of their ethnicity in the United States to increase the generalizability of our previous findings. Therefore, we expected that the results of Study 2 would be reproduced in our analyses of responses in Study 3. We extended the design of the current study by including a within-subject variable: order of measures. More specifically, we varied the order with which the lay theories measures (i.e., individual and societal) and the measure of perceived prevalence of racism were presented to examine how overt racism may trigger anger in Black Americans. Finally, we included the measure of perceived prejudice in the US from Study 1 instead of the measure of occurrence of similar events used in Study 2 to examine whether the article that participants read affected the perceptions of prejudice.

### Method

#### Participants

For Study 3, we recruited 356 people (123 men, 233 women; 146 Black, 210 White;  $M_{age} = 34.2$  years,  $SD = 10.7$ ). Participants were provided the same purpose as that mentioned in Study 2. Individuals were excluded if they did not self-identify as Black or White ( $n = 2$ ) on a demographics questionnaire that allowed for them to identify as biracial, multi-racial, or other (please specify). Eligible participants received \$6.75 from Qualtrics for their time.

**Exclusion criteria.** We employed the same criteria for exclusion of cases as used in the previous study. Participants were excluded if they did not consent to their data being used ( $n = 27$ ), failed all three attention-check questions ( $n = 113$ ), or if their data contained three of the following criteria: short (below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile) or long completion times (above the 90<sup>th</sup>

percentile ( $n = 21$ ), reported low levels of engagement ( $n = 18$ ), and failed two or more attention-check questions ( $n = 27$ ). Scores for engagement were calculated using the same procedure in Studies 1 and 2. Based on this criteria, we truncated our sample to 241 participants (83 men, 158 women; 97 Black, 147 White;  $M_{\text{age}} = 41.5$ ,  $SD = 11.7$ ). The large number of excluded cases did not affect the representativeness of our sample, as determined by a comparison of the distribution of participants across measures of age, household income, and education.

## **Procedure**

The procedure employed in this study mirrored that of the previous study, with the exception of the variation in the order of presenting the key dependent measures (i.e., lay theories of prejudice and perceived prevalence of racism). We assessed participants' perceptions of how prevalent racism is in the US by administering the same histogram participants used in Study 1. Beyond these modifications, participants were exposed to the same articles used in Study 2 and responded to the same measures.

## **Results**

### **Manipulation Check**

We tested and found that our manipulation of exposure to a racist comment was effective in heightening participants' attention to the presence of prejudicial remarks. Through a chi-squared test, we found that article condition significantly predicted whether participants noted that prejudicial comments were made,  $\chi^2(1) = 28.0$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants in the discrimination condition (68%) were more likely to report having noticed prejudicial comments than those in the embezzlement condition (34%). The percentage of participants who noticed prejudicial comments in the discrimination condition was lower in this study than in Study 2, which make reflect greater variability in recognition of what constitutes prejudice in a more representative

sample of Black and White Americans. Similar to Study 2, we found that Whites (59%) were marginally less likely than Blacks (75%) to detect prejudicial comments when in the discrimination condition,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.6, p = .058$ .

### **Correlational Analyses**

Correlational analyses were conducted to investigate the relations between the lay theories of societal racism, lay theories of individual prejudice, and level of prejudice. The measure of lay theories of societal racism was positively correlated with the measure of theories of individual prejudice,  $r(241) = .32, p < .001$  but not with participants' own level of prejudice,  $r(241) = -.044, p = .497$ . Consequently, we controlled for the other theory of prejudice when examining individual and society theories of prejudice.

### **Effects Theorized for Whites**

Consistent with Wilmot et al (in prep.) we found that that White and Black participants endorsed an entity theory of individual prejudice to differing degrees across news-article conditions,  $F(1, 237) = 26.7, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .101$ . This finding held after controlling for participants' own level of prejudice ( $p < .001$ ). After reading about an ingroup member engaging in discrimination, Whites reported endorsing an entity theory of individual prejudice to a greater extent than those who read about embezzlement,  $t(237) = 6.6, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.98$ . Blacks had only small differences in their endorsement of an entity theory of individual prejudice between conditions that were not statistically reliable,  $t(237) = 1.5, p = .133$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.29$ .

The second test of our hypothesis was conducted with participants' estimates as to the prevalence of racism in America being the dependent variable. Contrary to our hypothesis, we did not find that Whites and Blacks differed in their estimates of the prevalence of prejudice in response to reading the two articles,  $F(1, 237) = 1.9, p = .171, \eta^2_p = .008$ . Although Whites'

estimates in the discrimination condition ( $M = 16.72$ ,  $SD = 6.46$ ) were lower than those in the embezzlement condition ( $M = 18.36$ ,  $SD = 7.43$ ), this difference was not statistically reliable,  $t(237) = -1.4$ ,  $p = .155$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.23$ .<sup>5</sup>

### **Effects Theorized for Blacks**

Our second set of tests observed Black participants' endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism following a news event about discrimination. As predicted we found that Blacks showed greater differences in belief in an entity theory of societal racism across conditions than Whites,  $F(1, 237) = 5.7$ ,  $p = .018$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .024$ . This result held after controlling for theories of individual prejudice ( $p < .001$ ), theories of personality ( $p < .001$ ), own level of prejudice ( $p < .001$ ). Blacks endorsed an entity view of societal racism more strongly in the discrimination condition compared to the embezzlement condition,  $t(237) = 4.5$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.85$ .

Black participants' perceptions of the prevalence of racism were similar in the discrimination condition ( $M = 19.87$ ,  $SD = 6.16$ ) and in the embezzlement condition ( $M = 18.98$ ,  $SD = 7.77$ ), showing no statistically reliable difference,  $t(237) < 1$ ,  $p = .537$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.13$ .<sup>6</sup>

### **Level of Anger**

Participants' level of anger was the final dependent measure of analysis in the replication of a causal path between reading about discrimination and the participants' emotional responses. The relationships between the four emotions (anger, sadness, shame, and guilt) were computed and found to be positively correlated with each other,  $r_s > .20$ . Results did not change when we partialled out the effects of other emotions on anger. Contrary to the hypothesis, Blacks did not differ from Whites in the strength of emotion expressed in each condition,  $F(3, 711) < 1$ ,  $p = .437$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .004$ . This pattern of null findings was repeated when analyzing the interactive effect of discrimination and participant race on anger,  $F(1, 237) = 1.3$ ,  $p = .247$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .006$ .

<sup>5</sup>Effect of presentation order was not statistically reliable,  $F(1, 233) = 2.6$ ,  $p = .109$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .011$ .

<sup>6</sup>Effect of presentation order was not statistically reliable,  $F(1, 233) = 1.83$ ,  $p = .177$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .008$ .

## Personal Project Engagement

Consistent with Study 2, participants reported investment in personal goals were tested as predicted by their race and the news-article condition to which they were assigned. We found that Blacks differed from Whites in their goal engagement – aggregated across the four types of goal engagement – as a function of condition,  $F(3, 235) = 14.0, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .152$ . Specifically, we found that only Black participants reported differences in levels of goal investment aggregated across the four types of goal engagement after reading about discrimination versus embezzlement,  $F(3, 90) = 6.8, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .184$ . White participants also showed differences in investment across the four types of engagement after reading about discrimination versus embezzlement,  $F(3, 143) = 7.4, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .134$ .

Examining the four types of goal engagement separately, we found that Blacks differed from Whites in their reported level of self-efficacy across conditions,  $F(1, 237) = 26.8, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .102$ . Consistent with Study 2, Blacks were more likely to report lower self-efficacy when they read about discrimination ( $M = 1.83, SD = 1.13$ ) than when they read about embezzlement ( $M = 3.00, SD = 1.47$ ),  $t(92) = 4.4, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.90$ . Whites showed a trend in the opposite direction reporting greater self-efficacy after reading about discrimination ( $M = 2.58, SD = 0.80$ ) than embezzlement ( $M = 2.30, SD = 0.95$ ), but that trend was marginal,  $t(145) = -2.0, p = .052$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.32$ . Black participants did not show differences in scores of the number of hours committed, interest in the goal, and resistance to temptation between the articles they read ( $ps > .29$ ). Therefore, our results replicate the findings of Study 2 using a representative sample, showing that witnessing overt racism reduces Black participants' feelings of self-efficacy for their current personal projects.

We tested the hypothesis that the reduction in self-efficacy in Black participants after reading about discrimination could be explained by an elevated endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism. Our analyses showed that the Blacks' lay theories about the changeability of societal racism and their level of self-efficacy showed different patterns of relations with each other that depended on the news article they read,  $b = -0.84$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t(90) = -6.2$ ,  $p < .001$ . The relation between Whites' lay theories of societal racism and their reported self-efficacy did not differ across conditions,  $b = -.005$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(143) < 1$ ,  $p = .962$ . For Black participants, the correlations between lay theories of societal racism and self-efficacy were statistically reliable in the discrimination condition, showing that an entity theory of societal racism predicts a drop in self-efficacy,  $r(54) = -.62$ ,  $p < .001$ , (see Figure 10). Unexpectedly the relation between the two measures was positive in the embezzlement condition,  $r(40) = .37$ ,  $p = .016$ .

Finally, we compared the interactive relationship between participant race and lay theories of societal racism, within each condition, in predicting self-efficacy. Consistent with our hypothesis, the relationship between lay theories of societal racism and efficacy of goal pursuit differed between Blacks and Whites in the discrimination condition,  $b = 0.54$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(129) = 6.0$ ,  $p < .001$ . This pattern was occurred in the opposite direction in the embezzlement condition,  $b = -0.31$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ ,  $t(110) = -2.1$ ,  $p = .037$ . The findings of this analysis suggest that, for Blacks, observing blatant prejudice results in their belief that societal racism isn't changeable, and an entity theory of societal racism, in turn, predicts their belief that they cannot accomplish their current goal.

## Discussion

The results of Study 3 provided substantial replication of the findings obtained in Study 2, even with a representative sample of Black and White Americans. Blacks and Whites were

more likely to endorse an entity theory of societal racism and individual prejudice, respectively, when they read about discrimination. In the one instance of a failed replication, Whites did not show a decrease in the estimated prevalence of prejudice in society as we found in Wilmot et al., (in prep). Although we did not obtain statistically reliable evidence consistent with our previous findings, it is noteworthy that the results showed a similar pattern to those results and taken together the findings across the two studies would be statistically reliable.

The results for participants' self-efficacy in Study 2 were replicated in Study 3. Black participants who read the article about discrimination in the workplace were more likely to report that they would not be able to achieve their current goals. In addition, the results supported the proposed psychological process that the prospect for success in goal pursuit was results from Blacks' belief about the changeability of societal racism.

### **General Discussion**

When America is faced with addressing the problems of racial prejudice, Black Americans are willing to call attention to how systemic racism is an irremovable flaw that maintains order within the country. When racial prejudice is made explicit, it is easy for others to come to the conclusion that the perpetrator (or set of perpetrators) must be blamed for exhibiting a characterological problem (i.e., individual entity based prejudice). People may also call for the removal of these individuals because of fear that their views can free others like them to express bias. This well-intentioned response does not consider the perceptions of Black Americans. When racism is only addressed at the individual level, Black Americans may infer that America is permanently stained with societal racism.

In Study 1, we developed an 8-item measure of people's beliefs about the malleability of societal racism and tested it with a validation study with a sample of White and Black

Americans. Compared to scores on participants' lay theories of individual prejudice, social dominance orientation, system justification tendency, and modern racism, this measure showed both discriminant and convergent validity. Participants' lay theories of societal racism were found to be positively correlated with their lay theories of individual prejudice, negatively correlated with their social dominance orientation, positively correlated with their system justification tendency, and uncorrelated with their own level of racism.

We augmented these tests of construct validity by comparing Black and White Americans' lay theories of societal racism. For Black Americans, we found that the more they viewed societal racism as unchangeable, the less they favored social hierarchies over equality and the less likely they were to believe that the system is fair. This rejection of social hierarchies was not found for White Americans who held an entity view of societal racism. Whereas Black Americans who held an entity theory of societal racism reported low scores on modern racism, White Americans showed the opposite relation.

Finally, people's lay theories of societal racism predicted their perceptions of how many people in the US are racist and of the influence that hierarchy-maintaining careers exert on a people's level of prejudice. Emphasis was placed on Black Americans' scores across these measures because the detrimental influence that societal racism has in their lives has been captured through various metrics of perception (Chao, Mallinckrodt, & Wei, 2012; Ford et al., 2009; Henkel, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2006). In this study, Black participants' endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism predicted the perception that racists are highly prevalent in America. Furthermore, endorsing an entity theory predicted Black participants' belief that even seemingly egalitarian people who patronize careers that maintain inequality (i.e., police officer, mortgage loan officer, & urban planner) will become more racist over time. This pattern was not



shown in White participants or when lay theories of individual prejudice was substituted in as a predictor. Taken together, these results provide strong evidence of the divergent validity of our measure of theories of societal racism.

Studies 2 and 3 focused on testing the effect of witnessing overt racism on Blacks' and Whites' lay theories of societal and individual racism, respectively. In both studies, comparisons were made between Blacks' and Whites' responses to the manipulated variable in order to highlight the disparity that reflects unique concerns for their group's status. In Study 2, the data revealed a causal effect of reading about overt racism increasing Blacks' endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism. Whites' did not show this effect, but only reported a greater belief in an entity theory of individual prejudice. This disparity continued when comparing Black and White participants' estimates as to how often racism occurs in their city/region, a restricted measure of the perceived prevalence of racism. Blacks were more likely to report a higher prevalence of racism in their locale after reading about discrimination than Whites who read the same article. Finally, Black (but not White) participants reported a greater level of anger following exposure to blatant racism. In analyzing the psychological process, Study 2 provided evidence that observing overt racism led Blacks to endorse entity lay theories of societal racism, which in turn predicted perceived prevalence of racism in their community, which in turn predicted their level of anger.

We broadened the analyses of the effect of witnessing overt racism by comparing Blacks' and Whites' level of commitment to personal goals. Given that we found a negative correlation between an entity theory of societal racism and reduced goal self-efficacy in Black Americans, we were interested in whether overt racism would dampen this metric of goal commitment through Blacks' endorsement of an entity theory of societal racism. As expected, only Blacks

reported that they were less optimistic about their ability to reach their goal when they read the article about discrimination. In analyzing the psychological process accounting for this effect we found that Blacks' beliefs about the changeability of societal racism predicted their decrease in self-efficacy for their current goals. Because of the exploratory nature of this analysis, we decided to test the reliability of this effect in Study 3 with a representative sample of Black and White Americans.

Study 3 served as a replication of Study 2's findings. Black participants' (but not White participants') lay theories of societal racism were affected by reports of overt racism. Similarly, White participants' (but not Black participants') lay theories of individual prejudice were affected by reports of overt racism. These effects remained unchanged when we included presentation order as a moderating variable in the analysis.

Last, we tested the effect of the news article on participants' reported level of self-efficacy in pursuing personal goals. We found that Black participants were likely to report a lower level of self-efficacy in the discrimination condition compared to the embezzlement condition. In addition we found that the effect of the article condition on Blacks' self-efficacy for their current personal project could be explained by the effect of the manipulation on their lay theories of societal racism, replicating the results of Study 2. These findings strengthen the claim that overt racism may dampen Black Americans' willingness to engage in pursuit of current goals because it influences them to view societal racism as unchangeable.

Across the three studies, this investigation establishes the centrality of lay theories of societal racism within the psychological experiences of Black Americans. By making overt racism salient, this measure produced meaningful responses that may assist researchers in describing disparities between Black and White Americans' experiences of explicit racism and

estimates about how likely they will encounter racism in the future. These results present a new measure of people's lay theories that may account for disparities researchers have attempted to explain.

### **Limitations**

Our investigation failed to account certain limitations that important to highlight for the purpose of encouraging additional research on the topic of lay theories of societal racism. In the validation study of our lay theories of societal racism measure, items that discussed the idea of prejudice being changeable were composed in a manner that suggested change would occur in a positive direction and that items connoting the permanence of racism were biased towards more subtle forms of prejudice expression. We recognize that incremental changes can occur in opposing directions and that blatant racism still exists. Future research should consider testing the effect of this measure with new items that do not imply a specific direction of prejudice change and that account for the intensity of prejudice expression.

In Studies 2 and 3, half of the participants were given an article that highlighted blatantly racist comments made by a White-male CEO. The demographics of the speaker are important to note because of the stereotype of White men expressing blatantly prejudiced views (Shapiro & Neuberg, 2008). The White male-prejudice stereotype allowed for the article to appear authentic because it is not uncommon for news articles to report these stories, especially when similar comments are made by the US president (i.e., Donald Trump).

The question remains, however, as to whether these comments would have the same effect on Black and White American participants had they originated from a racial outgroup. There is reason to believe that this change in speaker characteristics would not generate a similar set of behaviors shown across the studies because part of the responses originate from Whites'

motivations to disconfirm a stereotype. Seeing a prominent Black individual (e.g., Kanye West) express the kinds of negative attitudes towards Black people that are usually attributed to Whites may lower White Americans' concern that the White ingroup will be stereotyped as racist because it appears to break the link between racial identity and racist views. In some circumstances, seeing this behavior may legitimize discrimination by Whites without the threat of being labelled a racist (Jurcevic, Shapiro, Trawalter, & Unzueta, in press). Without the threat of stereotypic ingroup members, Whites may not be defensive if a racial outgroup member was the speaker.

Witnessing a racial ingroup member express comments that are ingroup harming may be received as shocking for Black Americans because of the expectation that their community will show solidarity in opposition to racist oppression. This may create vicarious dissonance for Black Americans because the favorable view of one's group is contrasted with the ingroup-damning belief that a member expresses (Norton, Monin, Cooper, & Hogg, 2003). If a Black person witnesses another Black individual criticize the group in the public sphere, there are two contradictory hypotheses about the response Black Americans would make. The first potential response would be for Black Americans to align their views with that of the ingroup member in that they may feel racism to be less effective now than it may have been in the past, possibly believing that society has changed for their betterment. This response may not impact their baseline beliefs about the changeability of societal racism because it removes the threat to their group's integrity.

The second potential response would be for Black Americans to distance themselves from the ingroup member because they expect similarity of racial attitudes between ingroup members and dissimilarity is threatening (Garcia, Bergsieker, & Shelton, 2015). Under this circumstance,

a racial ingroup member may affect Blacks' lay theories of societal racism because the comments may reinforce the belief that even some members of the Black community may blindly (or willingly) support a racist system. Their response may be in relation to a belief that this person is not well-informed about the racist undertones that come with policies and practices exhibited by the American system. Therefore, future research on this subject may provide further insight into the consequences that ingroup-harming sentiments have on Black people's views of the changeability of systemic racism.

The generalizability of our experiments may also be limited because the White male in our articles was in a position of power. Would both racial groups make similar reactions to prejudicial comments if they came from someone in a low-power position (e.g., low-income, White male)? Because White Americans in low-power positions are more likely to be stereotyped as racists when compared to those in high-power positions (Sommers & Norton, 2007), they may be chronically subtyped as different from other Whites and not held in high regard. Therefore, our findings may not be applicable to a situation in which a disliked member of the dominant racial group makes prejudicial remarks.

Similarly, would our results generalize if the statements were less overt in their prejudice? In the manipulation, the CEO expressed comments that were blatantly racist. These comments are judged as racist more often than remarks that are subtle suggestions of racism (e.g. "I didn't hire Jamal because his style of clothing was too urban."). Nuanced forms of racism can be especially hard to detect when a person is focused on not seeing race (i.e., color-blindness; Apfelbaum, Pauker, Sommers, & Ambady, 2010), and the invisibility of this racial prejudice may prevent them from experiencing collective threat. If collective threat requires that Whites be concerned that the racist behavior of an ingroup member will confirm negative stereotypes, then

subtle forms of prejudice may not be picked up as stereotype-confirming if they don't call direct attention to race. It is expected that findings on the experience of collective threat in Whites are specific to instances where blatant prejudice is expressed by an ingroup member.

Prejudicial remarks directed at racial groups were the defining difference between news articles that evoked group-based threat responses. The CEO's remarks triggered a threat response because they were directed at a stigmatized racial group. If these remarks were directed at social identity that was not as relevant to the participants in this investigation (e.g., sexual orientation), would the same concerns for group integrity be evidenced? Would they suffice in affecting Black participants' entity theories of prejudice and perceptions of its prevalence? Research by Craig and Richeson hints at the potential for perceptions of discrimination directed at another stigmatized group to evoke coalition building in the focal stigmatized group (Craig & Richeson, 2016; Craig & Richeson, 2012; Richeson & Craig, 2011). Through this formation of allyship, members of various stigmatized groups may internalize the feelings of threat that their comrades encounter, leading to a motivation to endorse beliefs and perceptions that address the stigmatization. With the advent of social media allowing for people to witness discrimination against a variety of stigmatized groups unlike their own, further research is needed to investigate whether lay theories of prejudice can be flexibly applied toward understanding the plight of these groups.

Although our research speaks to the concerns that White and Black Americans face when witnessing overt racism, it is our hope that this investigation can further interest into studying how other stigmatized groups respond to blatant forms of prejudice. Previous research on women and sexual minorities has detailed the consequences that experiencing and/or witnessing prejudice has on their sense of belonging, mental health, satisfaction with the work/academic

environment, and performance (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Logel, Walton, Spencer, Iserman, von Hippel, & Bell, 2009; Meyer, 2003; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). While these consequences are one set of responses, members of stigmatized groups have other strategies that may curb the negative effects of blatant prejudice (Leach & Livingston, 2015). These strategies have not been granted the same level of attention and need to be accounted for in order to fully comprehend the experience of blatant prejudice that stigmatized groups report. Our research speaks to a motivated response that Black Americans make toward blatant prejudice that is specific to the history of Black-White relations in America. We encourage additional research to develop innovative ways to capture the variability of beliefs and attitudes that other stigmatized groups endorse in light of their historical narrative of encountering prejudice. Additionally, we petition for such research to consider the function that specific lay theories of prejudice serve these groups.

Black and White participants' endorsement of different lay theories of prejudice stemmed from their experiencing group-based threats via comments made by a White male CEO with whom they had no opportunity to interact. Different modes of encountering prejudice (e.g., virtual, vicarious or direct) can affect the probability that members of stigmatized groups take action to correct the perpetrator (Kaiser & Miller, 2001; Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001). This investigation reported a causal path between reading about blatant racism and Black Americans' expressions of anger toward the perpetrator. In Study 2, their level of anger was predicted by an entity theory of societal racism and the belief that racism is prevalent in their locale. Beliefs about the changeability and prevalence of racism may be amenable to change if stigmatized group members have an opportunity to solve the problem. If interactions between the target of prejudice and the perpetrator are granted for the purposes of intervening, then stigmatized group

members may alter their beliefs about the changeability of societal racism if they expect that their expression of disdain towards blatantly racist comments can erect change in the attitudes of a powerful White male. Similarly, Whites who interact with an ingroup member who behaves stereotypically may increase their belief in the changeability of individual prejudice in order to preach an anti-racist message to that member. By direct exposure to a perpetrator of racial prejudice, both Whites and Blacks have the opportunity to take action against these group-based threats, and this opportunity may affect their endorsement of an entity theory of prejudice.

Between Studies 2 and 3, we obtained mixed support for the idea that blatant racism predicts a greater experience of anger for Black Americans. Study 2 found a difference in reported level of anger when reading about blatant racism than when reading about embezzlement. This difference, however, did not replicate in Study 3. We contend that the inconsistency may have resulted from the differences in measures we employed that assessed Black participants' perceptions of the prevalence of racism (i.e. in their city/region or in general). Estimations of the prevalence of racism within one's locale may have prompted Black participants to personalize this event and, thus, recall similar instances where they have been the target of explicit prejudice. Through this recall of similar events, Blacks may have experienced the emotion that is associated with the experience and displaced their level of emotion in the reports of how angry they were towards the event they read in this study. In contrast, the histogram measure in Study 3 may not have evoked a recollection of events that one has experienced and the emotion they felt at that time. We believe that this discrepancy is plausible and, therefore, encourage future research to test this hypothesis.

Finally, the novelty of the histogram measure of the prevalence of racists in the US is established as a first step in understanding how threats can prime a motivated perception of race



relations. To our knowledge, this investigation is the first to test the idea that Blacks experiencing blatant racism respond by believing that societal racism is unchangeable and that there are large number of racists in America. Other forms of motivated perception (e.g., number of historically-prejudiced states in America), similar to the histogram, may be evoked by overt racism. We believe that expanding the repertoire of measures that operationalize responses to blatant racism will prove generative.

### **Theoretical Implications**

We contend that beliefs about the changeability of societal racism should be considered when examining the resistance to racial equality that overt racism creates in America. Most research on prejudice has focused on prejudice at the individual level, and the minority of studies that address how prejudice is detected within the system has focused on subtle and implicit forms (Adams, Tormala, & O'Brien, 2006; Burns, Monteith, & Parker, 2017). Our investigation is the first to try and understand how Black and White Americans make different conclusions about blatant racism from an individual that are based on considering different levels of prejudice. Although overt racism may be localized to the rhetoric that one person (or a group of people) displays, their behavior may be seen as less symptomatic of a character flaw and more emblematic of a setting that reinforces intolerance towards diversity and hatred toward specific people. Black Americans (and other subordinated racial groups) may develop theories about how these social environments can prevent the acceleration of progress toward racial equality. Blacks' skepticism towards the prospect of fair treatment may be generalized to conclusions made about racism in society.

Our validation study established the idea that Black and White Americans show different patterns of relationships between the changeability of societal racism and other politically-

relevant attitudes. We believe that the relations between these constructs may provide a first step into understanding the formation of people's beliefs about the changeability of societal racism as juxtaposed with the formation of other attitudes. Past research has revealed that this complexity may be tied to the dimensions of Black identity and should be considered when measuring relations between Black Americans' views of the system and institutional trust (Dawson, 2002; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998; Shockley, Wynn, & Ashburn-Nardo, 2014). For example, even though our results showed that Blacks who endorsed an entity view of societal racism were more likely to rate the system as unjust, it is premature to assume that all Black Americans who believe that societal racism is unchangeable believe that the American system is unjust without delving further into which elements of their identity are more likely to predict support for/opposition to the status quo. It is possible that Blacks who endorse an entity view of societal racism may believe that individual efforts by other Blacks to assimilate may help lessen the effects of racism or may believe that a collective effort to separate from the system may remove racism altogether. Putting aside these speculations, we believe this research can promote further investigation into the relations between Black Americans' theories of societal racism, levels of identification, and their political attitudes.

The Black-White disparity in perceptions about the changeability of racism at various levels contributes to research on how a motivated construal of racism is generated when threats are present. Black Americans who saw racism as a permanent facet of American society believed that racism within a person could be altered via what career that individual chose to pursue. What is fascinating about this result is how the careers that Black Americans believed would make people more racist were careers that conferred a certain degree of power over others, irrespective of the status of that career. This pattern suggests that careers which are stereotyped

to be racist against their group may confer power to the persons who enter into them, and this acquired control may be exerted over those who are believed to be a threat. Construing individuals' attitudes as being corruptible when they serve in roles that exert dominance over the Black community (e.g. police department) may function to prepare Black Americans for negative interactions with representatives of what some Black Americans believe is an inherently racist system.

The experiments we conducted in Studies 2 and 3 tested the impact that publicized blatant racism in the media has on beliefs about racism at the individual and societal level. The undertones of headlines and content within many news articles suggest that racism is a problem within a small faction of individuals rather than a systemic issue. As demonstrated by Johnson and Fujita (2011), perceptions about the changeability of a system can be affected by the message inherent in an article. The message conveyed by our news article about discrimination in the workplace was simple. The source of the problem of racism in this environment was the CEO who made those comments. For Black Americans, however, this instance of overt bigotry may undermine the belief that racial progress has been made because the CEO's attitude is perceived to be produced (or enabled) by a racist environment.

Black Americans support the belief that overt racism reflects an environmental problem by citing how often racism is perceived to occur in their city/region. In Studies 1 and 2, believing that societal racism is entity based was associated with Blacks' estimating a higher prevalence of racism in America (Study 1) and a frequent occurrence of overt racism where they lived (Study 2). Seeing overt racism provides a confirmation of the perceived level of victimization that Black Americans believe happens on a daily basis. The intimidating effect of racist behaviour produces vigilance and a reduction in trust which, over time, may dissuade Black Americans from

engaging with environments where racism is likely to occur. Unfortunately, the perception that racism occurs more often within one's locale can severely limit the areas where Black Americans can feel included.

When intractable racism creates boundaries for Black Americans, there is the possibility that limitations will be placed on a Black person attempting to reach their personal goals. Believing that overt racism is derived from a system that cannot change, Black Americans may not see their personal goals being fulfilled because their control over the outcome is limited. All three studies point to the notion that overt racism hinders the goals that Black Americans set, which can undermine their beliefs in their self-efficacy to achieve. This finding is consistent with research documenting the negative consequences racism can have on the motivation displayed by Black Americans (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beehler, 2010; Tovar-Murray, Jenifer, Andrusyk, D'Angelo, & King, 2012). Qualification is given to this work, however, in that the negative effects tend to accrue for those who identify less with their racial group. Furthermore, although we analyzed participants' level of self-efficacy, we did not inquire as to what goals the participants had thought about. It is possible that the effects of our manipulation on self-efficacy may work for certain goals (e.g., financial prosperity) more than others (e.g., losing weight) or for goals that the individual is externally motivated towards achieving. Overall, the effect of overt racism on Black Americans' goal investment requires additional parsing that can explain instances where it is debilitating versus enhancing.

Black Americans' lay theories of societal racism predict a host of beliefs about the intergroup landscape (i.e., perceived prevalence of racism) that may impact behavior in intergroup settings. Expectations as to how they may behave in intergroup settings where race becomes a topic of discussion is an area of further investigation because of the benefits that

discussions about racial treatment have on removing misunderstandings. Black Americans may enter the interaction with differing theories about racism (individual and societal) that can guide what they believe will be gained from these discussions. In concert with overt racism hindering investment in personal goals, if the goal of creating a positive intergroup environment is salient within intergroup interactions, then Black Americans with an entity view of societal racism may not believe that this goal is achievable. Understanding how these theories affect (and are affected by) the intergroup setting may be important to understanding barriers to positive intergroup contact.

Our research is framed under the lens of critical race theory in order to understand the reasons why people may believe that societal racism cannot change. A notable criticism of critical race theory has been its pessimistic and futile outlook on challenging racism in America (Wood, 2013). To be considered, however, are the psychological benefits afforded to Black Americans who expect societal racism to stay in its current state. Although we did not measure self-esteem as an outcome variable in these studies, it is reasonable to expect that an entity theory of societal racism may function to protect the self from psychological harm. This belief may prepare Blacks to expect racial bias in situations where it is likely to occur (i.e., being stopped by a police officer). Instead of attributing unfair treatment to something changeable within them, and thus blaming themselves, an external attribution to racism may remove the personal sting. Responding to this threat in a manner that separates the self from the source (i.e., system) may have a restorative effect on self-esteem for stigmatized individuals (Crocker & Major, 1989).

Believing that societal racism is stable may benefit Black Americans by orienting their focus to directly uplifting their ingroup members. Instead of relying on a system that is believed

to inherently disfavor them, Black Americans who endorse an entity theory of societal racism may invest time, finances, and energy within their group to help uplift successful ingroup members. Racism challenges the common ingroup identity model, which has been shown to undermine collective action by disadvantaged group members (Ufkes, Calcagno, Glasford, & Dovidio, 2016). To the extent that individuals believe that their group is continually victimized, they will be more willing to make sacrifices for the welfare of the collective (Rotella, Richeson, Chiao, & Bean, 2013). Black Americans may allocate resources directly to members of their racial group, even when there are outgroup-led organizations intended to help them. These actions may help buffer the consequences that societal racism has on Black Americans by increasing the accountability that ingroup members have toward each other. Most important, it reinforces a sense of solidarity when instances of prejudice and discrimination threaten the collective.

### **Practical Implications**

Racist behavior persists in spite of the “post-racial” era that some suggest America has entered (Dobbs, 2009). Even if Americans were living in a time in which race was no longer a determinant of life outcomes, racism would still be considered a personal flaw of those who have not adjusted to the times. Our research questions whether focusing on such individual level racism can ever be successful for eradicating racial bias. More specific, the studies we employed speak to the neglect in considering racism as a societal flaw that some believe cannot be changed. Considering these perspectives, which tend to be expressed by subordinated racial groups, may invite more robust solutions to the problem of racism in society.

Seeing societal racism as characteristic of America, Blacks may resort to revising their estimates of how common racism is in the US, a way of protecting their group’s esteem from the

boundaries placed on their opportunities. These perceptions can guide behavior towards disengaging with goal pursuits that require governmental assistance (e.g. education, careers). In tandem, Whites, who may see racism as an individual problem may be less supportive of social interventions, such as affirmative action, that are intended to address systemic racial barriers.

The implications of the results obtained within our samples of Black and White Americans define a charge for systemic change to be exercised by those in power. Changing the views about how malleable societal racism is may require more than just providing lip service to Black Americans about what is effective and how it will be brought about. As shown in previous interventions that modify social environments (Cook, Purdie-Vaughns, Meyer, & Busch, 2013; Walton, Murphy, & Ryan, 2015), formal measures that raise equity and equality interests in organizations can have a positive effect on the performance and well-being outcomes of members from disadvantaged groups. These measures can only be implemented and done effectively when greater attention is paid to the perspectives shared by these groups.

Although devising methods to intervene on behalf of subordinated racial groups is paramount to crafting a path to racial progress, the acceleration of improvement to the climate of organizations within the system requires alliance with the White majority. Opposition to racial progress by White Americans may be a response to the potential threat such measures pose to their privileged position (Carter & Murphy, 2015; Chow & Knowles, 2016). Through framing policy suggestions in ways that are inclusive and by targeting self-esteem concerns, it is possible for White Americans to align with subordinated racial groups in clear pursuit of racial equality. We believe that our research adds to this agenda by capturing how blatant prejudice can evoke identity concerns in Whites and Blacks alike and that can produce diverging conclusions about racial progress. Focusing on change in prejudice especially at the systemic level may allow both

groups to work together effectively. It is our hope that future research can develop and test interventions that draw both groups toward supporting systemic change in the face of blatant prejudice.

## **Conclusion**

The challenges to eliminating racism in American society are no longer derived from an inability to recognize its occurrence. Difficulties stem from misunderstandings as to the dominating source behind racism (i.e., individuals vs. institutions) and how motivational factors may account for racial differences in focus on what is the primary culprit. Though our research does not formally investigate how these beliefs can produce misunderstandings within intergroup interactions, we believe that this question is the next step to not only capturing important challenges for intergroup relations but also devising ways to alter the negative trajectory that accentuates racial tensions. We believe that such an approach can be a positive step toward moving intergroup interactions in the direction of forming alliances toward racial justice.



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. LAY THEORIES OF SOCIETAL RACISM MEASURE from Studies 1-3

Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements

1. When it comes to race relations, society can easily change.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

2. Although over time the form of race relations can change, racial biases in society will always continue.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

3. Society can appear unbiased, but if you look deeper you can always see racial bias.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

4. The level of racism within society can be changed a great deal.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

5. Racism cannot be removed from society.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

6. When people think they are removing racism from society, they really are just hiding it.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

7. Within my lifetime it is possible for racial bias within society to be eliminated.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

8. With enough effort even the deep-seated racism in society can be changed.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

APPENDIX B. LAY THEORIES OF (INDIVIDUAL) PREJUDICE MEASURE from Studies 1-3

Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.

1. People have a certain amount of prejudice, and they can't really change that.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

2. People's level of prejudice is something very basic about them that they can't change very much.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

3. No matter who somebody is, they can always become more or less prejudiced.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

4. People can change their level of prejudice a great deal.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree



5. People can learn how to act like they're not prejudiced, but they can't really change their prejudice deep down.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

6. As much as I hate to admit it, you can't teach an old dog new tricks. People can't really change how prejudiced they are.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

APPENDIX C: SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION SCALE from Study 1

Show how much you favor or oppose each idea below by selecting a number from 1 to 7 on the scale below. You can work quickly; your first feeling is generally best.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Oppose						Strongly Favor

Pro-trait dominance:

1. Some groups of people must be kept in their place.
2. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
3. An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom.
4. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.

Con-trait dominance:

5. Groups at the bottom are just as deserving as groups at the top.
6. No one group should dominate in society.
7. Groups at the bottom should not have to stay in their place.
8. Group dominance is a poor principle.

Pro-trait anti-egalitarianism:

9. We should not push for group equality.
10. We shouldn't try to guarantee that every group has the same quality of life.
11. It is unjust to try to make groups equal.
12. Group equality should not be our primary goal.

Con-trait pro-egalitarianism:

13. We should work to give all groups an equal chance to succeed.
14. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.

APPENDIX D: GENERAL SYSTEM-JUSTIFICATION SCALE from Study 1

Please answer the following 8 questions by circling the appropriate response.

1) In general, you find society to be fair.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

2) In general, the American political system operates as it should.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

3) American society needs to be radically restructured.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

4) The United States is the best country in the world to live in.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

5) Most policies serve the greater good.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

6) Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

7) Our society is getting worse every year.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

8) Society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Strongly Agree								Strongly Disagree

APPENDIX E. MODERN RACISM SCALE from Studies 1-3

The following statements below address a particular stance on racial issues. Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with each statement.

1. Discrimination against racial minorities is no longer a problem in the United States.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

2. It is easy to understand the anger of racial minorities in America.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

3. Racial minorities have more influence upon school desegregation plans than they ought to have.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

4. Racial minorities get too demanding in their push for equal rights.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

5. Racial minorities should not push themselves where they are not wanted.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

6. Over the past few years, racial minorities have gotten more economically than they deserve.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

7. Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to racial minorities than they deserve.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree

APPENDIX F. BELIEF IN CONSPIRACY THEORIES OF RACE from Studies 1 and 2

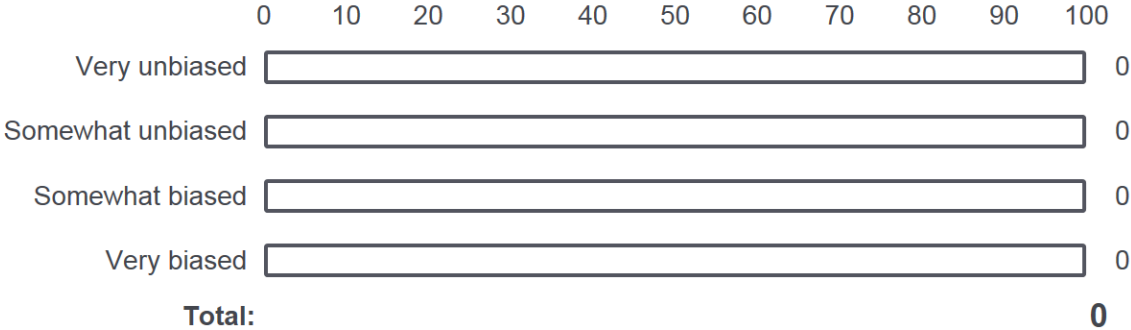
Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following reasons for certain government behaviors.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

1. The government deliberately makes sure that drugs are available in poor neighborhoods to harm racial minorities.
2. The high rate of unemployment among racial minorities is deliberately created by the government to maintain an inexpensive pool of workers.
3. The government deliberately singles out and investigates elected officials of color to discredit them in a way it doesn't do with White officials.
4. The government deliberately assigns the death penalty to males of color than White males to harm racial minorities.
5. The government takes children of racial minorities away from their families to be raised by others in a deliberate attempt to harm their parents.
6. Racial minorities are encouraged to use birth control as a way to keep the population of racial minorities small.
7. The high rate of incarceration of racial minorities is to keep racial minorities powerless.
8. The high rate of homelessness among racial minorities deliberately created by the government to keep them powerless.

APPENDIX G: PERCEIVED PREVALENCE OF RACISTS IN THE US from Studies 1 and 3

Adjust the bars to indicate the percentage of people within the US population who would fall under each of the four levels of racial prejudice. Note, the bars should **sum up to 100%**.





**APPENDIX H: PERCEIVED IMPACT OF CAREERS ON INDIVIDUAL PREJUDICE MEASURE from Study 1**

Some people believe that going into certain careers can make a person more/less racially prejudiced. Below are a list of careers that were randomly selected for you.

All other things considered, for each career, please indicate the degree to which a person's prejudicial attitudes change due to the years spent in that career. If you think working in a certain career tends to make people become more prejudiced then select one of the 'more prejudiced' response options. However, if you think working in a certain career tends to make people become less prejudiced then select one of the 'less prejudiced' response options. If you think working in a certain career has no influence on a person's prejudice then select the 'no change' response option for that career.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Much less prejudiced	Somewhat less prejudiced	Slightly less prejudiced	No change	Slightly more prejudiced	Somewhat more prejudiced	Much more prejudiced

1. Police officer
2. Attorney
3. Social worker
4. Mortgage loan officer
5. Politician
6. High-school teacher
7. Community organizer/advocacy worker
8. News pundit
9. Urban developer
10. Peace activist

## APPENDIX I: ATTRIBUTION STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE from Study 1

Please try to imagine yourself in the following situations. If such a situation happened to you, what do you think might have caused it? While situations like these may have many causes, we want you to choose only one – the main cause, that is, what made this situation happen to you.

First, type out the main cause after each situation. Next, answer two questions about the cause you provided. How likely is it that the main cause you gave will continue to affect you? Is the main cause that you gave something that affects just this situation, or does it affect other areas of your life? Have one sentence per answer.

Try to imagine yourself in the following situations?

- 1) You can't find a job.
- 2) You get fired from your job.
- 3) You are found guilty of breaking the law.
- 4) You have finance problems.

# Volcanic sea vents make racket

**Nature** | A UW student discovers that “black smokers” emit sound, and that might be a benefit for fish

Volcanic vents off the Northwest coast — so-called “black smokers” for the dark, billowing fluids they spew — aren’t only boiling hot; they’re also downright noisy.

An oceanographer at the University of Washington has discovered that the ocean vents 1½ miles below the surface aren’t silent as assumed, but emit a rumbling sound similar to an avalanche.

Timothy Crone, a UW student working on his doctorate, used a deep-sea recording system to capture sound at hydrothermal vents called Sully and Puffer. They’re located on the volcanically active Juan de Fuca Ridge about 200 miles west of the Washington coast.

Crone and his colleagues speculate that the



sound may help fish in the pitch-black water steer clear of the vents, which can blast fluids as hot as 750 degrees Fahrenheit.

The chimneylike black smokers form when superheated water, charged with metals and volcanic gases, rises into the frigid ocean from beneath the seafloor. The sudden mixing of hot and cold causes

the instantaneous precipitation of the metals and gases.

Crone suspects each vent has its own distinct sound. Part of the noise may be caused by the hot fluids gushing through a vent’s craggy structure or by the flow’s pulsations.

— Richard L. Hill



## Discrimination in the Workplace

The Future of  
Stephen Immerman



After 33 years, Stephen Immerman's future as Chief Editor of Boston Globe has been called into question after he allegedly made controversial remarks during an interview with a BNN reporter last Tuesday. When asked about the persistence of racial discrimination in workplace settings, Immerman commented "I don't understand the havoc people create regarding these so-called injustices. These minorities are the cause of their own troubles and I, for one, shouldn't have to concede to bailing them out because of this loose term called discrimination. Immerman further commented on how the confidence, intelligence, and conscientiousness he displayed throughout his tenure is not found in the assessments he makes of minority candidates he interviews. "I



"I don't care that I have few staff on my team who are of colour. I don't believe that I should be forced to hire Jamal or Julio if he's slouching on the seat during the interview and gazing at everything else in the room except at me." This has not been the first time Immerman has been linked to racialized comments and discriminatory treatment. Former staff have come forward mentioning of Immerman showing preference for hiring White employees, using racial slurs, and refusing to promote clearly-qualified employees of colour. With the investigation expected to continue, the public has again been left to discuss the persistence of injustice toward racial and ethnic minorities in the workforce.



# Embezzlement in the Workplace

## The Future of Stephen Immerman



After 33 years, Stephen Immerman's future as Chief Editor of Boston Globe has been called into question after he allegedly made controversial remarks during an interview with a BNN reporter last Tuesday. When asked about the persistence of embezzlement in political and corporate circles that has recently come to light, Immerman commented "I don't understand the havoc people create when they don't have a clue of what constitutes embezzlement. Just because an employer is transferring entrusted premiums from your pocket to their account for safe-keeping and has not given it back to you does not mean they engaged in embezzlement". Immerman further commented on how the confidence, intelligence, and conscientiousness he displayed throughout his tenure has allowed for him to step in and provide clarification



to the public on matters he believes are easily solvable. "I have justification for why I say what I say. I know it rubs people the wrong way if they have gone through or have witnessed friends or family get extorted by frauds in workplace settings. However, the key ingredients that discount the evidence of embezzlement are having a communicated and reasonable rationale for holding the funds as well as proof that the kept funds have been invested towards the insurance policy and only that". This has not been the first time Immerman has been linked to controversial statements regarding workplace issues. He has made equally galvanized comments about the use of quality assurance and workplace evaluation methods to improve performance.

APPENDIX L: LAY THEORIES OF PERSONALITY MEASURE from Study 2

**Please indicate the degree to which you agree/disagree with the following statements.**

1. Everyone is a certain kind of person and there is not much that can be done to really change that.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

2. The basic characteristics of a person do not change much over time.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

3. The kind of person someone is something very basic about them and it can't be changed very much.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

4. Everyone, no matter who they are, can significantly change their basic characteristics.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

5. All people can change even their most basic qualities.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Disagree					Very Strongly Agree

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1.

*Descriptive Statistics of Participants' Lay Theories of Societal Racism, Lay Theories of Individual Prejudice, Level of Prejudice, Perceived Prevalence of Racism, Belief in Conspiracy Theories of Race Relations, System Justification, and Social Dominance Orientation Measures (Study 1)*

	N	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Theory of Societal Racism	422	3.64	0.81	.84
Theory of Individual Prejudice	420	2.91	0.96	.88
Modern Racism	209	2.18	0.93	.91
Perceived Prevalence of Racism (weighted %)	421	19.74	5.42	N/A
Belief in Conspiracy Theories of Race Relations	210	3.19	1.59	.95
System Justification	420	4.60	1.59	.84
Social Dominance Orientation	420	2.40	1.33	.95
Valid N (listwise)	420			



Table 2.

*Correlations Between Lay Theories of Societal Racism, Lay Theories of Individual Prejudice, Level of Prejudice, Belief in Conspiracy Theories of Race, System Justification, and Social Dominance Orientation Scores By Racial Groups (Study 1)*

		1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Overall	1. Theory of Societal Racism	-				
	2. Theory of Individual Prejudice	.47**	-			
	3. Modern Racism (Pro-White)	-.01	.34**			
	4. Belief in Conspiracy Theories of Race	.08	.13	a	-	
	5. System Justification	-.13*	.04	-.25**	.26**	-
	6. Social Dominance Orientation	.11*	.41**	.76**	-.04	-.20**
Black	1.	-				
	2.	.37**	-			
	3.	-.40*	.23**	-		
	4.	-.03	.05	a	-	
	5.	-.24**	-.07	.32**	-.38**	-
	6.	-.26**	.29**	.71**	-.02	.27**
White	1.	-				
	2.	.58**	-			
	3.	.07	.51**	-	.	
	4.	.006	.15	a	-	
	5.	.06	.007	.11	-.16	-
	6.	.07	.54**	.79**	-.07	.14*

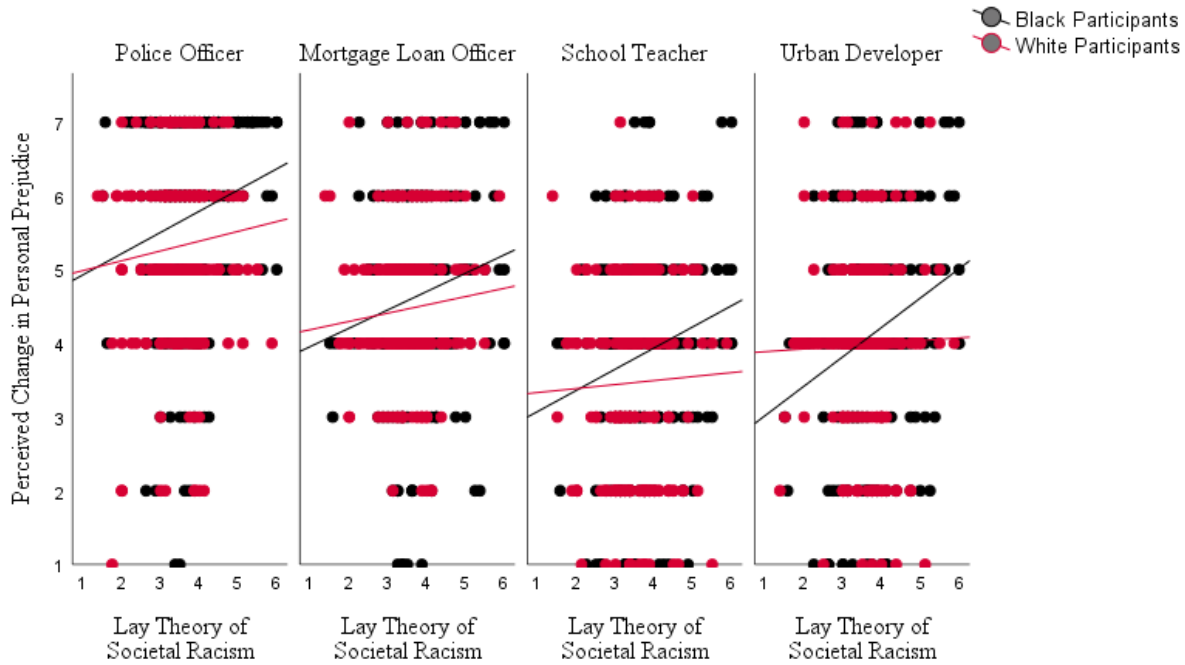
\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

<sup>a</sup> Participants were randomly assigned to complete either the Belief in Conspiracy Theories of Race Measure or the Modern Racism Scale

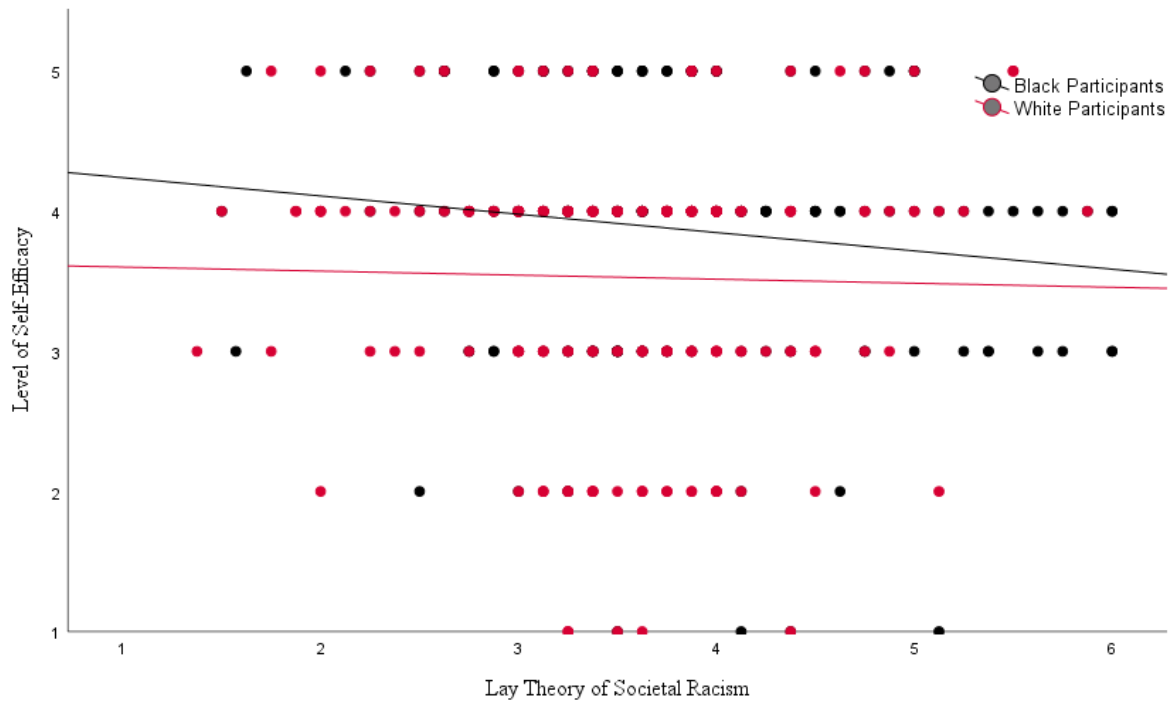
Table 3.

*Overall and By Condition Descriptive Statistics of Black and White Participants' Lay Theories of Individual Prejudice, Societal Racism, and Personality, Level of Prejudice, and Estimates of the Frequency of Similar News Events (Study 2)*

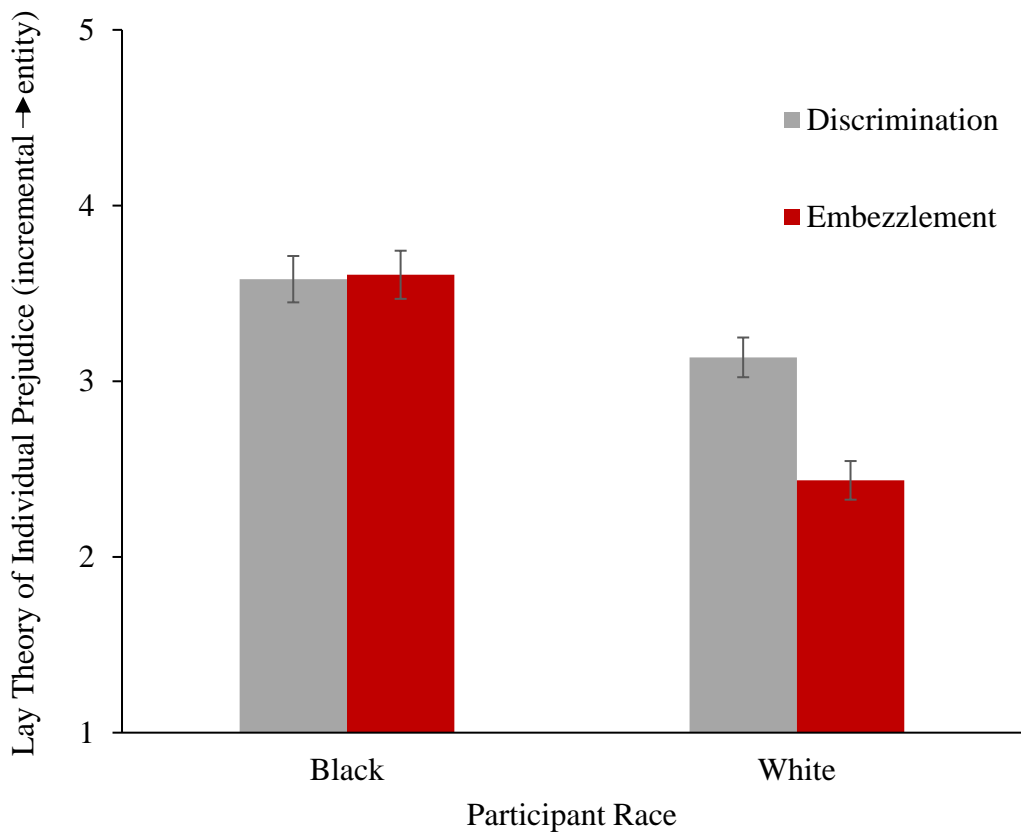
Participant Race		Mean	SD	Embezzlement	Discrimination
Black	Theory of Societal Racism	4.37	0.97	3.76 (0.80)	5.01 (0.69)
	Theory of Individual Prejudice	3.55	0.93	3.55 (0.84)	3.56 (1.03)
	Theory of Personality	3.05	1.00	3.04 (1.08)	3.07 (0.93)
	Modern Racism	1.75	0.65	1.76 (0.66)	1.74 (0.66)
	Frequency of Similar Events	2.89	1.19	2.35 (0.79)	3.46 (1.29)
White	Theory of Societal Racism	2.92	0.70	2.83 (0.75)	3.00 (0.94)
	Theory of Individual Prejudice	2.75	1.03	2.37 (1.04)	3.13 (0.81)
	Theory of Personality	3.20	1.03	3.30 (1.12)	3.11 (0.94)
	Modern Racism	2.23	0.97	2.20 (0.98)	2.27 (0.97)
	Frequency of Similar Events	2.83	0.79	2.72 (0.85)	2.94 (0.73)



*Figure 1.* Scores of participants' beliefs about the change in others' prejudice when involved in hierarchy-maintaining careers, as predicted by participants' theory of societal racism and racial group. Low scores represent becoming less prejudiced while high scores represent becoming more prejudiced.



*Figure 2.* Scores of participants' level of self-efficacy as predicted by their theory of societal racism and their racial group.



*Figure 3.* Mean estimates of participants' theories of individual prejudice as predicted by news-article condition and participant race. Errors bars are plotted at +/- 1 SE (Study 2).

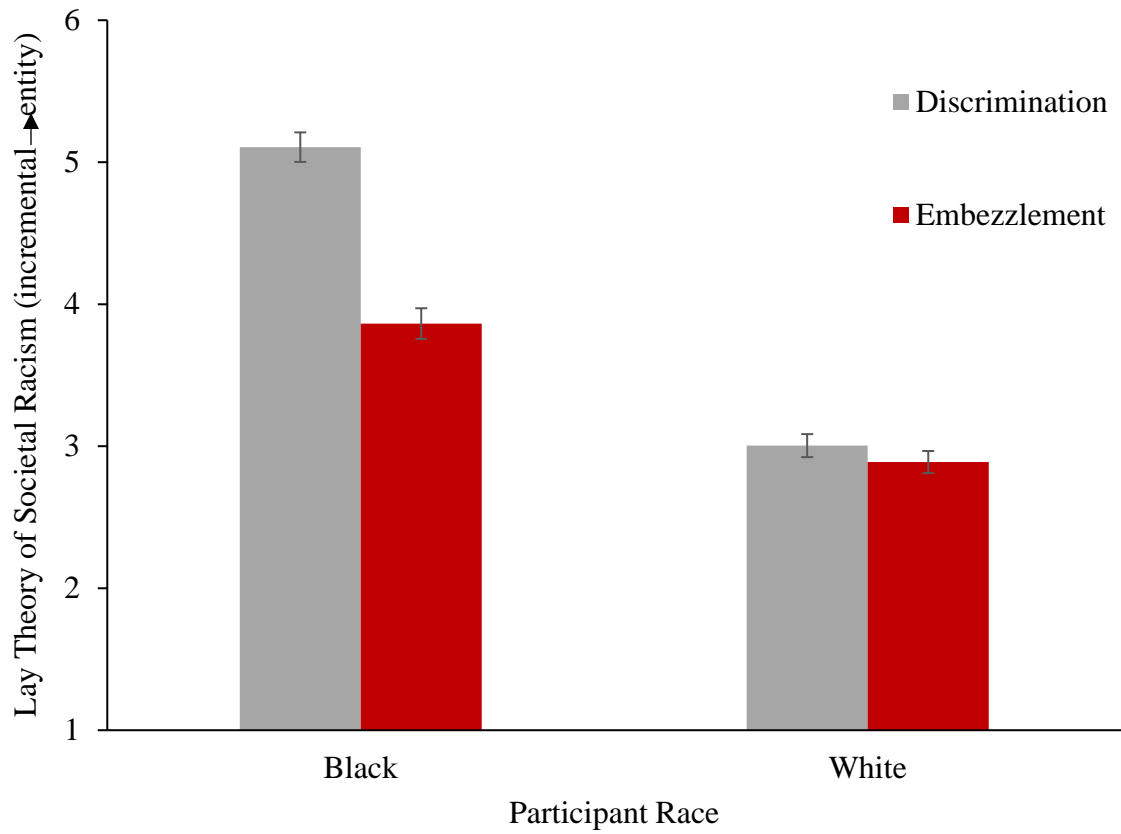
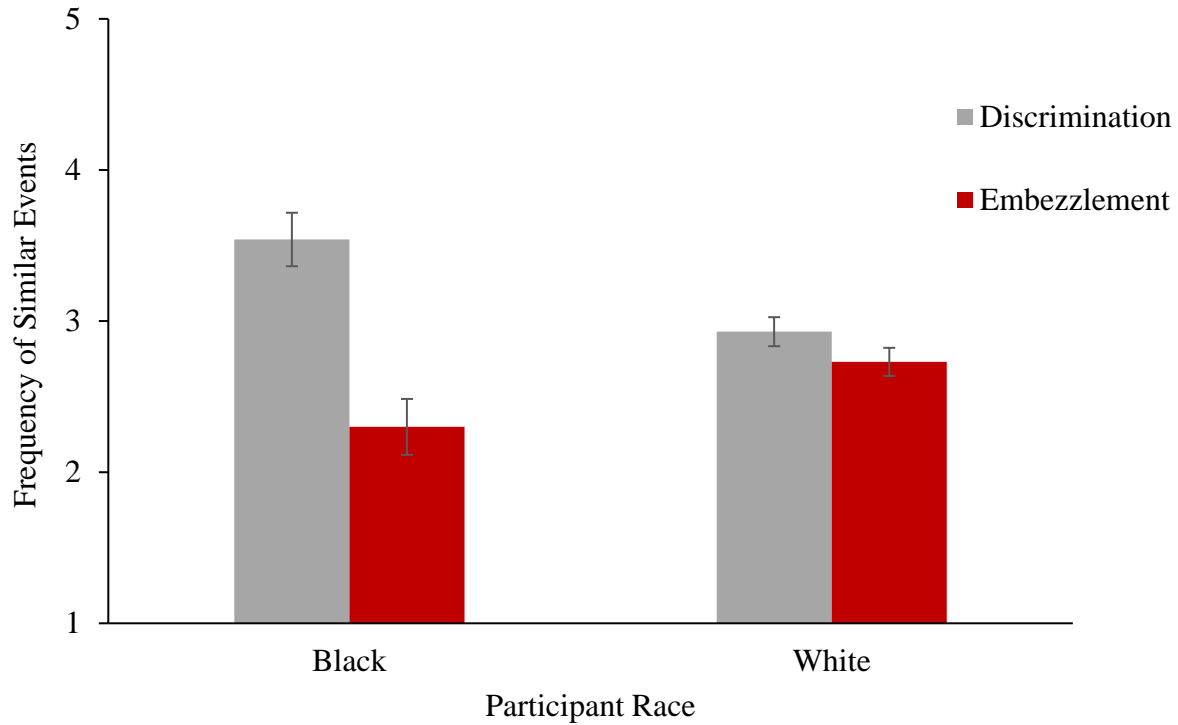
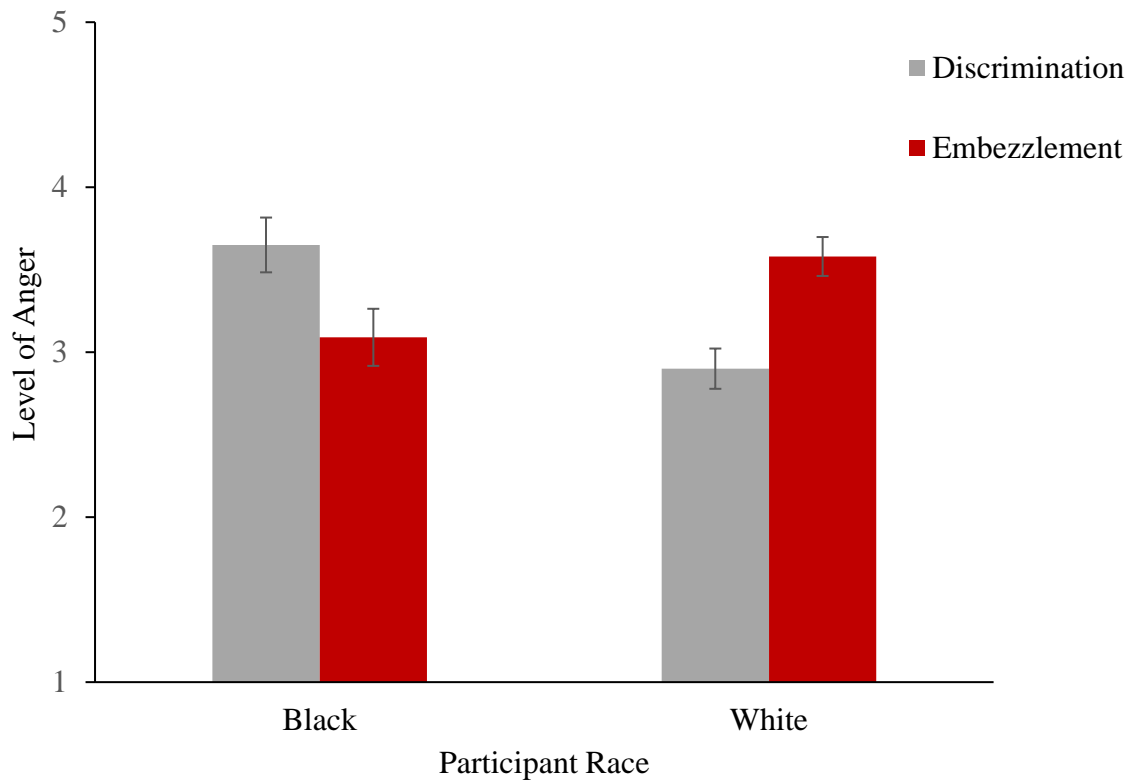


Figure 4. Mean estimates of participants' theories of societal racism as predicted by news-article condition and participant race. Errors bars are plotted at +/- 1 SE (Study 2).



*Figure 5.* Mean estimates of participants' perceptions as to the frequency of similar news events in their city/region as predicted by news-article condition and participant race. Low scores indicate a low frequency of occurrence. Errors bars are plotted at +/- 1 SE (Study 2).



*Figure 6.* Mean estimates of participants' level of anger as predicted by news-article condition and participant race. Low scores indicate a low level of anger. Errors bars are plotted at +/- 1 SE (Study 2).



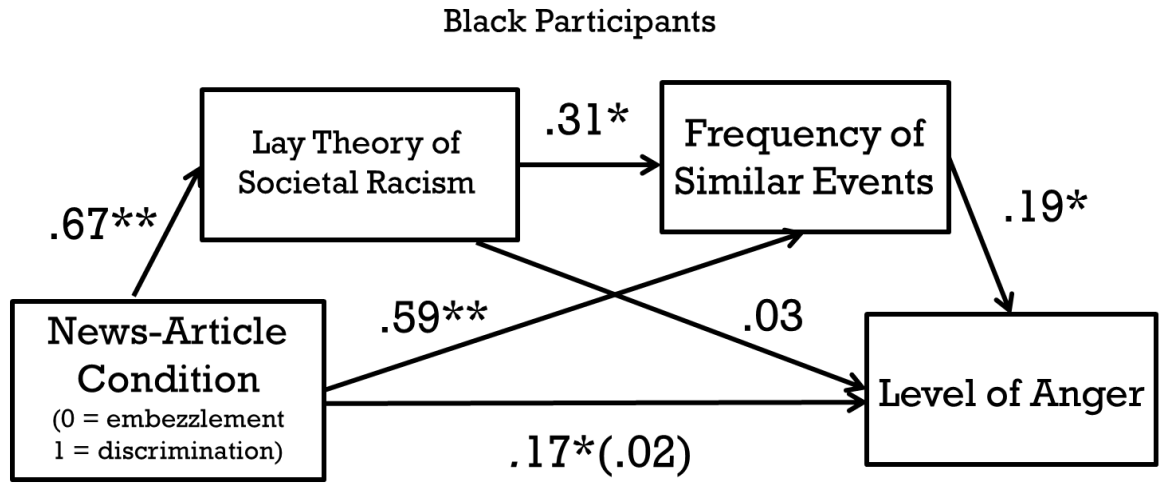
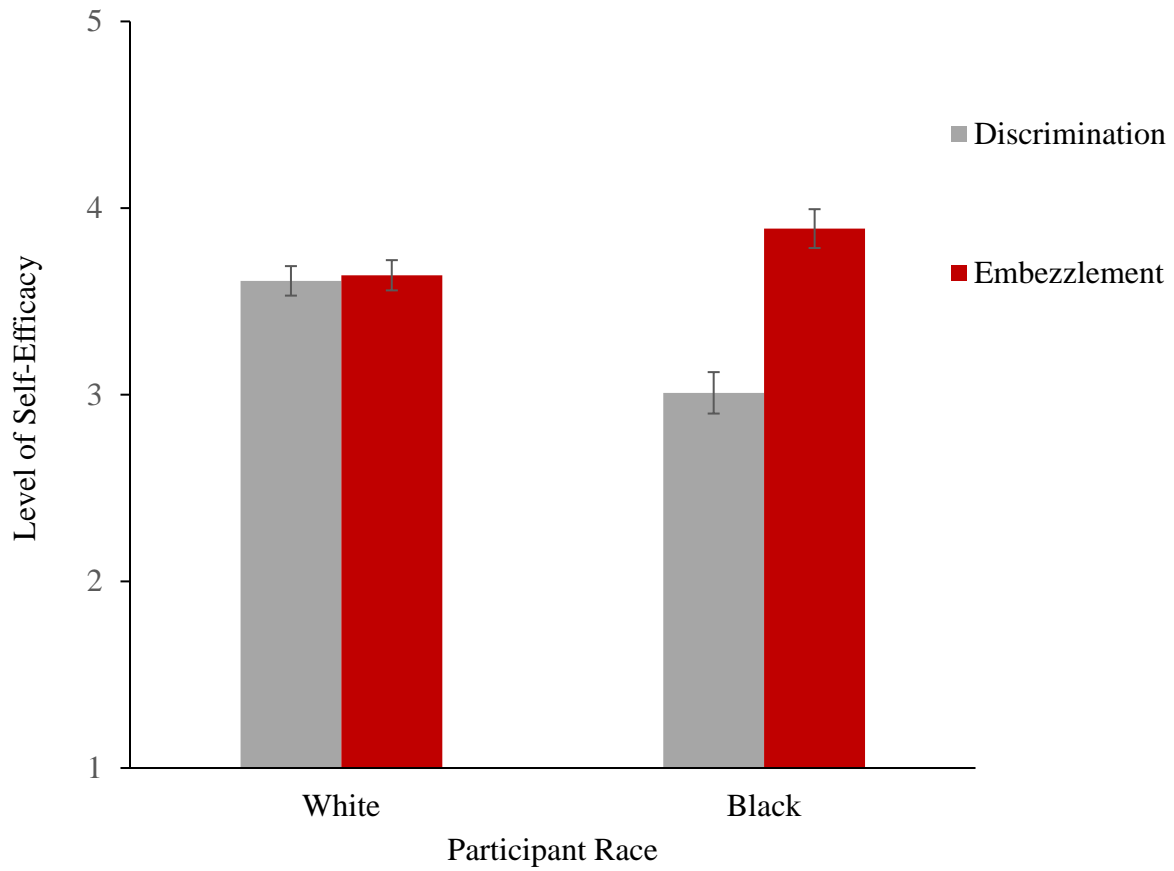
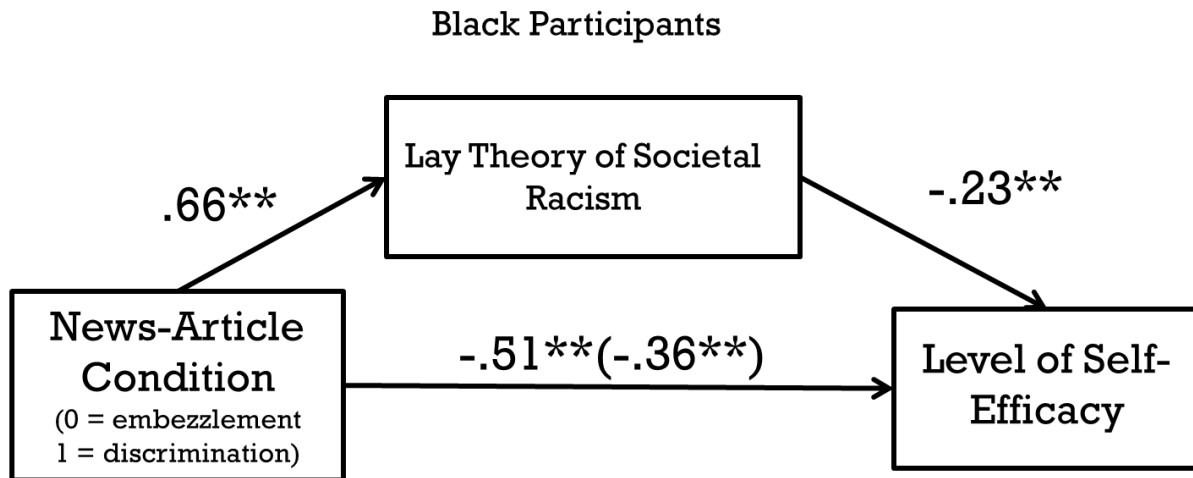


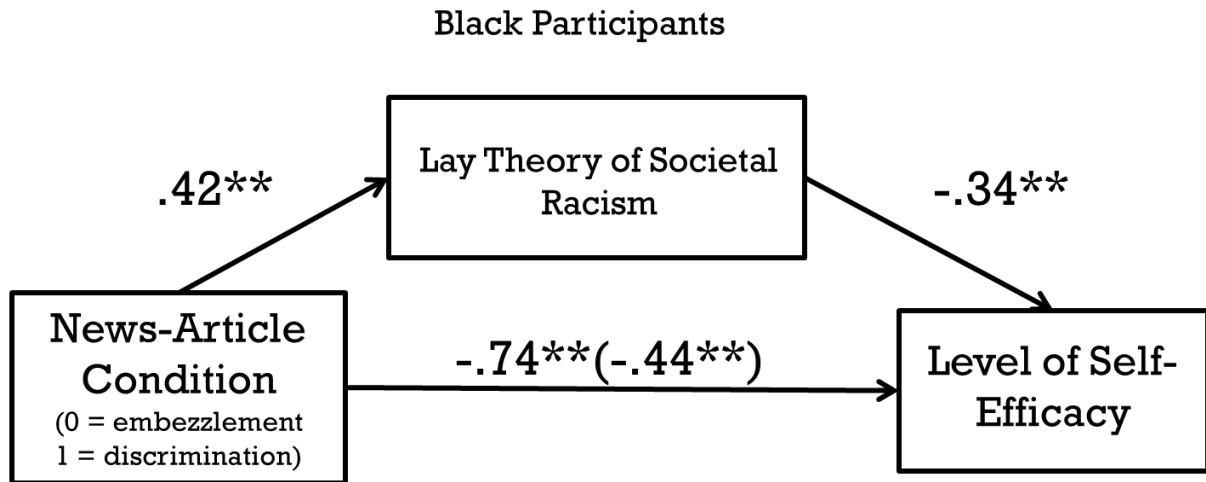
Figure 7. Structural equation model predicting Black participants' level of anger from news-article condition, theory of societal racism, and frequency of similar events. Parenthetical beta reflects the direct effect of news-article condition on Blacks' level of anger.



*Figure 8.* Mean estimates of participants' level of self-efficacy predicted by the news article they read and their racial group. Error bars are plotted at +/- 1 SE (Study 3).



*Figure 9.* Mediation analyses predicting Black participants' level of self-efficacy towards accomplishing a personal goal from news-article condition and their theory of societal racism (Study 2). Parenthetical beta score is the direct effect of news-article condition on level of self-efficacy. Standardized effect sizes reported in the diagram.



*Figure 10.* Mediation analyses predicting Black participants' level of self-efficacy towards accomplishing a personal goal from news-article condition and their theory of societal racism (Study 3). Parenthetical beta score is the direct effect of news-article condition on level of self-efficacy. Standardized effect sizes reported in the diagram.