
Inequality as Ingroup Privilege or Outgroup Disadvantage: The Impact of Group Focus on Collective Guilt and Interracial Attitudes

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Among members of privileged groups, social inequality is often thought of in terms of the disadvantages associated with outgroup membership. Yet inequality also can be validly framed in terms of ingroup privilege. These different framings have important psychological and social implications. In Experiment 1 (N = 110), White American participants assessed 24 statements about racial inequality framed as either White privileges or Black disadvantages. In Experiment 2 (N = 122), White participants generated examples of White privileges or Black disadvantages. In both experiments, a White privilege framing resulted in greater collective guilt and lower racism compared to a Black disadvantage framing. Collective guilt mediated the manipulation's effect on racism. In addition, in Experiment 2, a White privilege framing decreased White racial identification compared to a Black disadvantage framing. These findings suggest that representing inequality in terms of outgroup disadvantage allows privileged group members to avoid the negative psychological implications of inequality and supports prejudicial attitudes.

Keywords: racial inequality; collective guilt; White privilege; White identification; prejudice

In essentially all modern societies, social resources including power, status, wealth, and opportunity are distributed unequally based on group membership (Peterson & Runyan, 1993; Phillips, 1990; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel, 1978). Some receive benefits from structural inequality, whereas others incur costs. In the United States, for example, privileged groups such as

Whites, men, Christians, and heterosexuals enjoy the benefits of a hierarchal social system that comes at the expense of their African American, female, Muslim, and homosexual counterparts. Because inequality is inherently comparative, it can be accurately framed either in terms of dominant group privilege or subordinate group disadvantage.

When privileged group members consider group-based inequality, they tend to think in terms of what is different about the other group, resulting in a focus on the features of the subordinate group (Cook & Curtin, 1987; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; McIntosh, 1992; Miller, Taylor, & Buck, 1991). Indeed, the voluminous literature on prejudicial attitudes can be fairly summarized as an examination of how privileged group members explain the structural position of disadvantaged groups rather than how privileged group members think about their own more favored position (for reviews, see Biernat & Crandall, 1999; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). This bias is reflected in the meanings ascribed to the key terms of intergroup relations. Prejudice brings to mind antipathy but not prefer-

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ence, and discrimination connotes harm-doing but not favoritism.

Although privileged group members primarily frame inequality in terms of "outgroup disadvantage," there may be important social consequences of inducing the alternative "ingroup privilege" framing. In this article, we consider this issue in the context of relations between White and Black Americans. More specifically, we examine how the framing of racial inequality affects collective-level emotions and racist attitudes among White Americans. We predict that when Whites reflect on racial inequality framed in terms of White privilege rather than in terms of Black disadvantage, they will experience greater collective guilt and develop more positive attitudes toward Blacks as a result.

Framing of Inequality and Collective Guilt

The emotional experience of guilt has traditionally been considered an individual-level phenomenon conceived of as "an agitation-based emotion that is aroused when the actor actually causes, anticipates causing, or is associated with an aversive event" (Ferguson & Stegge, 1998, p. 20). Personal guilt is a self-focused emotion and is often associated with acceptance of responsibility for the negative state of others (Ferguson & Stegge, 1998; Hoffman, 2000; Tangney, 1995). More recently, research has explored a parallel, group-level emotional response—collective guilt (Branscombe, Doosje, & McGarty, 2002). According to self-categorization theory, individuals can categorize themselves and their actions at either the individual or group level of inclusiveness (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). When one self-categorizes at the group level and the ingroup is associated with inequitable treatment of outgroups, then the door is open for collective guilt to be experienced.

Some research on the antecedents of collective guilt suggests that as with personal guilt, collective guilt is a self-focused emotion. Iyer, Leach, and Crosby (2003, Study 1) found in a structural equation modeling analysis that the self-focused belief in the existence of White privilege, but not other-focused belief in Black disadvantage, was positively related to collective guilt. In a second study, they found that considering Whites as perpetrators of discrimination increased collective guilt, whereas considering Blacks as victims of discrimination did not (Iyer et al., 2003, Study 2). This research provides evidence that acknowledgement of White privilege and White responsibility for unfair treatment of others can lead to collective guilt. It is important to note, however, that these studies neither manipulated nor measured the degree to which participants framed inequality in terms of White privilege or Black disadvantage. Indeed, these studies were primarily concerned with

how the acknowledgement of inequality and seeing Whites as perpetrators affected collective guilt and attitudes toward reparative social action. We propose that even in the absence of change in the content of beliefs, a change in framing may affect the experience of collective guilt.

Among Whites, a Black disadvantage framing casts the issue of racial inequality in terms of the outgroup. Both one's privileged group membership and the role the ingroup plays in racial relations are deemphasized. From this perspective, inequality is less about the relationship between racial groups and more about the challenges and hardships associated with being Black. Although Black disadvantage may be considered unjust, it is essentially about "them" and not about "us." Thus, a Black disadvantage framing of inequality is unlikely to lead to self-categorization at the group level or to a focus on the ingroup's role in inequality. Therefore, we expect this perspective to be associated with relatively little collective guilt.

In contrast, when racial inequality is framed in terms of White privilege, the self, defined at the collective level and the relationship between the groups are likely to be salient. To consider inequality in terms of White privilege, one must reflect on the attributes and experiences of Whites. Even if not highly identified with one's racial group, it is unlikely that the privileges associated with being White could be considered without also recognizing one's own membership in this group. Thus, a White privilege framing of inequality is particularly likely to lead to self-categorization at the group level. In addition, reflecting on White privilege recasts the status and resources that Whites often take for granted as privileges that are unavailable to outgroup members. Even if one does not believe the ingroup is responsible for the inequity, one is still faced with the fact that the receipt of these structural privileges is not based on ability or effort but on the color of one's skin.

Research on equity theory has demonstrated that when the perceived ratio of inputs to outcomes is unequal (whether one overbenefits or underbenefits), feelings of distress will result (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973; Walster et al., 1978). Furthermore, when one overbenefits from inequity, this distress may take the form of guilt (Scher, 1997; Walster et al., 1973). Therefore, to the extent that thinking about White privilege leads to group-level self-categorization and highlights the inequitable relationship between racial groups, feelings of collective guilt may follow.

Collective Guilt and Attitudes Toward the Harmed Outgroup

Although guilt is an unpleasant emotion to experience, it can result in socially desirable outcomes.

Individual-level guilt has been found to motivate perpetrators to repair the harm done, apologize, accept punishment, and make reparations (Barrett, 1995; Baumeister, Stillwell, & Heatherton, 1994; Frijda, 1986; Parkinson, 1995; Roseman, Wiest, & Swartz, 1994). Similarly, collective guilt has been linked to acts of compensation in the form of monetary allocation and affirmative action policy support (Branscombe, Slugoski, & Kappen, 2004; Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Iyer et al., 2003; Swim & Miller, 1999).

In addition, it has been proposed that collective guilt may create a motivation to establish a more egalitarian relationship with the outgroup (Branscombe & Miron, 2004; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Brehm, 2004). This is likely to be especially true in situations where collective guilt is associated with ongoing group-level inequities because compensation alone fails to address the ongoing imbalance of resources. Thus, to the extent that Whites experience collective guilt in association with ongoing racial inequality, they may be motivated to create a more egalitarian interracial environment. Prosocial intergroup motivations and actions generated by the experience of collective guilt may be reflected in more positive attitudes toward the outgroup. Therefore, Whites who experience collective guilt as a consequence of thinking about racial inequality may develop more egalitarian and less racist attitudes toward Blacks.

Framing of Inequality and Group Identification

The manner in which intergroup inequality is framed may influence ingroup identification as well as collective guilt and intergroup attitudes. Compared to an outgroup disadvantage perspective, the ingroup privilege perspective highlights an aspect of the ingroup that typically goes unnoticed, the unearned benefits derived from structural inequality. The realization of inequitable benefit at the expense of outgroup members can undercut pride in the ingroup's higher status and harm the ingroup's identity with the taint of illegitimacy. As suggested by social identity theory, when members of dominant groups are confronted with the privileges of ingroup membership, they may decrease their level of ingroup identification (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Branscombe (1998) found that men who focused on the privileges they receive based on their gender reported lower identification with their gender group compared to when they considered the disadvantages they received because of their gender group membership. Disidentification is less likely to occur when privileged group members consider inequality from an outgroup disadvantage perspective because the collective self is unlikely to be salient.

If a White privilege framing of inequality does cause Whites to identify less with their racial group than a

Black disadvantage framing, this disidentification could translate into decreased racial prejudice. As one's membership in the group decreases in importance, the motivation to view outgroups as inferior to one's ingroup also may decrease. Research linking ingroup identification with prejudicial attitudes, especially under conditions of identity threat, supports this view (Branscombe & Wann, 1994; Brown, 2000).

Overview of Present Research

We predicted that when White Americans reflect on White-Black racial inequality, the framing of this inequality would affect racial attitudes and this effect would be mediated by collective guilt. The dominant cultural framing of racial inequality focuses the issue on the disadvantages associated with being Black. We hypothesized that compared to this Black disadvantage framing, a framing that focuses participants on the privileges associated with being White would lead to relatively greater feelings of collective guilt, and this in turn would lead to reductions in racist attitudes.

In two experiments, White American participants reflected on the issue of racial inequality. We manipulated how this issue was framed by providing participants with questions that would lead them to reflect either on the advantages they experience as White Americans or the disadvantages experienced by Black Americans. Following this manipulation, participants completed measures of collective guilt and anti-Black racism.

In Experiment 1, we manipulated framing by having participants rate their level of agreement with a series of statements on the topic of racial inequality that were framed in terms of the benefits associated with being White or the disadvantages associated with being Black. In Experiment 2, our framing manipulation consisted of an open-ended question that asked participants to generate a list of either White privileges or Black disadvantages.

In Experiment 2, we also measured White racial identification. This allowed us to test for an effect of our framing manipulation on level of identification and to assess identification as a potential mediator between our manipulation and racism. Therefore, in Experiment 2, we examined both collective guilt and White racial identification as potential mediators between the framing of inequality and racism.

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Participants and procedure. In total, 110 White American introductory psychology students (41 men, 69 women) participated in exchange for course credit. In a

laboratory setting, each participant completed a short questionnaire that included the experimental manipulation and dependent measures.

Manipulating the framing of inequality. The first page of the questionnaire consisted of a brief instruction paragraph followed by 24 statements having to do with inequality between White and Black Americans. We randomly assigned participants to read instructions and statements that framed inequality in terms of either White privilege or Black disadvantage. The instruction paragraph read as follows:

In the last half of this century, Americans have given considerable attention to matters of racial inequality. Despite increased attention to the issue, most social scientists agree that, even today, White Americans enjoy many privileges that Black Americans do not [Black Americans face many disadvantages that White Americans do not]. Below is a list of White Privileges [Black Disadvantages] compiled from sociological, psychological, and economic research.

The 24 statements following these instructions illustrated a wide variety of domains in which White Americans are relatively privileged and Black Americans are relatively disadvantaged. This list was based on examples of group privilege described by McIntosh (1992). To manipulate the framing of inequality, we constructed two parallel versions of each of the 24 statements that framed the same form of inequality either in terms of White privilege or Black disadvantage. For example, in the White privilege condition, participants read, "White Americans can easily rent or purchase housing in any area where they can afford to live." In the Black disadvantage condition, participants read, "Black Americans often have difficulty renting or purchasing housing, even in areas where they can afford to live." To ensure that participants carefully read and considered each of the 24 statements, we asked them to respond to the statements on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Dependent measures. The remainder of the questionnaire consisted of a series of 7-point Likert-type agree/disagree statements designed to measure collective guilt and racism. We measured collective guilt with the five-item measure validated by Branscombe, Slugoski, and Kappen (2004). Responses to these items were averaged to create a collective guilt index, with higher numbers indicating greater collective guilt, $\alpha = .87$. To measure racism, five items from the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995) were adapted to fit the context of racism. Responses to these items were averaged such that higher scores indicate greater racism, $\alpha = .76$. For a complete list of the items used to measure collective guilt and racism, see the appendix. After partici-

pants had completed the questionnaire, the experimenter explained the purpose of the study.

Results

Mediation analysis. To determine if collective guilt mediated the effect of our framing manipulation on racism, we employed Baron and Kenny's (1986) regression procedure for testing mediation. First, we regressed the racism index on the framing manipulation (coded as 0 = Black disadvantage, 1 = White privilege) to establish that there was an effect to be mediated. This manipulation of the framing of racial inequality reliably predicted racism, $\beta = -.22$, $t(108) = -2.34$, $p = .021$. As hypothesized, participants who read statements framed in terms of White privilege expressed reliably lower racism ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.09$) than did participants in the Black disadvantage condition ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 1.09$). We then regressed our hypothesized mediator, collective guilt, on our framing manipulation. We found that our framing manipulation was a reliable predictor of collective guilt, $\beta = .25$, $t(108) = 2.77$, $p = .007$. As predicted, White privilege participants expressed significantly higher levels of collective guilt ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.32$) than those assigned to the Black disadvantage condition ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.44$).

The next step in our mediation analysis was to regress the dependent variable (racism) on both the independent variable (framing) and the proposed mediator (collective guilt), $R^2 = .236$, $F(2, 107) = 16.57$, $p < .001$. This analysis allowed us to determine if our framing manipulation's effect on racism could be accounted for by collective guilt. In this analysis, collective guilt reliably predicted racism, $\beta = -.45$, $t(108) = -5.14$, $p < .001$, and the framing manipulation was no longer significant, $\beta = -.10$, $t(108) = -1.19$, $p = .237$. A Sobel test, assessing whether collective guilt carried the influence of the framing manipulation on racism, was significant, $z = 2.44$, $p = .014$. These data support the hypothesis that collective guilt mediates the relationship between the framing of inequality and racism. This mediation model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Ratings of the inequality statements. To encourage careful consideration of the inequality statements used in our framing manipulation, participants were asked to rate the degree to which they agreed with each statement on a 7-point Likert scale. On average, participants in the White privilege condition expressed more agreement with the 24 racial inequality statements than did participants who read statements framed in terms of Black disadvantage (White privilege $M = 5.17$, $SD = .92$; Black disadvantage $M = 2.79$, $SD = .91$), $t(108) = 13.62$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.60$.

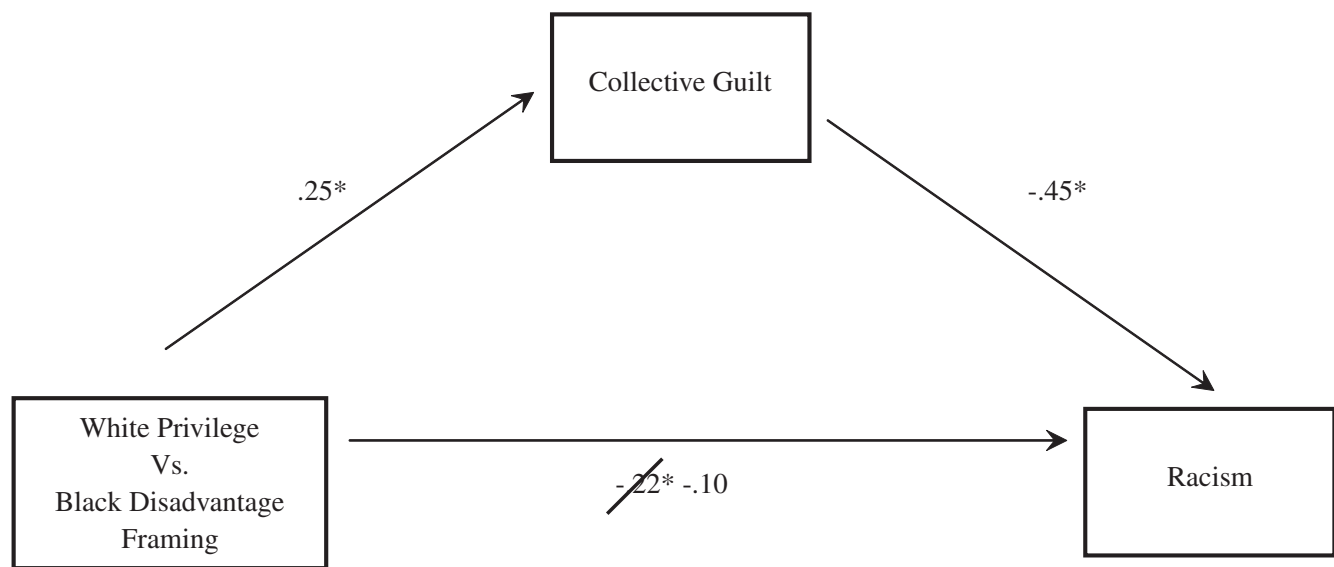


Figure 1 Framing of inequality mediation model, Experiment 1.

NOTE: Coefficients with an asterisk indicate significant beta weights. Coefficient with a slash through indicates the direct effect of framing on racism, prior to controlling for collective guilt.

* $p < .05$.

Although we made no a priori predictions regarding this variable, in retrospect, this differential agreement across conditions does not seem surprising. To a large extent, racial inequality manifests itself in a daily undercurrent of concerns and challenges for Black Americans that is nonexistent for Whites. Our statements reflected this disparity. For example, in the Black disadvantage condition, participants evaluated the statement, "Whether using checks or credit cards, Black Americans' skin color often works against their appearance of financial reliability." The analogous White privilege statement was "Whether using checks or credit cards, White Americans can count on their skin color not to work against them." Agreement with this and other statements in the White privilege condition may simply reflect a widespread belief that Whites are infrequently discriminated against based on their race. Conversely, agreement with statements in the Black disadvantage condition may reflect a belief that discrimination against Blacks is a frequent occurrence. Furthermore, our participants are unlikely to have had a great deal of exposure to the experiences of Black Americans to draw on when answering these questions. Yet, they are likely to have considerable direct evidence of the infrequency of White discrimination. Therefore, with less direct knowledge regarding the prevalence of Black discrimination, one might expect the Black disadvantage statements to receive relatively less endorsement.

Because beliefs about the prevalence of racial inequality have been found to correlate with feelings of collective guilt among White Americans (Iyer et al., 2003; Swim & Miller, 1999), we decided to examine the relationship with our agreement statements to see if our data replicate this finding. Indeed, the more our participants agreed with the inequality statements used in our manipulation, the more collective guilt they reported, $r(110) = .26, p < .01$. In addition, we found that agreement with these statements was negatively correlated with racism, $r(110) = -.38, p < .001$.¹

This pattern of relationships suggests the possibility that the effect of framing on collective guilt and racism in our model could actually be due to differences in our participants' beliefs about the prevalence of structural inequality with regard to race. Therefore, we felt it would be prudent to reexamine our mediation model taking agreement ratings with the inequality statements into account. First, we added the ratings of these inequality statements as a predictor to our regression analysis assessing the effect of framing on collective guilt. Adding this variable failed to reliably increase the variance accounted for in collective guilt, $\Delta R^2 = .007, \Delta F(1, 107) = .83, p = .365$. We then added these statement ratings as an additional predictor variable in our model regressing racism on framing and collective guilt. The addition of these ratings did reliably improve the fit of this model, $\Delta R^2 = .086, \Delta F(1, 107) = 13.47, p < .001$. Agreement was a

reliable predictor of racism in this model, such that greater agreement with our inequality statements was associated with less racism, $\beta = -.49$, $t(108) = -3.67$, $p < .001$. Of importance, however, collective guilt remained a reliable predictor of racism, $\beta = -.42$, $t(108) = -5.08$, $p < .001$. Thus, although participants' level of agreement with the inequality statements does appear to explain some variance in racism not accounted for by our mediation model, it does not eliminate the mediating effect that collective guilt plays in the relationship between framing and racism.

Discussion

In Experiment 1, participants were presented with statements in which racial inequality was framed either in terms of White privilege or in terms of Black disadvantage. We predicted that this manipulation would influence racial attitudes such that participants in the White privilege condition would express less racism than participants in the Black disadvantage condition. We also hypothesized that feelings of collective guilt would mediate the effect of framing on racial attitudes. A mediation analysis of the data supported these predictions. Furthermore, although participants in the White privilege condition expressed reliably more agreement with the statements than did participants in the Black disadvantage condition, this effect did not account for the mediating role of collective guilt in the relationship between the framing of inequality and racism.

It is important to note, however, that participants in Experiment 1 were provided with specific statements to evaluate regarding racial inequality. Although these statements involved common life issues in a wide variety of domains, it is possible that these statements made salient aspects of inequality that were perceived as being unique or atypical. If this were the case, our mediation model may not generalize to situations where the specific examples of inequality are self-generated. Therefore, to be more confident that our findings were not limited to this specific type of framing exercise, we conducted a second experiment, in which the framing of racial inequality was manipulated in a manner that allowed participants to generate their own examples.

This second experiment also provided us with an opportunity to obtain a measure of belief in the existence of White privilege among participants in both conditions. Past research indicates that this variable is positively associated with collective guilt (Iyer et al., 2003) and it is possible that our Experiment 1 manipulation of framing affected these beliefs. We have argued that a White privilege framing of inequality affects collective guilt and racism because it implicates the self as beneficiary of unjust racial relations. However, an alternative explanation of our results is that our manipulation

affected beliefs regarding the prevalence of White privilege and that these changes in beliefs were responsible for our manipulation's effect on both collective guilt and racism. Including a measure of belief in the prevalence of White privilege in Experiment 2 provided us with a means of assessing this alternative interpretation.

In addition to replicating and clarifying our Experiment 1 findings, we were also interested in assessing whether the framing of racial inequality affects White racial identification. If thinking about White privilege focuses one's attention on the role of the ingroup in racial inequality, our participants may be more likely to disidentify with their racial group in this condition than in the Black disadvantage condition. Disidentification with White Americans could, in turn, lead to less racist attitudes toward Blacks. To examine this possibility, we included a measure of White racial identification in our second experiment.

EXPERIMENT 2

Method

Participants and procedure. Participants were 122 White American introductory psychology students (53 men, 69 women) who took part in the study in exchange for course credit. Seven participants were not included in this analysis because they did not answer the question that constituted our independent variable. In this study, the materials were administered via an Internet survey. We chose this method of administration because recent research indicates that Internet surveys can decrease demand characteristics on sensitive topics such as racial attitudes (Evans, Garcia, Garcia, & Baron, 2003).

Participants were recruited using two different methods. The majority of participants ($n = 106$) were recruited via an e-mail invitation that included a link to the study Web site. These participants were given a window of several days during which they could go to the Web site and complete the study. A small number of additional participants ($n = 16$) were run in small groups in a campus computer lab. After completing an unrelated computer-based study for which they had been recruited, these participants were directed by their computer to the present study's Web site. Once at the study Web site, all participants read a brief introduction and responded to several demographic questions. At this point, the Web survey randomly assigned participants to either a "White privilege" or a "Black disadvantage" framing condition.

Manipulating the framing of inequality. In this experiment, we manipulated the framing of inequality by asking participants to generate either White privileges or

Black disadvantages. Participants in the White privilege condition read the following introductory paragraph:

We would like you to consider the ways that you have received privileges or been advantaged because you are White/Caucasian. Write down as many different ways as you can think of that you have benefited or been advantaged because of your race.

For participants in the Black disadvantage condition, the introductory paragraph read as follows:

We would like you to consider the ways that African Americans have not received privileges or been disadvantaged because they are Black/African American. Write down as many different ways as you can think of that African Americans have not benefited or have been disadvantaged because of their race.

To help participants generate privileges or disadvantages, we told all participants that they might consider "employment, finances, education, social life, organizational memberships, romantic relationships, housing, safety, day-to-day living, treatment by authorities, health care, shopping, or acceptance by others, to name a few possibilities." These content categories were found in prior studies to capture the content White Americans generate when thinking about racial inequality (Branscombe, Schmitt, Schiffhauer, & Valencia, 2004). Six text boxes in which participants could record their thoughts followed these instructions.

Dependent measures. Once participants had written as much as they wanted in the text boxes, they clicked a button that brought them to the next page of the Internet survey. All remaining questions were identical for both conditions. Participants responded to a series of five statements from the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986). These statements were averaged to form a racism index, with higher scores indicating greater racism, $\alpha = .66$. These racism items were followed by seven statements measuring collective guilt, $\alpha = .88$. Higher scores on this measure indicate greater collective guilt. Participants then responded to two statements regarding their perceptions of the prevalence of White privilege, $\alpha = .70$, and a series of seven statements that had been used in previous research to measure White identification (Branscombe, Schmitt, et al., 2004). Responses to these statements were averaged to form a White identification index, with higher scores indicating greater White identification, $\alpha = .87$ (see the appendix for a complete list of items used to measure modern racism, collective guilt, and White identification). When participants had completed all questions they were automatically re-

directed to a debriefing Web page and thanked for their participation.

Results

Manipulation check. Our theoretical argument concerning the effects of framing on collective guilt and racism claims that thinking about ingroup privilege leads to a focus on the self, categorized at the group level. An outgroup disadvantage framing, on the other hand, minimizes the role of the self and focuses the issue on the outgroup. To determine if our manipulation successfully induced differential focus, we measured the relative frequency of first-person pronouns (I, me, my, we, us, our) versus third-person pronouns (they, them, their, him, his, her, hers) that were used by participants in response to our framing question. As expected, participants thinking about White privilege used substantially more first-person pronouns ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 4.31$) than those assigned to think about Black disadvantage ($M = .53$, $SD = 1.35$), $t(120) = 6.59$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.16$. In contrast, third-person pronouns were used significantly more frequently by those in the Black disadvantage condition ($M = 3.00$, $SD = 3.33$) compared to those who thought about White privilege ($M = .46$, $SD = 1.19$), $t(120) = 5.45$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.02$.

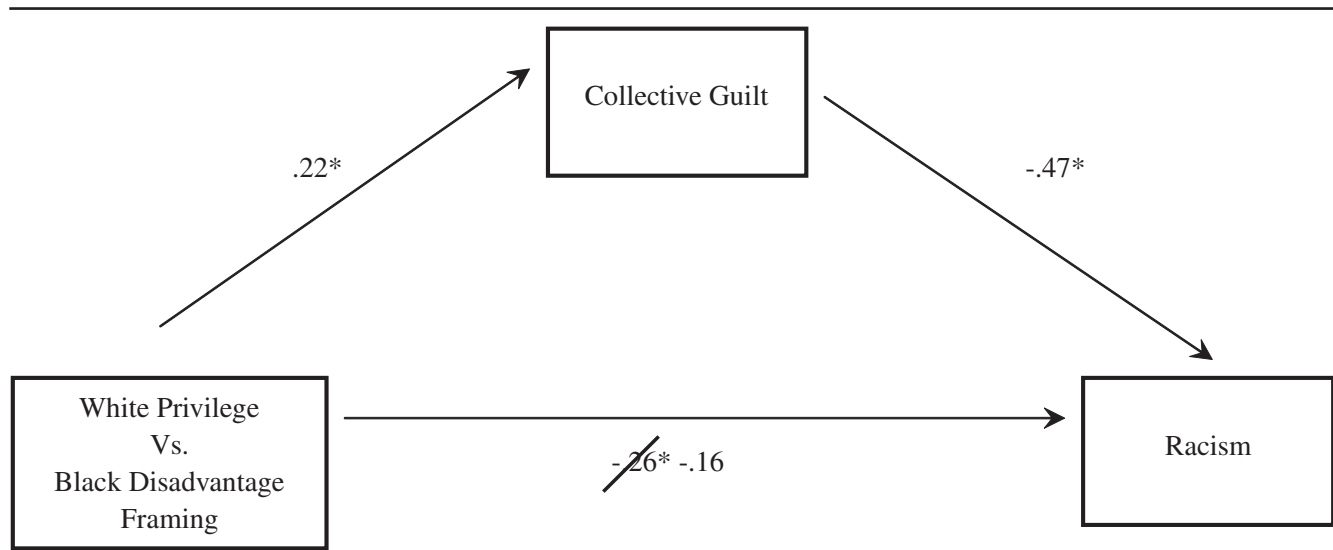
Content and quantity of thoughts. To assess how our framing manipulation affected the quantity and quality of thoughts about racial inequality, we performed several analyses on the responses participants typed into the text boxes following our framing question. First, we counted the number of words typed by participants as a function of condition. Participants in the White privilege and Black disadvantage conditions did not reliably differ in the mean number of words typed in the two conditions ($M = 52.25$, $SD = 40.78$; $M = 64.09$, $SD = 45.39$, respectively), $t(120) = 1.52$, $p = .132$, $d = .27$.

To assess if there were differences across condition in the salience of different types of inequality, two coders assigned the responses according to the main topic discussed. Each idea expressed by the participant was coded into six general domain categories used previously with a similar procedure (see Branscombe, Schmitt, et al., 2004): education, employment, housing, discrimination within organizations, differential treatment by authorities, and general social stereotyping. The coder agreement rate was 95%. Disagreements were resolved through discussion. Table 1 lists the means and standard deviations for each of these categories. Of these six domains, only the frequency of responses regarding employment and organizational discrimination differed by condition. Compared to participants in the White advantage condition, those who thought about Black disadvantage were more likely to mention issues related to

TABLE 1: Mean Number of Thoughts Generated Within Each Content Category in the Privilege and Disadvantage Conditions, Experiment 2

Thought Category	White Privilege	Black Disadvantage	t(120)	p
Education	.48 (.56)	.44 (.54)	.38	.701
Employment	.54 (.59)	.77 (.63)	-2.12	.036
Housing	.22 (.41)	.28 (.45)	-.83	.407
Organizations	.08 (.32)	.28 (.59)	-2.41	.018
Authorities	.54 (.59)	.60 (.49)	-.58	.560
Social stereotyping	1.75 (1.09)	1.53 (.95)	1.22	.224
Total coded thoughts	3.60 (1.27)	3.89 (1.03)	-1.39	.166

NOTE: Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

**Figure 2 Framing of inequality mediation model, Experiment 2.**

NOTE: Coefficients with an asterisk indicate significant beta weights. Coefficient with a slash through indicates the direct effect of framing on racism, prior to controlling for collective guilt.

* $p < .05$.

employment and organizational discrimination. The total number of coded thoughts expressed by White privilege and Black disadvantage participants did not reliably differ by condition.

In summary, our content analysis of participants' open-ended responses indicated that there were no reliable differences in the overall amount that participants wrote and few differences in terms of the topics they chose to write about. There were, however, clear differences in terms of internal versus external focus, with White privilege participants being more focused on the self and ingroup and Black disadvantage participants focused more on the outgroup.

Collective guilt mediation analysis. To test the proposed mediation model, we again employed Baron and Kenny's (1986) regression procedure. A regression model with our framing manipulation as the independent variable (dummy coded as 0 in the Black disadvan-

tage condition and 1 in the White privilege condition) and racism as the dependent variable was significant, $\beta = -.26$, $t(120) = -2.91$, $p = .004$. As expected, racism scores were reliably lower among participants who reflected on White privilege ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.19$) than among those who focused on Black disadvantage ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.28$). Regressing our manipulation on collective guilt also demonstrated a reliable relationship, $\beta = .22$, $t(120) = 2.45$, $p = .016$. Collective guilt was significantly higher in the White privilege condition ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 1.77$) than in the Black disadvantage condition ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.83$).

To determine if the effect of our manipulation on racism could be explained by collective guilt, we entered both the framing manipulation variable and collective guilt into a regression model with racism as the dependent variable, $R^2 = .272$, $F(2, 119) = 22.22$, $p < .001$. The path coefficient associated with collective guilt in this model was significant, $\beta = -.47$, $t(120) = -5.80$, $p < .001$.

However, as shown in Figure 2, with collective guilt included in the model, the variance explained by the framing manipulation decreased and was only marginally significant, $\beta = .16$, $t(120) = -1.94$, $p = .055$. As in Experiment 1, we conducted a Sobel test to determine if the explanatory power of our manipulation on racism is being carried by collective guilt. This test was significant, $z = 2.26$, $p = .024$.

Acknowledgement of White privilege. Past research on collective guilt suggests that beliefs about the prevalence of White privilege can affect collective guilt (Iyer et al., 2003; Swim & Miller, 1999). However, we propose that because our two framings differ in the degree to which the self is implicated, beliefs about the prevalence of inequality need not change for the framing of inequality to affect racial attitudes. Indeed, we found that beliefs regarding the prevalence of White privilege were not reliably different between participants in the White privilege condition ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.94$) and those in the Black disadvantage condition ($M = 4.71$, $SD = 1.79$), $t(120) = 1.15$, $p = .253$. Thus, it appears that our framing manipulation's effect on collective guilt and racism occurs because framing differentially implicates the self at the collective level, not because framing affects beliefs about inequality.²

Analysis of White racial identification. We included a measure of White racial identification in Experiment 2 so that we could assess the possibility that the framing of inequality affects identification and to examine identification as a potential mediator of the relationship between framing and racism. Because both of these questions could be addressed through mediation analysis, we again ran a mediation analysis on the relationship between framing and racism, this time using White identification as a potential mediator rather than collective guilt. A regression model with our framing manipulation as the predictor variable and White identification as the dependent variable was significant, $\beta = -.19$, $t(120) = -2.08$, $p = .040$. Participants in the White privilege condition expressed reliably less White identification ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 1.49$) than did participants in the Black disadvantage condition ($M = 7.66$, $SD = 1.17$). Having already determined that the framing manipulation was a significant predictor of racism, we performed a regression analysis in which the framing manipulation and White identification were both entered as predictors of racism, $R^2 = .095$, $F(2, 119) = 6.22$, $p = .003$. In this model, White identification was a marginally significant predictor of racism, $\beta = .17$, $t(120) = 1.95$, $p = .055$. However, the effect of our manipulation on racism remained significant, $\beta = -.23$, $t(120) = -2.25$, $p = .013$. A Sobel test on this model indicated that the effect of framing on racism in this experiment was not reliably mediated by White identi-

cation, $z = 1.42$, $p = .155$. Thus, although our manipulation reliably affected White identification, and White identification had a marginal effect on racism, White identification was not a reliable mediator of the effects of framing of inequality on racist attitudes.

Although not statistically significant, the general pattern of effects in our White identification mediation analysis paralleled those of our collective guilt mediation model. Thus, part of the mediation effect that we had been attributing to collective guilt may have been actually due to White identification. To examine this issue, we regressed racism on the framing manipulation, collective guilt and White identification simultaneously. In this model, collective guilt remained a reliable predictor of racism, $\beta = -.46$, $t(120) = -5.18$, $p < .001$. The effect of White identification was again nonsignificant, $\beta = -.13$, $t(120) = -1.58$, $p = .118$.

Discussion

The results of Experiment 2 support the predicted collective guilt mediation model. For our White American participants, thinking about racial inequality in terms of White privilege, rather than Black disadvantage, led to decreased racism. This effect was mediated by heightened feelings of collective guilt in the White privilege condition. Content analysis of the pronouns used in expressing thoughts about inequality indicated that White privilege participants were more focused on the self and ingroup and less on the outgroup compared to participants in the Black disadvantage condition.

In addition, Experiment 2 provides evidence that the framing of inequality can affect the degree to which privileged group members identify with their group. When White Americans reflected on inequality framed in terms of ingroup privilege, they identified less with their racial group than when inequality was framed in terms of outgroup disadvantage. In examining the potential mediating role of White identification, we found a marginal effect of identification on racism that was independent of our manipulation's direct effect. However, White identification did not appear to be a reliable mediator of the relationship between framing of inequality and racism. An analysis in which White identification and collective guilt were examined simultaneously as potential mediators indicated that White identification could not account for the mediating role of collective guilt in our model.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In the United States, racial inequality between Blacks and Whites is primarily framed in terms of Black disadvantage. White Americans who adopt this culturally dominant perspective are likely to see inequality as an

outgroup issue with little relevance to the self. A less common but equally viable framing casts inequality in terms of the privileges associated with membership in the White racial ingroup. White Americans who consider inequality framed in terms of White privilege may become more aware of the unearned benefits they receive as members of a privileged social group. This realization may, in turn, lead to the experience of collective guilt and, as a consequence, more positive racial attitudes.

These issues were examined in two experiments in which participants were led to think about racial inequality through the lens of either White privilege or Black disadvantage. In both studies, we found that participants who reflected on White privilege experienced relatively greater collective guilt and, as a result, expressed less racism than did participants who thought about inequality in terms of Black disadvantage. This pattern of results was observed using two different methods of data collection (in the lab and via the Internet), different measures of racism, and regardless of whether participants were provided with specific examples of inequality (Experiment 1) or generated examples on their own (Experiment 2).³

Previous work has demonstrated that self-focused beliefs regarding the prevalence of White privilege are associated with collective guilt (Iyer et al., 2003, Study 2). Our work provides evidence that the framing of inequality can affect collective guilt and racist attitudes even without corresponding changes in beliefs about the prevalence of inequality. In Experiment 1, the hypothesized effect of framing occurred even though the content of these statements was held constant, differing only in terms of whether the focus was on ingroup advantage or outgroup disadvantage. In Experiment 2, our framing manipulation affected collective guilt and racism even though there were no reliable differences between conditions in beliefs regarding the prevalence of White privilege and the content of thoughts about inequality was similar across conditions.

There was, however, a striking difference in the types of pronouns used across the two conditions in Experiment 2. Consistent with the assumption that thinking about ingroup privilege makes salient the ingroup's role in structural inequality, participants in the White privilege condition used reliably more first-person pronouns and reliably less third-person pronouns than did participants in the Black disadvantage condition. The framing of inequality appears to influence collective guilt not because it affects beliefs about the prevalence of inequality but rather because it affects the degree to which one sees these beliefs as being relevant to the self.

The Role of Identification

In addition to the effects on guilt and racism, we found in Experiment 2 that the framing of inequality also affected the degree to which Whites identified with their racial group. Participants who considered White privilege displayed a greater tendency to disidentify with their White racial group compared to those who considered inequality in terms of Black disadvantage. To our knowledge, this constitutes a new finding in its own right. Past research has found that men who focus on gender-based privileges identify less with being male than men who consider the disadvantages associated with their gender (Branscombe, 1998). The current research indicates that it is not necessary to manipulate the type of inequality (ingroup advantage vs. ingroup disadvantage) to obtain a disidentification effect. Indeed, by simply making the ingroup or the outgroup salient while thinking about inequality, changes in identification can follow.

Although our framing manipulation reliably affected White identification, there was only a marginally significant positive correlation between White identification and racism. A possible explanation for the weakness of this relationship is that participants in our study perceived little threat to the status of the ingroup. The perception of ingroup threat has been shown to play an important moderating role in the relationship between ingroup identification and prejudicial attitudes toward outgroups (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Turner, 1999). When perceived threat to ingroup status is high, strong relationships between ingroup identification and prejudice are likely to occur. As perceived threat decreases, so too does the relationship between identification and prejudice.

Our White American participants may have perceived little threat when considering racial inequality. The hierarchical nature of Black-White racial relations is deeply embedded in our culture and is unlikely to be quickly ameliorated. Thus, reflections on racial inequality, regardless of how they were framed, may not have been perceived as posing any real challenge to the position of White Americans in the social hierarchy. Under conditions in which thoughts about ingroup privilege are perceived as more threatening, we might expect to see identification playing a greater mediating role in the relationship between framing and collective guilt.

Behavioral Implications

Although our research demonstrates that the framing of inequality can effect intergroup attitudes, attitude change is of little consequence unless it is accompanied

by changes in behavior. Although our research does not examine the behavioral effects of framing, previous research on the relationship between collective guilt and intergroup behaviors provides some reason for optimism. Our mediation analyses suggest that the observed differences in racial attitudes were a consequence of our framing manipulations' effect on collective guilt, and guilt in its different incarnations has been associated empirically with prosocial outgroup behaviors. Collective guilt can lead to support for financial compensation and affirmative action policies (Branscombe, Slugoski, & Kappen, 2004; Doosje et al., 1998; Iyer et al., 2003; Swim & Miller, 1999). Personal guilt also has been associated with compensatory action (Estrada-Hollenbeck & Heatherton, 1998; Ferguson, Stegge, & Damhuis, 1991) as well as attempts to avoid inappropriate behavior in the future (Baumeister et al., 1994; Devine & Monteith, 1993). To the extent that framing inequality in terms of ingroup privilege produces feelings of guilt, one may reasonably expect this framing to motivate more egalitarian intergroup behaviors than currently occur as a result of the culturally predominant outgroup disadvantage framing.

It should be noted, however, that collective guilt has been found in some circumstances to predict only a limited subset of prosocial intergroup behaviors. Iyer et al. (2003) found that collective guilt was associated with support for compensatory affirmative action policies but not for equal opportunity policies. This implies that collective guilt motivates reparations for past misdeeds but does not motivate efforts to create a more egalitarian future. We suspect, though, that a fuller picture of the relationship between collective guilt and intergroup behavior involves an assessment of the transgressions associated with the guilt experience. If collective guilt is experienced only for the past state of social relations, people may be motivated to compensate only for those past deeds. If, however, collective guilt is associated with the present and continuing nature of structural inequality, people may focus their efforts on preventing inequality from continuing in the future. Research on personal guilt provides some support for this reasoning. Estrada-Hollenbeck and Heatherton (1998) found that the experience of personal guilt for a past transgression was associated with motivation to apologize and compensate. Personal guilt associated with a potential future behavior, on the other hand, led to efforts to improve the quality of future relationships. Thus, we believe that collective guilt induced through the consideration of ongoing structural inequality can motivate both compensatory behavior and action designed to create a more egalitarian future.

The framing of inequality may affect intergroup behavior in ways other than through the experience of

collective guilt. In our Experiment 2, participants who focused on White privilege identified less with their racial ingroup. This process of disidentification may decrease motivation to maintain structural inequality and make the idea of prosocial action toward outgroup members more acceptable. Consistent with this line of thinking, manipulations that affect ingroup identification have been found to have a corresponding effect on discriminatory behavior against outgroups (Mullin & Hogg, 1998; Perreault & Bourhis, 1999).

Black Disadvantage as the Dominant Cultural Perspective

Given the effects of our framing manipulations on racism, it is interesting to note that public discourse on race is almost exclusively framed in terms of Black disadvantage—the framing that our research indicates would lead to relatively higher levels of racism. This bias in how Whites tend to frame inequality might be due, in part, to “normal” perceptual processes. For White Americans, the benefits of dominant status are a part of everyday life and, as such, are rarely salient. In contrast, exposure to the experiences of Black Americans is a relatively infrequent occurrence. For this reason, instances of Black discrimination are likely to capture attention. In the terminology of Gestalt psychology, Black disadvantage is likely to represent a smaller part of the psychological field for Whites and will therefore be perceived as figural (Koffka, 1935). White privilege, on the other hand, constitutes the ever-present and invisible background.

In addition, there are plausible motivational reasons for privileged groups to prefer an outgroup disadvantage framing of inequality. As demonstrated by our data, the White privilege framing leads Whites to express relatively higher levels of guilt (an aversive emotion) and to distance themselves from their racial group, which is indicative of harm to their social identity. In addition to these group-level negative outcomes, a White privilege framing may have negative implications for the individual-level self. For Whites, an ingroup privilege perspective highlights the uncomfortable notion that a certain amount of one's status, power, and other resources are due not to one's abilities and effort but to a social structural system that unfairly favors the ingroup. Thus, a White privilege framing may pose a threat to one's self-esteem.

Framing inequality in terms of Black disadvantage also is likely to serve the political and material interests of White Americans. Our data suggest that framing inequality in terms of Black disadvantage can lead Whites to be more racist compared to when inequality is framed in terms of White privilege. Racism, as a legitimizing ideology, serves as a justification for existing racial unequal-

ity (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). By framing inequality in a manner that maintains White racist attitudes against Blacks, ingroup protest of White privilege is minimized.

Thus, we argue the dominant cultural framing of White-Black inequality reflects the perspective and interests of Whites. This highlights one of the most important and pervasive privileges of occupying a dominant position in the social structure—the power to frame mainstream social discourse. By representing inequality primarily in terms of Black disadvantage, Whites are able to preserve their innocence regarding their structural position and maintain the perceived legitimacy of their privileged status.

Limitations in the Use of Framing as a Prejudice Reduction Technique

Although we found that framing inequality in terms of ingroup privilege can reduce prejudice, there are likely to be important limitations on its utility as a general prejudice reduction strategy. In the previous section, we pointed out several cognitive and motivational reasons that may be responsible for the framing of inequality to primarily take the form of outgroup disadvantage. For these same reasons, privileged group members may be resistant to interventions that frame inequality in terms of ingroup privilege.

The use of framing as a prejudice-reduction strategy also may be limited to certain types of inequality. In contexts where dominant group members consider intergroup inequality to be highly legitimate, an ingroup privilege framing is unlikely to evoke guilt and reduce racism. We chose to investigate race-based inequality in our research because, at this historical juncture, many White Americans tend to see racial inequality as illegitimate. Indeed, social psychologists have noted that the legitimizations of racial inequality are now considered “old-fashioned” (Biernat & Crandall, 1999). However, among other groups, those of privileged status may consider inequality to be highly legitimate. When the inequality is legitimized, one would not expect ingroup privilege to lead to the experience of guilt or to reductions in prejudice. In fact, when inequality is considered to be legitimate by the dominant group, an ingroup privilege framing could even evoke pride in group membership and increase prejudice.

Conclusions

In the United States, as well as in many other cultures, “equal opportunity” is a value that constitutes a central part of national identity. Yet, in many domains, structural biases create an uneven playing field that manifests itself in unearned advantages for members of privileged groups and an ongoing undercurrent of difficulties, con-

cerns, and challenges for subordinate group members. Thus, a conflict exists between egalitarian social values and the reality of social inequality.

A long-term solution to this conflict is likely to require deliberate reflection on the problem. Yet, simply thinking about inequality may not be sufficient to motivate social change. Our research indicates that this reflection process can be more or less effective depending on how the problem of inequality is framed. For members of privileged groups, framing inequality in terms of outgroup disadvantage portrays only half of the story of intergroup relations, allowing the pervasive yet subtle benefits of ingroup membership to remain obscured.

Alternatively, a framing of inequality that emphasizes the privileges of dominant group membership creates a more complete picture of the hierarchical nature of intergroup relations. From this perspective, inequality is not just about disadvantaged groups. As beneficiaries of the inequitable distribution of social resources, the ingroup and the self are also implicated. Our research indicates that this may be an uncomfortable realization, leading to the experience of collective guilt and disidentification with the privileged group. Yet, this very discomfort also may motivate members of privileged groups to defend their egalitarian values by adopting less prejudicial attitudes and creating a more equitable social system. By identifying both the costs and benefits of these alternate perspectives, we are in a better position to choose how social discourse on inequality should be framed. The psychological discomfort associated with the realization of ingroup privilege may be a price willingly paid if it leads to a society that is more consistent with the values of equity and egalitarianism that are at the heart of our cultural identity.

APPENDIX

Measures of Collective Guilt, Racism, Belief in White Privilege, and White Identification

Collective Guilt (Experiments 1 and 2)

I feel guilty about White Americans' harmful actions toward Black Americans.

I feel guilty about the negative things other White Americans have done to Black Americans.

I believe I should help repair the damage caused to Black Americans by my racial group.

I feel regret for some of the things White Americans have done to Black Americans.

I can easily feel guilty for bad outcomes brought about by members of my racial group.

Sometimes I feel guilty because of the benefits that being White brings to me.^a

I would feel guilty if I thought that I had behaved in a racially discriminatory fashion.^a

Racism (Experiment 1)

On average, people in our society treat White Americans and Black Americans equally.

Society has reached a point where Black and White Americans have equal opportunities for achievement.

It is easy to understand the anger of Black Americans in America. (reverse coded)

It is easy to see why Black groups are still concerned about societal limitations of Black Americans' opportunities. (reverse coded)

The government and news media tend to pay too much concern about the treatment of Black Americans.

Racism (Experiment 2)

Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.

Over the past few years Blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.

Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.

Blacks should not push themselves where they are not wanted.

It is easy to understand the anger of Black people in America. (reverse coded)

Belief in White Privilege (Experiment 2)

I feel that because I am White I have important advantages in life over Blacks.

In general it is much easier to be White in America than to be Black.

White Identification (Experiment 2)

I am comfortable being White.

I believe that White people have a lot to be proud of.

Being White is an important part of who I am.

I feel good about being White.

Being White just feels natural to me.

I am not embarrassed to admit that I am White.

I identify with other Whites.

a. Added to the index for Experiment 2 only.

NOTES

1. It should be noted that Swim and Miller (1999) found that agreement to statements about both White privilege and Black disadvantage was positively correlated with collective guilt. Iyer, Leach, and Crosby (2003) also demonstrated a positive relationship between agreement with statements about White privilege and collective guilt. When we analyzed our conditions separately, we found a marginally significant relationship between agreement and collective guilt among participants who evaluated Black disadvantage statements, $r(55) = .26$, $p = .058$, but no reliable relationship between these variables among those who rated White privilege statements, $r(55) = -.09$, $p = .495$.

We suspect that differences between our data and previous work may be due to differences in the types of agreement statements used.

The White privilege statements used in previous studies were of a very general nature (e.g., *White people have certain advantages that minorities do not have in this society*). Our statements, on the other hand, were specific to various domains (e.g., *White Americans can count on their race being a positive factor in employment interviews and job appraisals*). Participants with little knowledge or experience regarding some of these specific domains could express relatively low agreement on many statements while still believing that White privilege is prevalent.

2. Although agreement with specific statements of White privilege from Experiment 1 was not reliably related to collective guilt (see Note 1), agreement with the more general statements of White privilege used in Experiment 2 was positively correlated with collective guilt, $r(120) = .35$, $p < .001$. Thus, when we use statements regarding White privilege that are similar those used by Iyer et al. (2003) and Swim and Miller (1999), we replicate their findings.

3. Both our measure of modern racism (Experiment 2) and the measure of modern sexism that was adapted for measurement of racism (Experiment 1) are based on the notion that modern anti-Black attitudes have three primary components: denial of continuing discrimination, antagonism toward Blacks' demands for equal rights, and resentment over perceived Black preferential treatment (McConahay, 1986). One might wonder if we would have obtained similar results with less cognitive measures of racism. Although we did not include other racism measures in this study, Swim and Miller (1999) found that the relationship between White guilt and modern racism was similar in magnitude to the relationship between White guilt and scores on a Black feeling thermometer rating, a scale of derogatory beliefs, and a scale of affective reactions to Blacks. Because our research indicates that White guilt mediates the effect of framing on racism, we expect that our results would generalize to other measures of racism.

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