Perceptions of Confronters of Racist Remarks Towards Interracial Couples: The Effects of Confronter Race, Assertiveness, Explicit Bias, and Participant Race

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Perceptions of Confronters of Racist Remarks Towards Interracial Couples: The Effects of Confronter Race, Assertiveness, Explicit Bias, and Participant Race

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Psychological Sciences from The College of William and Mary

by

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Abstract

Confronting prejudicial comments has been shown to reduce bias towards minority groups (Czopp et al., 2006). Previous research has demonstrated that perceptions of those who confront prejudicial comments differ as a function of factors such as confronter race (Czopp & Monteith, 2006, Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; Dickter et al., 2012; Zou & Dickter, 2013). The current study extends previous research to examining perceptions of confronters who confront prejudice towards interracial couples on social media. We studied the effects of participant race, confronter race, assertiveness, and explicit bias on the perceptions of the confronter on social media. Black and White participants throughout the United States (n = 156) viewed a Twitter post from a Black-White interracial couple followed by both a racist comment and a confronting comment (varied by confronter race and assertiveness of the comment). Results indicated that confronters were perceived more positively when they used a low assertive approach and were rated more negatively by Black compared to White participants overall. Additionally, those who had more explicit biases towards outgroups and interracial couples perceived the confronter more negatively.

Keywords: confrontation of prejudice, explicit bias, prejudice, perceptions, race, interracial couples
Perceptions of Confronters of Racist Remarks Towards Interracial Couples: The Effects of Confronter Race, Assertiveness, Explicit Bias, and Participant Race

Racism and the denial of racism has increased significantly, causing people of color and other minority groups to feel unsafe (Dougherty, 2017). This increase shows that there is more work to do in order to reduce discrimination in this country, especially since President Trump has played a role in promoting racist ideology, particularly using social media (Ott, 2016; Shear, 2020). Most conversations regarding race on social media occur after large news events concerning intergroup relationships (i.e., cases of police brutality) and mainly deal with references to Blacks and Whites (Anderson, 2016). The conversations sometimes encompass prejudicial language which can have detrimental effects on the targeted groups and further prevent positive intergroup relationships.

These detrimental effects can be reduced and avoided through confronting the individuals who make these prejudicial comments. Confronting prejudicial remarks requires an individual to deliberately express disapproval of the prejudice another individual is exuding (Kaiser & Miller, 2004). Previous research indicates that confronting prejudice can increase the guilt in the racist commenter which in turn causes the prejudiced commenter to engage in self-criticism of their prejudicial behavior (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Confronting has also been shown to encourage egalitarian norms in bystanders (Czopp et al., 2006). Together, these findings show that further research examining the confrontation of prejudicial remarks is important to evoke social change by decreasing prejudice, creating social norms of nonprejudiced, and fostering egalitarian thoughts and behaviors. As confronting instances of prejudice can have consequences for the confronter (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter et al., 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; Zou & Dickter, 2013), research also needs to investigate the perceptions of those who confront.
Perceptions of confronters

Previous research indicates that the race of the confronter can contribute to the perception others have toward the confronter. Most of the research concerning the perceptions of confronters of prejudice examines Blacks as the target group and Whites as the non-target group. These studies have been consistent in indicating that the confronters who identify as the majority, non-target group are more positively perceived than minority, target groups while minority groups tend to be looked down upon for confronting these injustices (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter et al., 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010, Zou & Dickter, 2013). When specifically looking at Blacks, members of the Black community who confronted were perceived more negatively in comparison to Whites regardless of the assertiveness of their remark and were criticized based on stereotypical attitudes (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Black confronters have also been negatively perceived as complainers and as hypersensitive when speaking out against this discrimination (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Majority group confronters often do not suffer from the same negative judgments as minority group confronters. Dickter et al. (2012) examined how non-target confronters were perceived in regard to respect, likability, and morality. Results showed that the White confronter was liked more when they did confront a highly offensive comment than when they did not, regardless of the confrontation style used (Dickter et al., 2012). Since negative perceptions of confronters tends to result in the lack of agreement with minority confronters and an overall less effective confrontation among minority confronters in comparison to majority confronters (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter et al., 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010), more research needs to be conducted examining more minority groups.

Bias Towards Interracial Couples
Even though this previous research has several implications and should continue to be studied, it is important to expand this to comments made about other racial/ethnic minority groups. Assessing other minority groups is important to find if these relationships are consistent among different communities. Furthermore, assessing more than one individual allows for understanding the perceptions of confronters of interracial relationships (i.e. romantic relationships and platonic friendships). This can extend research concerning ways individuals confront prejudice and bias towards interracial groups/communities which in turn can increase more positive intergroup interactions and perceptions of biracial and multiracial individuals. Specifically, there remains a lack of research on the perceptions of confronters who confront prejudice towards interracial couples. This is especially important due to consistent negative perceptions and discrimination towards interracial couples (Chuang et al., 2020; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Murty & Roebuck, 2015; Skinner & Hudac, 2017; Skinner & Rae, 2018). In particular, history has shown that in the U.S. interracial marriages between Blacks and Whites have been highly controversial (Fu & Heaton, 2008), and it is important to examine ways to decrease negative consequences of those who confront biased remarks and behavior.

Interracial marriage, the marriage between two heterosexual individuals of different races, has been legal in all 50 U.S. states since 1967 but has not always been accepted by all members of society. When specifically looking at interracial marriage between African Americans and Caucasians in the U.S. from a historical standpoint, it is clear that racism and discrimination continues to affect couples made up of individuals from these two races (Murty & Roebuck, 2015; Skinner & Hudac, 2017; Skinner & Rae, 2018). Marriage between African
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Americans and Caucasians has been occurring less frequently and racial homogamy is increasing (Fu & Heaton, 2008). Racial homogamy refers to the marriage between ingroup members that commonly happens across all races. When studying data from 1980 to 2000, it was noted that there has been a “decline in white and black homogamy” and this pairing is seen less than pairings between Caucasians and other races (Fu & Heaton, 2008, p. 751). One possible contributor to this pattern is that interracial marriage between these two races is being less tolerated in comparison to same-race marriage. The study showcases that there are still low rates of interracial marriage, and the authors argue that pairings between African Americans and Caucasians are seen as disgusting and unacceptable by some people (Fu & Heaton, 2008). More recent research by Murty and Roebuck (2015) demonstrated that even though students approve of interracial dating, they do not necessarily approve of interracial marriage. Similarly, Skinner and Hudac (2017) conducted a study to assess the overall bias individuals have towards interracial couples in relation to disgust. They were able to discover that disgust leads to dehumanization, and many people have dehumanized interracial couples to the point of processing them similar to the processing of non-human animals. Later, Skinner and Rae (2018) were able to identify that people do have a large amount of explicit (deliberate and conscious attitudes) as well as implicit (hidden and unconscious) bias towards Black-White interracial couples. Importantly, it was noted that there is a difference in the bias exhibited when taking a closer look at gender pairings. That is, Black women demonstrated a higher amount of bias due to feeling that the eligible Black men were being lost in the marriage market, and Blacks overall had shown more bias towards interracial marriage in comparison to the White sample (Crowder & Tolnay, 2000). Research examining the effects of confronting prejudice against interracial couples has not yet been conducted, although it is clear that confronting has the ability to help
reduce racism, discrimination, and stereotyping towards target groups (Czopp et al., 2006). Conducting a study about the perceptions of the confronter who confronts this racism and discrimination may inform ways to reduce these biases.

**Presence of Racism on Social Media**

Social media has been utilized as a source where millions of people express their thoughts and opinions which many times includes racist and discriminatory remarks towards others. There has been a significant increase in the amount of discussion concerning race on Twitter after large news events; specifically, the prevalence of the tweets involving race mostly deals with references to Whites and Blacks (Anderson, 2016). This has increased ever since the presence and denial of racism has increased substantially since the 2016 Presidential election when Donald Trump took the presidency (Dougherty, 2017; Ott, 2016; Sharma & Brooker, 2016; Shear, 2020). President Trump’s Twitter account alone has had several posts of racist content causing different controversial issues (Shear, 2020). For example, he reposted a racist video in support of White supremacy and tweeted, “When the looting starts, the shooting starts, after the murder of George Floyd.” The presence of racism on social media has detrimentally increased and further divided majority and minority groups, especially since the U.S. has had a president who is comfortable with casually tweeting racist content (Ott, 2016; Shear, 2020). Due to his stature, it is evident as to why minority groups feel unsafe (Doughtery, 2017) and why it is important to examine whether or not people will disapprove of those who confront racism.

Discovering ways to combat this on social media is important because there is a lack of research concerning the best ways to address prejudice on social media with regard to the new discourse of racism. Cisneros and Nakayama (2015) found that there are two discourses of racism on Twitter such that some racist remarks continue using older discourse through emphasizing
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exclusion and differences between majority and minority groups. New discourse on social media involves racism through “color-blindness” through overlooking racist content, further continuing the presence of racism (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015). This is even furthered by the usage of certain hashtags (i.e., #notracist) that allow individuals to make racist remarks while denying that they are in fact being racist avoiding criticism from others (Shear, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to examine the best ways to confront this racism on social media in order to preserve minority groups who use these networks and hold individuals accountable for their prejudiced behavior promoting healthier intergroup relationships online.

Present study

When discussing perceptions of the confronter, previous research has been conducted when looking at Blacks as the target, but none has been conducted on looking at Black-White interracial couples as the target and using social media as the platform. Social media is one way of producing contact with different groups with whom individuals may not have contact, exposure, or experience. With discrimination toward Black-White interracial couples being prevalent, it is important to examine the perceptions of those who confront this discrimination and how this may specifically be unique to racist commentary on social media. This study does so by further examining the style of confrontation, the race of the confronter, and seeing if predetermined biases towards interracial couples plays a role.

The goal of the present study was to examine the perceptions of individuals who confronted racist comments made about an interracial couple on Twitter. In the current study, adult participants from the United States viewed Twitter posts that contained a racist comment followed by a confronting comment by another person. The race (White) and gender (male) of the racist commenter was kept constant, similar to a previous study, that also indicated males are
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more likely to make racist comments than females (Dickter & Newton, 2013). Additionally, gender of the confronter was held constant with a woman always confronting since women are more likely to confront, especially Black women (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Participants then rated the participant on both positive and negative dependent variables. As an extension of previous research, we asked participants if they found the confronter racist, prejudiced, friendly, rude, offensive, or outspoken (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Assessing if the participant feels the confronter is racist, prejudiced, rude, and offensive is essential since it may serve as a reflection of their own biases towards the confronter as well as the interracial couple. On the other hand, asking about friendliness and outspokenness provides insight on the positive perceptions the individual has towards the confronter. Further, we ask about perceptions of morality and respect as an extension of the literature since this allow us to test the participants’ judgement of the confronters character and principles (Dickter et al., 2012). Lastly, we examined the participants agreeance with the confronter and if they find the confronter to be hypersensitive since confronters, specifically minorities, have been noted as complainers and overtly sensitive (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; Xie, 2019). Furthermore, we wanted to see how these descriptors are influenced by several factors.

First, we investigated whether the race of the confronter affected perceptions. To test this, confronter race was manipulated with the race being either Black or White. Race plays a significant role on whether or not the confronter will be perceived in a positive manner in which Black confronters tend be seen as complaining and typically in an overall negative way (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter et al., 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Overall, it was expected that the White confronters would be perceived more positively than Black confronters.
The secondary goal of the present study was to examine whether the assertiveness of the comment would affect perceptions of the confronter. Previous research has pointed out differences between low and high threat/assertive styles of confrontation and has reported that taking a high threat/assertive approach can potentially result in negative perceptions of the confronter (Czopp et al., 2006). In contrast, more recent research indicates the confronter was perceived more positively when the racist comment was highly offensive regardless of assertiveness (Dickter et al., 2012). In the current study, we aimed to examine whether the assertiveness of the confrontation would affect perceptions of the confronter.

The tertiary goal of the current study was to understand the role of participant race in the perceptions of the confronter considering both Whites and Blacks demonstrate both implicit and explicit biases towards interracial couples (Chuang, 2020; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Skinner & Hudac, 2017; Skinner & Rae, 2018). Whites have had a tendency to have more implicit biases than explicit biases, specifically White women have tended to disapprove of Black-White interracial marriage more than White men (Herman & Campbell, 2012; Skinner & Hudac, 2017). Notably, other research has noted that Blacks showed more biases than Whites, in particular Black women showed more bias than White women which can be further attributed to Black women having negative feelings towards the decrease in Black men who are eligible for marriage (Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Skinner & Rae, 2018). Therefore, this study did not make any predictions about participant race.

The fourth goal of the present study was to examine whether those with more prejudice would have more negative perceptions of the confronter. Rasinski and Czopp (2010) demonstrated that high-prejudiced participants perceived the confronter more negatively in comparison to low-prejudiced participants. There is a lack of research on whether this
relationship occurs when the target group is an interracial couple. Therefore, we hypothesized that participants with more negative explicit attitudes towards interracial couples and more negative attitudes of the outgroup would have more negative perceptions of the confronter.

The final goal of the current study was to examine how confronter race, assertiveness, and participant race interact with each other influencing the perception of the confronter. First, we hypothesized that Black confronters would be perceived more negatively regardless of the assertiveness of the comment. This is important to explore if Black confronters are being viewed more negatively or not based upon their confrontation style. This would have implications of whether or not minority confronters may suffer negative consequences of confronting just because they choose to confront. Second, we expected that both Black and White participants will have negative perceptions of the confronter regardless of assertiveness since both Blacks and Whites have been known to have biases towards interracial couples (Chuang, 2020; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Skinner & Hudac, 2017; Skinner & Rae, 2018). Lastly, we did not make a prior hypothesis concerning the participant race * confronter race * assertiveness interaction since it is a complex model with varying factors. Overall, it is important to study these interactions to examine which identities are perceived the most positively which in turn can help inform the literature on confronting prejudice.

Methods

Participants

There was a total of 156 participants who completed the tasks through Amazon Mechanical Turk, which is a service for institutions to collect participant data with a potentially diverse sample. Most of the participants were between the ages of 18-24 (61.7%) and 25-34 (20.1%) ($M = 2.43, SE = .76$); 16 participants did not state their age. Age was coded as such: 1=
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18-24, 2= 25-34, 3= 35-44, 4= 45-54, 5= 55-64, 6= 65 and older. The gender composition was 103 males (66.9%), 50 females (32.5%), and 1 transgender female (0.6%). The racial composition was 88 Non-Hispanic, Whites (57.1%) and 66 Blacks (42.9%), and 56.5% of participants have had previous experience in interracial relationships.

**Design and Procedures**

The study had a 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) x 2 (Confronter Race: White, Black) x 2 (Confrontation Assertiveness: low, high) between-subjects factorial design. Participants were told that they would be answering a survey about their opinions. They then moved on to give informed consent and answered some demographic questions. Next, they read a Twitter post of an interracial couple. The last names of the interracial couple (Anderson), racist commenter (Smith), and confronters (Black- Jones, White- Clark) used in the Twitter post were chosen using common last names in the US (Mongabay, n.d.). The first names of the racist commenter (Connor) and confronters (Black- Ebony, White- Holly) were taken from another site that displayed the most common White and Black female names in the US (ABC News, 2015). The entire image provided included the original post made by the interracial couple, the racist comment, and the confronting comment (Appendices A-D). The original post and racist comment, including race of the commenter, were consistent among all conditions and appeared as such:

Original Post: "We just want to take the time to say thank you to all of those who have been supporting our cause over the years. We appreciate all of your love, support, and dedication that you have had towards making the world a better place. You mean so much to us and we will forever be grateful for the impact you have helped the Anderson family have. We love you! #thankyou #goals".
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Racist Comment: What do you have against dating your own race? I know your parents are disappointed in you, we already have affirmative action, we don't have to marry them too.

On the other hand, both the race (White/Black) and assertiveness (low/high) were manipulated among the confronting comments while the gender (female) remained constant. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. Quotas were used during data collection to ensure that neither participant races dominated the results per condition. The low assertive comment stated: “Honestly we should just be nicer to each other. I think they are a beautiful couple and have done alot for their community #peace”. The high assertive comment stated: “I ABSOLUTELY HATE PEOPLE LIKE YOU! You don't have to be with a person of color but don't DEMEAN those who are. Im sick of people attacking interracial couples!”

A pilot test was conducted in order to choose the best high assertive, low assertive, racist, and original comments out of multiple choices. The racial composition of participants in the pilot test was as follows: Non-Hispanic, White (33.33%), Black (52.38%), Hispanic (4.76%), Asian (4.76%), and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (4.76%). Response choices for credibility, assertiveness, and racist ranged from 1=extremely incredible (unbelievable), inoffensive, unassertive to 7=extremely credible (believable), offensive, assertive. The high assertive comment was the highest in both assertiveness ($M = 6.71, SE = 0.45$) and credibility ($M = 6.00, SE = 1.45$). In contrast, the lowest assertive comment had the lowest assertiveness ($M = 4.00, SE = 1.35$) and highest credibility ($M = 5.90, SE = 1.48$). Also, the original comment was based solely on credibility ($M = 5.86, SE = 1.70$) while the racist comment was chosen based on offensiveness ($M = 6.33, SE = 1.32$) and credibility ($M = 5.10, SE = 2.07$).
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Next, participants completed a series of questionnaires assessing their perceptions of the confronter in the social media posts using Likert scales. They also completed another set of questions concerning the next steps the participant would have taken on social media (i.e., report the post/comment). Lastly, they completed the Attitude Towards Blacks scale (Brigham, 1993) or Attitude Towards White Scale (Brigham, 1993), and a previous scale used to assess explicit attitudes of interracial couples (Skinner & Rae, 2018), as described below. Then, participants were compensated with money for participating.

Measures

Perceptions of Confronter Likert Scales

Participants were randomly placed into the conditions and rated the White Confronter or Black confronter using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = very much. They assessed the dependent variables, including positive (outspoken, agreement with confronter, friendly, respect, morality) and negative (rude, offensive, racist, prejudiced, sensitive) words. All of the dependent variables were examined as individual outcomes.

Social Media Perceptions

The 19-item questionnaire consisted of short questions including liking the comment, retweeting the comment, adding the commenter as a friend, reporting them, and confronting them using 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely. They were asked in regard to the interracial couple (α = .792), racist commenter (α = .806), the White confronter (α = .783), and the Black confronter (α = .693). High scores indicate favorability of the interracial couples and confronting commenters, while high scores indicated disapproval of the racist commenter. Items concerning reporting or confronting the comment were reverse coded for analyses of the interracial couple and confronters. On the other hand, items concerning liking,
retweeting, or adding the individual as a friend were reverse coded for analyses of the racist commenter.

*Attitudes Towards Blacks (Brigham, 1993)*

This 20-item questionnaire assesses prejudice towards Blacks using concise sentences (e.g., ‘I would rather not have blacks live in the same apartment building I live in.’) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). This was only administered to the White participants within the sample. Reliability analysis was conducted among the sample (α=.513). Scores were standardized in order to compare with the ATW (higher scores indicate more positive attitudes).

*Attitudes Towards Whites (Brigham, 1993)*

This 20-item questionnaire assesses prejudice towards Whites using concise sentences (e.g., ‘Most Whites can’t be trusted to deal honestly with Blacks.’) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*). This was only administered to the Black participants within the sample. Reliability analysis was conducted among the sample (α=.879). Scores were standardized in order to compare with the ATB (higher scores indicate more positive attitudes).

*Measures of Explicit Attitudes Toward Interracial Couples & Experience (Skinner & Rae, 2018)*

This 3-item scale examines the explicit attitudes participants have towards Black-White interracial couples. The first question asked: Which statement best describes your feelings about same race (both partners are White or both partners Black) and interracial (one partner is White and the other is Black) couples? Participants responded on a 7-point scale (1 = *I strongly prefer same-race couples to interracial couples* to 7 = *I strongly prefer interracial couples to same-race couples*). The last two items assessed feelings towards same-race couples in comparison to
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interracial couples (i.e. ‘How warm or cold do you feel towards Black-White interracial couples?’) using 11-point scales (1= extremely warm to 11= extremely cold). Reliability analysis was conducted among the sample (α=.803). They were standardized with high scores indicating preference for interracial couples, since the item with high scores that indicated preference for same-race couples was reverse coded. For purpose of demographics, we also used the single item (‘Have you ever had a romantic or sexual encounter with someone outside your racial or ethnic group?’) to indicate the portion of the same with previous experience in interracial relationships.

Results

Data Reduction and Overview of Analyses

Only data from participants passing the manipulation checks were included in the analyses; this required knowing the racial composition of the interracial couple in the original Twitter post and the races of both confronters (White or Black). Only 156 (82.5%) participants passed them while 32 participants (17.5%) failed and were then excluded from all analyses. The data examining perceptions of the confronter were analyzed using 2 (Participant Race: White, Black) x 2 (Confronter Race: White, Black) x 2 (Confrontation Assertiveness: low, high) analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) with the first three factors as between-subjects variables and the average explicit attitudes toward interracial couples (Skinner & Rae, 2018) and standardized values of both ATB (Brigham, 1993) and ATW (Brigham, 1993) as covariates. Each dependent measure was tested individually with the ANCOVA. The independent variables were coded as such: participant race (1=White, 2=Black), confronter race (1=White, 2=Black), and assertiveness (1=Low, 2=High). The ATB and ATW were standardized while the explicit attitudes measure (Skinner & Rae, 2018) was averaged in order to serve as covariates of each model. Significant and marginally significant main effects and interactions are reported below.
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Perceptions of the Confronter

Friendly

There was a main effect of assertiveness, $F(1, 152) = 6.03, p = .015, \eta_p^2 = .041$, such that high assertive confronters ($M = 5.03, SE = .17$) were perceived as less friendly than low assertive confronters ($M = 5.69, SE = .17$). This main effect was qualified by a significant confronter race x assertiveness interaction, $F(1, 152) = 4.29, p = .040, \eta_p^2 = .029$, as seen in table 1. This interaction was broken down by assertiveness. For the White confronters there was no effect of assertiveness. For the Black confronters, those who were higher in assertiveness ($M = 4.90, SE = .25$) were perceived as less friendly than those lower in assertiveness ($M = 5.86, SE = .21$). As seen in table 1, there was a significant participant race x assertiveness interaction, $F(1, 152) = 6.44, p = .012, \eta_p^2 = .043$. This interaction was broken down by assertiveness. For the Black participants there was no effect of assertiveness. For the White participants, they perceived the high assertive confronter ($M = 4.65, SE = .22$) as less friendly than the low assertive confronter ($M = 5.73, SE = .22$).

Table 1
Perception of the Confronter - Friendliness

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*p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001

Figure 1

Confronters’ Ratings Based on Friendliness
There was a marginally significant main effect of explicit attitudes of interracial couples, $F(1, 152) = 3.49, p = .064, \eta_p^2 = .024$, where those who preferred interracial couples agreed more with the confronter, $r = .19$. There was another marginally significant main effect of the attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 3.28, p = .072, \eta_p^2 = .023$, where those who had less prejudice
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agreed more with the confronter, \( r = .19 \). There was a significant participant race x confronter race x assertiveness interaction, \( F(1, 152) = 4.23, p = .042, \eta^2_p = .029 \), as seen in Table 2. When broken down by confronter race, there was no assertiveness x participant race interaction for Black confronters. However, for White confronters there was a marginal assertiveness x participant race interaction, \( F(1, 71) = 3.14, p = .081, \eta^2_p = .045 \). For Black participants there was no effect of assertiveness but for White participants, they agreed more with the low assertive (\( M = 6.27, SE = .30 \)) than the high assertive confronter (\( M = 5.57, SE = .31 \)).

Table 2

Perception of the Confronter- Agreeance

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<td>3.49</td>
<td>.064</td>
<td>.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.023</td>
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<td>Participant Race</td>
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<td>.49</td>
<td>.487</td>
<td>.003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confronter Race</td>
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<td>.14</td>
<td>.711</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.53</td>
<td>.467</td>
<td>.004</td>
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<td>.002</td>
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<td>4.23</td>
<td>.042*</td>
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</table>

* \( p < .05 \). ** \( p < .01 \). *** \( p < .001 \)

Figure 3

White Confronters’ Agreeance with the Confronter
Outspoken

There was a main effect of assertiveness, $F(1, 151) = 6.62, p = .011, \eta_p^2 = .045$, such that high assertive confronters ($M = 5.88, SE = .15$) were rated as more outspoken than low assertive confronters ($M = 5.35, SE = .15$).

Respect
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS

There was a significant main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 6.29, p = .013, \eta_p^2 = .042$, where those who had less prejudice respected the confronter more, $r = .23$.

**Moral**

There was a significant main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 151) = 7.10, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .048$, where those who had less prejudice perceived the confronter as more moral, $r = .24$.

**Rude**

As shown in Table 3, there was a main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 37.47, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .209$, such that people who had more prejudice rated the confronter as more rude, $r = .45$. There was also a main effect of participant race, $F(1, 152) = 9.82, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .065$, such that Black participants ($M = 3.62, SE = .25$) rated the confronter as more rude in comparison with the White participants ($M = 2.74, SE = .22$). There was a main effect of assertiveness, $F(1, 152) = 10.19, p = .002, \eta_p^2 = .067$, where high assertive confronters ($M = 3.61, SE = .23$) were rated as more rude than low assertive confronters ($M = 2.64, SE = .23$).

**Table 3**

Perception of the Confronter- Rude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>$F$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$\eta_p^2$</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>.989</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes Toward Blacks/Whites</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37.47</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.82</td>
<td>.002**</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronter Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.608</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>.002**</td>
<td>.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Confronter Race</td>
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<td>.44</td>
<td>.508</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>1.53</td>
<td>.219</td>
<td>.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confronter Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.02</td>
<td>.877</td>
<td>.000</td>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>152</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

**Offensive**
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS

As shown in Table 4, there was a main effect of explicit attitudes towards interracial couples, $F(1, 152) = 4.46, p = .036, \eta^2_p = .030$, such that participants who preferred same-race couples over interracial couples, $r = -.50$, rated the confronter as more offensive. There was a main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 54.43, p = .000, \eta^2_p = .277$, such that people who had more prejudice rated the confronter as more offensive, $r = .50$. There was also a main effect of participant race, $F(1, 152) = 10.73, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .070$, such that Black participants ($M = 3.58, SE = .25$) rated the confronter more offensive than the White participants ($M = 2.72, SE = .22$). There was a main effect of assertiveness, $F(1, 152) = 9.88, p = .002, \eta^2_p = .065$, where high assertive confronters ($M = 3.51, SE = .24$) were rated as more offensive than low assertive confronters ($M = 2.67, SE = .23$).

Table 4

Perception of the Confronter- Offensiveness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta^2_p$</th>
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</thead>
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<td>.036*</td>
<td>.030</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes Toward Blacks/Whites</td>
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<td>54.43</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.277</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Race</td>
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<td>10.73</td>
<td>.001***</td>
<td>.070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confronter Race</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.591</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.88</td>
<td>.002**</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Confronter Race</td>
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<td>1.35</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.009</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.684</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confronter Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.04</td>
<td>.838</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Confronter Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.05</td>
<td>.822</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>152</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Racist

As seen in Table 5, there was a main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 40.32, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .221$, such that people who had more prejudice rated the confronter as more racist, $r = -.45$. There was also a main effect of participant race, $F(1, 152) = 23.79, p = .000, \eta^2_p = .143$, such that Black participants ($M = 3.56, SE = .24$) rated the confronter as more racist than
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS

the White participants \((M = 2.25, SE = .21)\). There was also a main effect of assertiveness, \(F(1, 152) = 4.73, p = .031, \eta_p^2 = .032\), such that high assertive confronters \((M = 3.09, SE = .24)\) were rated as more racist than the low assertive confronters \((M = 2.54, SE = .23)\).

**Table 5**

*Perception of the Confronter - Racist*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
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<th>F</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(\eta_p^2)</th>
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<td>.016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes Toward Blacks/Whites</td>
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<td>40.32</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race</td>
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<td>23.79</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronter Race</td>
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<td>1.66</td>
<td>.200</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
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<td>4.73</td>
<td>.031*</td>
<td>.032</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Confronter Race</td>
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<td>1.35</td>
<td>.247</td>
<td>.009</td>
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<td>.20</td>
<td>.654</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronter Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>1.72</td>
<td>.192</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race * Confronter Race * Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>.875</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total* | 152 | \(\) | \(\) | \(\) |

\(\ast p < .05. \ast\ast p < .01. \ast\ast\ast p < .001\)

**Prejudiced**

As shown in Table 6, there was a main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, \(F(1, 152) = 42.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .228\), such that people higher in their own prejudice rated the confronter as less prejudiced, \(r = -.48\). There was also a main effect of participant race, \(F(1, 152) = 13.61, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .087\), such that Black participants \((M = 3.42, SE = .24)\) rated the confronter as more prejudiced than the White participants \((M = 2.41, SE = .20)\). There was a marginally significant main effect of assertiveness, \(F(1, 152) = 3.87, p = .051, \eta_p^2 = .027\), such that high assertive confronters \((M = 4.60, SE = .20)\) were perceived as more prejudiced than low assertive confronters \((M = 4.59, SE = .20)\).

**Table 6**

*Perception of the Confronter - Prejudiced*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>(p)</th>
<th>(\eta_p^2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Total | 152 | \(\) | \(\) | \(\) |
As seen in Table 7, there was a main effect of attitudes towards the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 15.49$, $p = .000$, $\eta_p^2 = .098$, such that people who were more prejudiced rated the confronter as more sensitive, $r = -.31$. There was also a main effect of participant race, $F(1, 152) = 5.14$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .035$, such that Black participants ($M = 4.92$, $SE = .21$) rated the confronter as more sensitive than the White participants ($M = 4.35$, $SE = .18$).

Table 7

Perception of the Confronter- Sensitive

<table>
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<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>$\eta_p^2$</th>
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<td>.288</td>
<td>.008</td>
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<td>15.49</td>
<td>.000***</td>
<td>.098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Race</td>
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<td>5.14</td>
<td>.025*</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confronter Race</td>
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<td>1.10</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.008</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
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<td>.01</td>
<td>.921</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
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<td>.001</td>
</tr>
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<td>.010</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.001</td>
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</table>

*p < .05. ** p < .01. ***p < .001

Exploratory Analyses

Overview
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS

A series of exploratory analyses were conducted to examine perceptions of the interracial couples on the social media post as well as the racist commenter. The data were analyzed using the same approach as the data above. Additionally, we examined participants’ likelihood of confronting.

Perception of Interracial Couple

There was a main effect of explicit attitudes towards interracial couples, $F(1, 152) = 4.39, p = .038, \eta_p^2 = .030$, where those who preferred same-race couples had more negative perceptions of the interracial couple, $r = .17$.

Perception of Racist Commenter

There was a main effect of attitudes toward the outgroup, $F(1, 152) = 50.21, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .261$, such that people higher in prejudice had more positive perceptions of the racist commenter, $r = .52$. Also, there was an effect of participant race, $F(1, 152) = 4.71, p = .032, \eta_p^2 = .032$, where White participants ($M = 5.21, SE = .13$) had more positive perceptions of the racist commenter in comparison to Black participants ($M = 4.84, SE = .15$).

Likelihood of Confronting

There was a main effect of participant race, $F(1, 151) = 7.05, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .048$, where Black participants ($M = 4.80, SE = .23$) were more likely to indicate that they would confront the racist commenter in comparison to White participants ($M = 3.40, SE = .20$).

Discussion

The primary hypothesis was partially supported with results demonstrating that confronter race influences the perception on the confronter depending on level of assertiveness. The finding suggests that Black confronters are perceived more negatively with regard to friendliness when they use a high assertive confrontation style while there was no effect seen in
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS

White confronters concerning friendliness. This is consistent with previous research that Black confronters are perceived negatively (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter et al., 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010; Zou & Dickter, 2013) but still lacks evidence supporting that Black confronters are seen more negatively while White confronters are seen more positively. Further, there was a lack of main effects of the dependent variables showing that confronter race did not affect the perceptions of the confronters.

The secondary hypothesis was not supported due to assertiveness having a significant effect on multiple dependent variables. Although previous research indicates that confronters are favored regardless of the level of assertiveness when a highly offensive comment is used (Dickter et al., 2012), the current findings indicate that assertiveness has a large impact on how the confronter is perceived similar to other previous research (Czopp et al., 2006). Confronters who used a high assertive approach were perceived as more rude, offensive, racist, and prejudiced; however, high assertive confronters were viewed as more outspoken than low assertive confronters. In addition, low assertive confronters were perceived as more friendly than high assertive confronters. Overall, confronters who used a high assertive approach were viewed more negatively than those who use low assertive approach. We expected this to be different since we used a highly offensive racist comment. Together, findings demonstrate that assertiveness outweighs the effect of confronter race and also plays a dominant role in perceptions of confronters. This can be attributed to Twitter serving as a platform where users can make comments while their race can remain ambiguous, but when race of the user is evident, we can see how individuals own biases are reflected in the perceptions of the confronter.

Even though there was no previous hypothesis stated regarding participant race, there were significant main effects and interactions in the results. Findings suggest that Black
participants rated the confronter as more rude, offensive, racist, prejudiced, and sensitive than White participants. Within the Black participant sample only 15% of the men had ever been in a romantic relationship with a White person while only 7.8% of the women had a prior relationship with a White person. The increased negative perceptions of the confronter may be attributed to the lack of experience in a Black-White romantic relationship and upset feeling towards decrease of eligible Black partners as romantic prospects (Chuang et al., 2020; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Skinner & Rae, 2018). This in turn may be affected by the individual’s prejudice towards both Whites and interracial couples as a whole.

The hypothesis that individuals’ prejudice strongly affects the perceptions of the confronter was supported. First, with high levels of prejudice towards the outgroup member, the confronter was perceived as more rude, offensive, racist, and sensitive. Additionally, those who were more prejudiced found the confronter less prejudiced and found the racist commenter favorable. On the other hand, those who demonstrated lower levels of prejudice judged the confronter as more moral and respected the confronter more. Second, higher negative explicit attitudes towards Black-White interracial couples caused participants to rate the confronter as more offensive and agreed with them less in comparison to individuals who had lower levels of prejudice towards interracial couples. This was also seen with the Twitter post where participants who had more positive explicit attitudes towards interracial couples found the interracial couple from the original Twitter post as favorable. Therefore, increasing positive perceptions of those who confront discrimination towards interracial couples begins at the level of prejudice the individual has toward the outgroup. Explicit attitudes towards interracial couples plays a significant in perceptions of the confronter. Findings suggest that the best way to improve these perceptions is through efforts to decrease negative explicit attitudes toward outgroup members,
such as increasing adolescents' exposure to positive, counterstereotypical outgroup exemplars (Gonzales et al., 2016; Plant et al., 2009). This could foster better intergroup relationships which in turn could decrease prejudice towards interracial couples.

Interactions were only indicated when examining friendliness and agreeance with the confronter as the dependent variables. First, findings indicated that Black confronters who used a higher assertive approach were viewed as less friendly than Black confronters with a low assertive approach. In addition, high assertive confronters were also perceived less friendly in comparison to low assertive confronters by White participants. Second, White participants agreed more when the White confronter used a low assertive approach extending previous findings that the majority, non-target confronter is perceived more positively when they confront (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Even though previous findings indicate that non-targets are viewed more positively regardless of assertiveness (Dickter et al., 2012), the current study indicates that using a low assertive approach is important for more positive perceptions. Future research should examine an effect for Black participants since it can give insight on Blacks perceptions of Whites when they confront. This may indicate that Blacks have an appreciation for when majority groups serve as allies through confronting prejudicial comments towards others. This can foster more positive interactions between Blacks and Whites which can in turn help reduce the biases towards Black-White interracial couples.

Lastly, the exploratory analyses we conducted provided interesting findings in regard to the perceptions of the Twitter users, including the interracial couple and racist commenter, and whether or not the individual would confront the racist comment. For interracial couples, participants had more positive perceptions of the interracial couple when they had the least amount of prejudice against them regardless of if the participant was Black or White. This
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extends previous findings of how both Blacks and Whites have prejudice towards interracial couples (Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Murty & Roebuck, 2015; Skinner & Hudac, 2017; Skinner & Rae, 2018). On the other hand, the racist commenter was liked more if the participant was higher in prejudice or identified as White. This indicates that prejudiced, White participants were more likely to befriend the commenter, like their comment, and/or retweet it along with being less likely to report the comment. The White participants’ favorability of the racist commenter can be attributed to color-blindness. Previous findings indicate that the new discourse of racism can reflect color-blindness which in this study may indicate that on social media Whites may have trouble with identifying racist comments if they are prone to feelings of color-blindness and overall denial of racism (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015; Dougherty, 2017; Zou & Dickter, 2013). Finally, we assessed the participants’ likelihood of confronting the racist commenter. We found that Blacks had overall more negative perceptions of the confronter and seemed to be more likely to confront the racist commenter. Whites may be less likely to confront than Blacks since they may lack the ability to differentiate when a comment is prejudice in itself (Zou & Dickter, 2013). This shows that there is a lack of ally confronting which can be detrimental since ally confronting has been seen to be effective and have fewer negative consequences (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Dickter et al., 2012; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). Further research should examine ways to increase the amount of White allies’ confrontation to avoid further harm to minority groups and help decrease racist comments through confronting them whether they are as highly offensive similar to the current study of using different syntax in order to make racist statements without the consequences of them (Shear, 2020).

Limitations
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS

Even though the current study provides several significant findings, there were several limitations to the study. First, this study has a large age range. Even though this increases generalizability due to having a diverse sample, most users of social media are typically younger and middle-aged adults but not the elderly. Future research of a sample of undergraduate students may provide a more sufficient sample. Second, the sample size is considerably small when accounting for the number of between-subjects conditions of the study due to failing of the manipulation checks. In addition, the sample is also predominately male and does not account fully for where the bias in Black samples mainly comes from: Black women (Chuang et al., 2020; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Herman & Campbell, 2012). Lastly, the current study does not account for color-blindness. Several studies have shown that color-blindness plays a large role in perceptions of confronters of prejudice and has even play a larger role than prejudice towards the outgroup (Zou & Dickter, 2013). Future research has the ability to account for all of these limitations and should be conducted to extend the presented findings.

Directions for Future Studies

Future studies should assess perceptions of the confronters with biracial/multiracial individuals who identify as Black and White. Previous research has indicated even though multiracial individuals tend to favor interracial couples, there is a possibility that multiracial individuals who self-identify as Black and not biracial/multiracial may have increased bias towards interracial couples (Skinner & Rae, 2018). There is a lack of research concerning this bias, but it is important to examine multiracial perceptions of confronters and whether or not this may be influenced by their own biases, specifically with the outgroup of their self-identified race. Additionally, future research should take an intersectional approach examine if there is a difference in the perceptions of Black male-White female marriages and Black female-White
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male marriages. Most previous research indicates that there is a preference for Black
female-White male marriages due to Black women’s feelings of competition for available Black
men (Chuang et al. 2020; Skinner & Rae, 2018). This would also allow for examining the
intersectionality of race and gender with perceptions of the confronter. Research has shown that
White women have more biases towards interracial marriage than White men (Herman &
Campbell, 2012) and this relationship is the same for Black men and Black women (Chuang et
al. 2020; Crowder & Tolnay, 2000; Skinner & Rae, 2018).

Conclusions

The current study has implications of the best ways to confront racist comments on social
media. Due to the present study showing that confrontation style outweighed confronter race, it
may be best that confronters choose a low assertive confrontation approach to avoid negative
consequences. Even though this is true, there is a great deal of evidence showing that minority
confronters tend to be perceived more poorly. Thus, promoting ally confronting from Whites and
low threat confronting is important to increase more positive outcomes from confronting
prejudice on Twitter and potentially other social media outlets.

Even further, these findings can help find ways to increase confrontations of prejudice
which can help decrease discrimination to both outgroup members and interracial couples on
social media. Even though not all participants indicated that they would be likely to confront the
racist commenter, it is important that witnessing confrontations of prejudice can influence an
individual to want to confront. This can encourage more nonprejudiced social norms where racist
remarks are less tolerated which can uplift the target and make them feel welcomed on these
social media networks. With this, it can also help with Whites identifying instances of racism on
social media. This study can inform interventions, especially in schools and the workplace,
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where individuals can learn to better identify racism of the new discourse to decrease color-blindness and the denial of racism (Cisneros & Nakayama, 2015; Dougherty, 2017; Zou & Dickter, 2013).
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References


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https://doi.org/10.1080/01973530903539754


https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.05.008
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS


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<td>We just want to take the time to say thank you to all of those who have been supporting our cause over the years. We appreciate all of your love, support, and dedication that you have had towards making the world a better place. You mean so much to us and we will forever be grateful for the impact you have helped the Anderson family have. We love you! #thankyou #goals</td>
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<td>What do you have against dating your own race? I know your parents are disappointed in you, we already have affirmative action, we don’t have to marry them too.</td>
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<td>Honestly we should just be nicer to each other. I think they are a beautiful couple and have done a lot for their community #peace</td>
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Appendix B

Twitter Post- Race (White)/ Assertiveness (High) Condition

We just want to take the time to say thank you to all of those who have been supporting our cause over the years. We appreciate all of your love, support, and dedication that you have had towards making the world a better place. You mean so much to us and we will forever be grateful for the impact you have helped the Anderson family have. We love you! #thankyou #goals

2:54 PM • 6/12/20 • Twitter for iPhone

20.5K Retweets 32.1K Likes

Connor Smith @Connor_Smith • 4d
Replying to @TheAndersons
What do you have against dating your own race? I know your parents are disappointed in you, we already have affirmative action, we don't have to marry them too.

20 7 35

Holly Clark @Holly_Clark • 4d
Replying to @TheAndersons and @Connor_Smith
I ABSOLUTELY HATE PEOPLE LIKE YOU! You don't have to be with a person of color but don't DEMEAN those who are. Im sick of people attacking interracial couples!

22 9 40
Appendix C

Twitter Post- Race (Black)/ Assertiveness (Low) Condition

Mr. & Mrs. Anderson
@TheAndersons

We just want to take the time to say thank you to all of those who have been supporting our cause over the years. We appreciate all of your love, support, and dedication that you have had towards making the world a better place. You mean so much to us and we will forever be grateful for the impact you have helped the Anderson family have. We love you!
#thankyou #goals

2:54 PM • 6/12/20 • Twitter for iPhone

20.5K Retweets  32.1K Likes

Connor Smith  @Connor_Smith  • 4d

Replying to @TheAndersons

What do you have against dating your own race? I know your parents are disappointed in you, we already have affirmative action, we don’t have to marry them too.

Ebony Jones  @Ebony_Jones  • 4d

Replying to @TheAndersons and @Connor_Smith

Honestly we should just be nicer to each other. I think they are a beautiful couple and have done alot for their community #peace

22  9  40
PERCEPTIONS OF CONFRONTERS
We just want to take the time to say thank you to all of those who have been supporting our cause over the years. We appreciate all of your love, support, and dedication that you have had towards making the world a better place. You mean so much to us and we will forever be grateful for the impact you have helped the Anderson family have. We love you! #thankyou #goals

2:54 PM  •  6/12/20  •  Twitter for iPhone

20.5K Retweets  32.1K Likes

Connor Smith  @Connor_Smith  •  4d
Replying to @TheAndersons
What do you have against dating your own race? I know your parents are disappointed in you, we already have affirmative action, we don’t have to marry them too.

Ebony Jones  @Ebony_Jones  •  4d
Replying to @TheAndersons and @Connor_Smith
I ABSOLUTELY HATE PEOPLE LIKE YOU! You don’t have to be with a person of color but don’t DEMEAN those who are. I’m sick of people attacking interracial couples!