Reports

Communicating about others: Motivations and consequences of race-based impressions

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HIGHLIGHTS

► Examined the effects of target race (Black/White) on impressions and communications.
► Internal motivation to respond without prejudice (IMS) moderated race effects.
► Those low in IMS showed evidence of race-based shifting standards in judgment and memory.
► Positive communications about Black targets predicted *increased* racism.

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

We examined how written communications about other people are affected by racial stereotypes and the race-relevant motivations communicators bring to the situation. Following exposure to a Black or White student's academic transcript, White communicators who were low (but not high) in the internal motivation to respond without prejudice (IMS) offered more favorable evaluations of Black than White students. Thus, those least concerned about expressing prejudice offered the most pro-Black communications, presumably because they use racial stereotypes and evaluated Blacks relative to lower standards. At the same time, they mis-remembered Black students as having lower GPAs than White students. Additionally, racial prejudice increased from pre- to post-test among those who communicated a positive impression of the Black student, compared to those who communicated a positive impression of a White student. Surface positivity of communications about Black students may paradoxically strengthen negative stereotypes and racial prejudice.

Introduction

When we talk about other people, we typically use subjective descriptors or adjectives such as "he's nice," "she's smart," "he's really good at basketball." Such language is slippery and subjective, and its meaning is not obvious without some knowledge of the comparative standard used to produce the judgment (see Dunning, 1993; Huttenlocher & Higgins, 1971). One relevant standard is the category membership – and associated stereotypes – of the target being described. For example, a claim that "she's tall" may be based on a comparison of a particular female target to a female standard; a claim that "he's good at math" may be based on comparison to a male standard. This is a key argument behind the shifting standards model, which suggests that within-category standards of judgment are used to evaluate targets on stereotype-relevant dimensions (Biernat, 2003; Biernat, Manis, & Nelson, 1991).

A consequence of using within-category judgment standards is that the same subjective language may be used to mean very different things about people. "Tall" for a woman is not the same thing as "tall" for a man, because men are stereotyped as being taller than women and therefore judged against a higher height standard. Similarly, "good athlete" may have a different meaning when it describes a White versus a Black target, because Blacks may be stereotyped as more athletic than Whites. A considerable body of research suggests that standard shifts of this sort occur, and result in similar subjective judgments of members of different groups (e.g., women and men judged equally "tall"). At the same time, *objective* or *common rule* judgments, not open to standard shifts, reveal straightforward evidence of stereotypes. For example, though women and men might be judged equally "tall," the men are nonetheless judged taller in feet and inches than women; though Blacks and White may be judged equally "athletic," Blacks are chosen as more athletic than Whites in direct comparisons (for reviews, see Biernat, 2003, 2012).

The use of stereotype-based standards is evident not only when we make judgments of others but when we *translate* descriptive language offered by third parties. For example, equivalent subjective

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language about female and male physics students in letters of recommendation was translated to indicate a lower objective level of performance for the female student (Biernat & Eidelman, 2007). The description "good parent" was translated to indicate greater objective involvement in childcare (e.g., more diapers changed) for women than for men (Kobrynowicz & Biernat, 1997). In both of these cases, the translations indicate that what it takes, objectively, to be considered a good physics student or a good parent depends on gender stereotypes: *For a woman*, a "good" academic record in physics is less good than that of a man's, and "good" parenting is evident in more plentiful childcare involvement than that of a man.

Recently, we documented a sequence of shifting standards effects in the communication and translation of race-based judgments (Collins, Biernat, & Eidelman, 2009). White respondents designated as "communicators" provided more favorable subjective descriptions of Black than White targets, based on an identical objective record (a college transcript). Although this pattern could also be driven by the desire to appear non-prejudiced, evidence supporting the shifting standards account could be gleaned from the fact that these communicators mis-remembered the Black student as having a lower GPA than the White student (Collins et al., 2009). Additionally, a separate set of "interpreters," who were told the student's race and assigned to read the written description of one communicator, "translated" that description to indicate a worse academic record when the student was Black than White.

The psychology of the communicators in this paradigm is worth exploring further. Having just offered positive descriptions of Black students – a counter-stereotyping or contrast effect – communicators' memories were nonetheless distorted in a stereotype-consistent direction (Collins et al., 2009). In the present research, we seek to examine this effect further, in two distinct ways. The first is to explicitly examine the role of motivations to respond without prejudice in this pattern (Plant & Devine, 1998). In our earlier research we documented that such motivations measured *after* communications were unrelated to target race and positivity of communications. But we were unable to examine whether pre-existing motivations play a predictive role. One might expect that it would be among those high in motivation to respond without prejudice that more favorable communications about Blacks than Whites will be observed — after all, those motivated to avoid prejudice might be most inclined to present a positive view of Black students.

But we suggest the converse, perhaps counterintuitive pattern: those *low* in motivation to respond without prejudice should be particularly prone to the use of racial stereotypes, and therefore to the application of race-based shifting standards. From past research, we know that one must hold stereotypes about a social group in order to shift standards. For example, Biernat and Manis (1994) found that only individuals who explicitly endorsed relevant stereotypes (e.g., that Blacks are more athletic than Whites) showed evidence of shifting standards in their judgments of individual targets. Thus, to the extent that low internal motivation to respond without prejudice is associated with stereotype endorsement, we predict that those *least* motivated to respond in a non-prejudiced way will show the *most* evidence of subjective positivity toward Black relative to White targets.

Our predictions are specific to the *internal* (not external) motivation to respond without prejudice (Plant & Devine, 1998), which involves concern with "living up to… personally important, self-defining egalitarian standards" (Plant, Devine, & Peruche, 2010, p. 1136). This internal commitment to non-prejudice should reduce the use of race in making evaluations; indeed, for such individuals, non-prejudice is well-rehearsed and relatively automatic (Amodio, Devine, & Harmon-Jones, 2008; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002). But those low in this internal motivation may be more likely to use race when considering a Black target, and therefore, paradoxically, may apply a within-race standard that results in more favorable subjective communications. At the same

time, their memory for the objective record of the Black student will be more negative than that of the White student.

We also consider the role of external motivation to respond without prejudice, which is a concern with "avoiding negative reactions from others that would result from an overt expression of prejudice" (Plant et al., 2010, p. 1136). One possibility is that those high in external motivation do indeed communicate more positive impressions of Black than White targets, *and* show a pro-Black memory bias as well — all to avoid any social sanction for overt and "detectable" negative reaction to a Black student (Plant and Devine, 2009). Such an outcome would clearly be distinct from the tendency to shift standards; our data will allow for a test of this possibility.

A second objective of the present research is to examine the *consequences* of communicating a positive impression of a Black student on communicators' racial attitudes. One possibility is that having described a Black student positively, communicators may experience a change in their racial attitudes in that positive direction. Perhaps through a self-persuasion process, positive feelings toward the Black student may extend to the group as a whole (Aronson, 1999). But we consider the alternative possibility that communicators, having reported more favorable subjective impressions of a Black than a White student, may leave the setting endorsing more negative racial attitudes. There are two reasons to suspect this possibility, particularly among those who are low in internal motivation to respond without prejudice. One is simply the activation of racial stereotypes, which gives rise to the use of race-based shifting standards that is evident in positive subjective communications accompanied by negative objective memory for GPA. Such activation may also strengthen negative racial beliefs as reflected in a racism measure. The other is that communicators may earn a kind of *legitimacy credit* (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) or *moral credential* (Monin & Miller, 2001) by speaking positively about a Black student. This credit then "allows" them to subsequently express more prejudice.

Thus we offer what may appear to be counterintuitive predictions about the role of motivation to respond without prejudice on communication positivity and the consequences of communication positivity for racial prejudice. We predict that it is those with *low* internal motivation to avoid prejudice who will use lower standards to evaluate the academic record of a Black versus White student, and will therefore offer the most pro-Black communications. That is, those who care the *least* about living up to egalitarian standards will appear to be *most* pro-Black. Others have documented that White participants – even those high in racism – may engage in behavior that superficially looks unbiased (e.g., Norton, Sommers, Vandello, & Darley, 2006; Shelton, Richeson, Salvatore, & Trawalter, 2005; Vanman, Paul, Ito, & Miller, 1997; Vorauer, Martens, & Sasaki, 2009). But the shifting standards model makes the unique prediction that this subjective positivity toward Blacks co-occurs with stereotype-consistent anti-Black memory errors (remembering the positively described Black student as having a worse GPA). Additionally, we predict that subjective positivity toward Blacks predicts *more negative* racial attitudes. Paradoxically then, those who communicate most positively about an individual Black student may leave the situation with the most negative racial attitudes.

Method

Participants were 90 undergraduates at the University of Kansas (54 women, 36 men; 89 White, 1 race unknown) who received course credit for their time. In an online pre-test survey completed several weeks before their participation in the main study, all students completed measures of pro-Black and anti-Black Attitudes (Katz & Hass, 1988) and the Internal and External Motivation to Respond without Prejudice Scales (IMS and EMS; Plant & Devine, 1998). Five participants did not complete the IMS/EMS scales and therefore could not be included in the analyses that follow, leaving $N = 85$.

For the main study, participants reported individually to a lab and were told they would play the role of a "communicator" who would examine the credentials of an undergraduate student (a transcript) and then communicate their impressions of the student to another participant "who will try to estimate some of the information on the [transcript] from the impressions you communicate…. Therefore we want you to try to be as accurate as possible" in the communications. Participants received the college transcript of a fellow KU student who was identified (via a coversheet) as a 21-year old Black or White male or female.[1] The transcript depicted a mediocre student, with an overall GPA of 2.83, and individual course grades ranging from "A" to "D". Participants were told to review the transcript as much as they liked, and then to write an open-ended passage about the student communicating their "impressions of the person as though they were telling another person about the student."

Participants first wrote an open-ended narrative about the student that were later submitted to text analysis software (Linguistic Inquiry Word Count; Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001), using the default 2007 dictionary. Our focus, as in Collins et al. (2009), was on the number of "positive emotion words" (e.g., excellent, good, awesome, terrific, wonderful, etc.) in these narratives.[2] Participants were then asked to rate the student on a series of 9 traits: *capable, competent, logical, lazy* (reversed), *motivated, hardworking, unskilled* (reversed), *leader, studious*, using 1–7 (*not at all true* to *very true*) subjective rating scales, as well as 14 statements, including *is a good student, tests well on verbal tasks, should put more effort into school* (reversed), *has good verbal skills, has good Math ACT scores, does well in math classes, does well in English classes, does not excel in math* (reversed), and *needs help in English* (reversed), using 1–7 (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) scales. Results are reported below for an index based on averaging across these 23 items, $\alpha = .91$.

Communicators were then given a surprise memory test for information about the target student, including the student's overall GPA, as well as hometown, number of credits to graduate, etc. Participants then completed the same measures of pro- and anti-Black attitudes that they had completed in the pre-test, along with demographic items.

Results

Communications

Participants communicated their impressions by providing an open-ended narrative and rating the target student on a series of attributes that would supposedly be conveyed to another participant. Each resulting measure – positive emotion words from the open-ended narratives, and subjective ratings – was regressed on target race (coded as $-1 =$ Black, $1 =$ White), pre-test internal motivation to respond without prejudice (IMS, centered), pre-test external motivation to respond without prejudice (EMS, centered), and all interactions.

For positive emotion words, only the main effect of race was significant, $B = -.30$, $SE = .15$, $t(76) = -2.01$, $p < .05$, replicating Collins et al. (2009). More positive emotion words were used in communications about Black than White students, but there was no moderation by IMS or EMS. In the case of subjective ratings, the effect of race depended on IMS scores, $B = .11$, $SE = .06$, $t(77) = 2.00$, $p < .05$. This interaction is depicted in Fig. 1 using values of IMS $+1$ and -1 SDs from the mean. Positivity in communications about Blacks relative to Whites occurred only at *low* levels of IMS, race simple slope $B = -0.22$, $SE = .09$, $t(77) = -2.38$, $p < .05$. At high levels of IMS, the race effect was nonsignificant, $p > .40$. Additionally, the effect of IMS was significant when the target was Black, $B = -.11$, $SE = .05$, $t(76) = -2.44$, $p < .02$, but not when the target was White, $p > .17$. EMS had no effects on communication positivity.

Memory

A few minutes after completing their communications, participants took a surprise memory test in which they were asked to recall the GPA of the target. We predicted that despite the positivity in communications about Black versus White targets, communicators would remember Black targets as having a lower GPA. GPA estimates were regressed on target race, pre-test IMS scores, pre-test EMS scores, and all interactions. Fig. 2 depicts the only significant finding: the Target Race × IMS interaction, $B = -.02$, $SE = .01$, $t(76) = -2.00$, $p < .05$. At low levels of IMS, Black students were remembered as having significantly *lower* GPAs than White students, $B = .05$, $SE = .02$, $t(76) = 2.33$, $p < .05$; at high levels of IMS, the race effect was nonsignificant, $p > .40$. Additionally, the effect of IMS was significant when the student was Black, $B = .03$, $SE = .01$, $t(76) = 2.23$, $p < .05$, but not when the student was White, $p > .25$. The target student's actual GPA was 2.83; as can be seen in the figure, only participants low in IMS who viewed the Black target misremembered his GPA as being notably lower. In short, those low in IMS communicated more positive impressions of the Black than the White target, but nonetheless remembered him as having a lower GPA. EMS played no role in these outcomes.

Post-communication racial attitudes

Did communication patterns affect participants' racial attitudes? We expected that those who communicated positively about Black targets might paradoxically show increased racism in a post-test. To test this prediction, we regressed post-test anti-Black attitudes on target race, communication positivity, IMS, EMS, and all possible interactions, while controlling for pre-test anti-Black attitudes. The
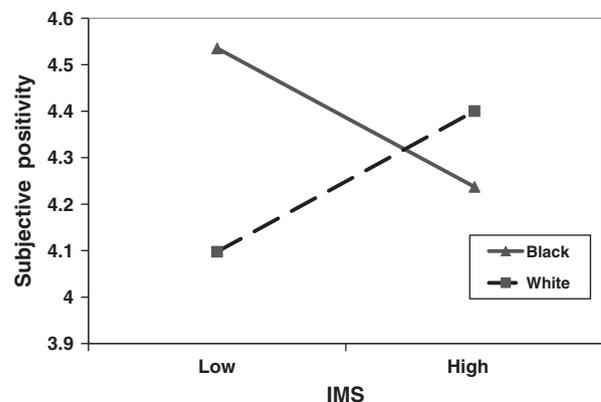
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[1] Target gender produced no significant main effects, and did not moderate any of the effects reported below. Furthermore, all interactions involving target race showed the same patterns within the male and female conditions separately, but given lower *n* were not always significant. Because our focus is on racial academic stereotypes, we collapse across this factor in the reported results.

[2] We also analyzed the text for language directly relevant to shifting standards, such as "for a Black student…", or "for someone from this background." There were no instances of such statements, and only 8 participants in the Black target condition mentioned the student's race (e.g., "he is a 22-year old Black male"), compared to two in the White condition. Only 4 of 85 participants used the "for a…" construction, all of which referenced college students (e.g., "for a soon-to-be graduating college student,…"). We did not use condition-blind coders to judge overall positivity, as past work in our lab has indicated that coder judgments of positivity relate more strongly to subjective ratings than to the counts of positive emotion words (in Biernat et al., 2012, relevant *r*s were .73 versus .12). The positive emotion word counts tap something distinct from direct target ratings.

Fig. 1. Subjective positivity of communications, by target race and IMS scores.
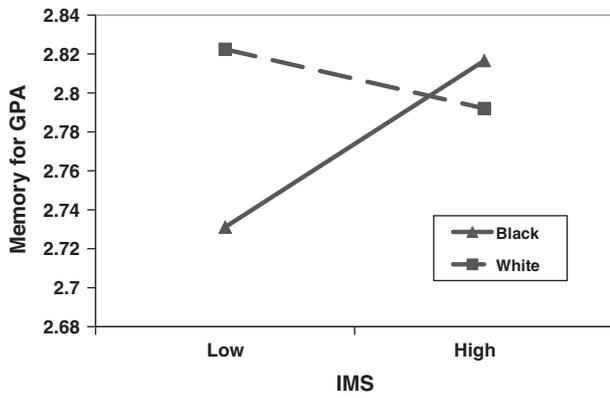
Fig. 2. Memory for student GPA, by target race and IMS scores.

Fig. 3. Post-test anti-Black attitudes, by target race, communication positivity, and IMS scores, controlling for pre-test anti-Black attitudes.

regression revealed a Target Race × Communication Positivity interaction, $B = -.32$, $SE = .10$, $t(60[3]) = 3.11$, $p < .01$, subsumed by the Target Race × IMS × Communication Positivity interaction, $B = .26$, $SE = .09$, $t(60) = 2.88$, $p < .01$.

This 3-way interaction was decomposed using utilities provided by Preacher, Curran, and Bauer (2006), and is depicted in Fig. 3 using levels of IMS −1 SD (top panel) and +1 SD (bottom panel) from the mean, and levels of communication positivity +1 and −1 SDs from the mean. At low levels of IMS (top panel), the simple effect of target race was significant when communications were negative, $B = .65$, $SE = .16$, $t(60) = 4.10$, and when communications were positive, $B = -.27$, $SE = .06$, $t(60) = -4.45$, $ps < .0001$. As predicted, participants expressed higher levels of post-test anti-Black attitudes after having communicated positively about a Black versus White student. The reverse was true following negative communications. Additionally, the interaction was driven by the fact that as communications about the *Black* target became more positive, anti-Black attitudes increased, $B = .78$, $SE = .22$, $t(60) = 3.61$, $p < .001$, and as communications about the *White* target became more positive, anti-Black attitudes decreased, $B = -.54$, $SE = .11$, $t(60) = 4.92$, $p < .0001$. At low levels of IMS (bottom panel), no simple effects were significant, all $ps > .26$.

Discussion

We often convey our impressions of others *to* others, both verbally (in conversation), and in writing (through letters, emails, etc.). In this study, we examined how written communications are affected by race of the target and the race-relevant motivations communicators bring to the situation. We also examined downstream consequences of this communication, asking whether favorability in communications about Black versus White targets might paradoxically leave communicators with more negative racial attitudes.

We suggest that the language of subjective communications reflects the use of within-group standards (Biernat, 2003). "Good" may mean different things depending on the category membership of the person to whom it is applied, and the same objective record (e.g., a college transcript) might be described more positively if it is evaluated with reference to a lower standard. Because of racial stereotypes about academic performance, we expected that Black students would be evaluated relative to lower academic standards than White students, and therefore that the same objective record would be described as "better" for Blacks than Whites.

We reported such a pattern in Collins et al. (2009), but sought to better understand and elaborate on the finding here by considering the role of motivations to respond without prejudice in the effect. On the surface, one might expect that increased positivity in communications about Black students might be motivated by concerns about appearing prejudiced to others or the self. But we found no evidence that *external* motivation to respond without prejudice affected this pattern, suggesting that concern about social sanctions for expressing prejudice did not drive pro-Black subjective positivity. We also did not find this pattern among those high in *internal* motivation to respond without prejudice, suggesting that those who have internalized the goal of non-prejudice were able to avoid use of race as a judgment cue.

Instead, we hypothesized and found that positivity in subjective communications about Black relative to White students was observed only among those *low* in the *internal* motivation to respond without prejudice. This suggests that use of race and associated race-based standards is greater among those who have *not* internalized non-prejudice as a goal. As in much prior work, those low in IMS in our sample also reported the most negative explicit racial attitudes ($r = -.56$). But they communicated the most favorable impressions of Black students.[4] We suggest this occurred because the use of race also meant the use of within-race standards to produce subjective communications. Those low in IMS were particularly likely to use race – and the associated low expectations for Black students – as they formed and communicated impressions of Black targets.

Further evidence of this pattern lies in one additional finding: just minutes after communicating positive impression of Black students, those low in IMS remembered them as having lower GPAs than their White counterparts. A strong test of the shifting standards perspective would find that communication positivity and GPA memory were negatively correlated: to the extent that a communicator offered positive

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[3] Degrees of freedom are reduced here because pre-test anti-Black attitudes data were missing from 9 participants. The 3-way interaction between race, IMS, and communication positivity was marginally significant ($p < .07$) when pre-test prejudice levels were not controlled, thus allowing use of the full sample, and the data pattern was identical to that reported in the figure.
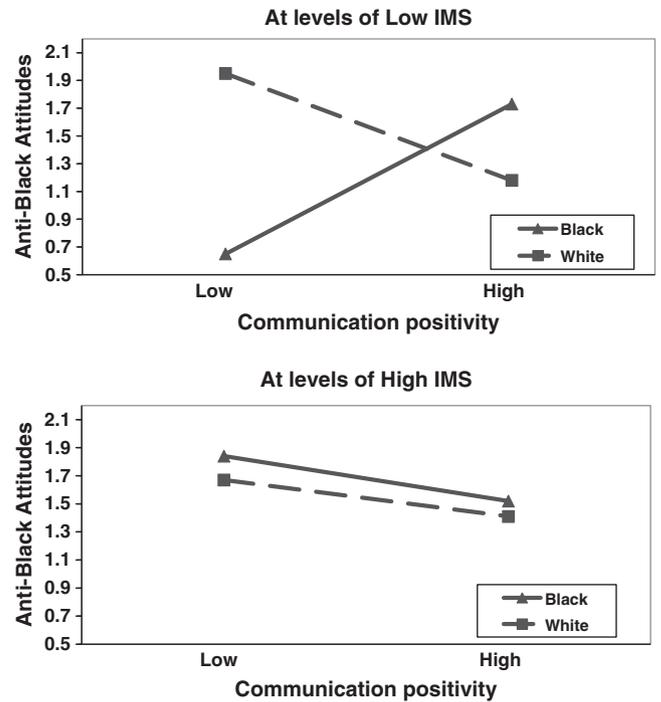
[4] The Race × IMS interaction was not due to anti-Black attitudes per se, as substituting pre-test prejudice for IMS scores in the regression equation produced null effects. Therefore the effects reported here are specific to IMS and not to its measured attitudinal correlate.

subjective ratings, their memory for GPA should be more negative. Additional analysis revealed that this correlation was indeed negative, but modest in size, $r = -.12$, ns. Nonetheless, the data are consistent with the idea that those low in IMS used race such that they communicated positively about, but reported negative memory for, Black targets.

Our overall finding that IMS moderated the effects of target race on communication and memory was not evident in our analysis of the count of positive emotion words in the open-ended narratives. Here, we replicated pro-Black pattern reported in Collins et al. (2009); both those high and low in IMS used more positive emotion words in communications about Black than White targets. We did not predict differences in the role of IMS depending on which dependent variable – positive emotion words versus subjecting ratings – was considered, and we can only speculate on the reasons for the difference. These two dependent variables were uncorrelated ($r = .02$ in the Black target condition, $r = .13$ in the White target condition, $ps > .35$), suggesting independence of these aspects of communications. This was also the case in an analysis of evaluations of Wall Street attorneys, where positive emotion words and numerical ratings were only modestly correlated, particularly in the case of female attorneys (Biernat, Tocci, & Williams, 2012). It is possible that compared to the explicit subjective attribute ratings, the narrative comments were more spontaneous and less subject to deliberative monitoring: communicators were unlikely to have tracked or kept count of their use of positive emotion words. This may have reduced the impact of any motivations to respond without prejudice. Revisiting Collins et al. (2009), we also note that the strongest evidence of pro-Black communication emerged in the analysis of open-ended narratives and not in the subjective ratings. Further research into the differences among forms of communication – including spoken in addition to written impressions – is warranted.

The general effectiveness of high IMS individuals in avoiding use of race in their communications (and in their memory for the student's GPA) is consistent with recent research suggesting successful self-regulation among these individuals. For example, Plant et al. (2010) found that high IMS White participants were more likely to report having positive interactions with a Black confederate than those low in IMS; they were more likely to report using approach strategies such as maintaining eye-contact, smiling, and sharing personal information, and engaged in longer interactions. In addition, Black confederates rated the interaction more positively when they interacted with a high IMS White participant compared to when they interacted with a low IMS participant. This research is consistent with the current findings in that it demonstrates that high IMS participants are skilled at avoiding the use of race when interacting with and forming impressions of others. Our findings suggest that the tendency to shift standards based on race may be overridden by those who have high internal motivation to response without prejudice.

In addition, Crosby and Monin (2007) investigated how IMS/EMS and target race affected the quality of advice a student receives from advisors. Participants were asked to give advice to a Black or White student who was planning to enroll in a challenging semester of course work. Those high in IMS were less likely to warn Black students that their academic plan was likely to be difficult compared to White students. There was no difference in advice given to Black or White students for participants low in IMS, and EMS had no effect. Crosby and Monin (2007) discuss this "failure to warn" Black students about the potential difficulty of their course plan as a consequence of high IMS participants' concern about appearing prejudiced.

At face value these data seem inconsistent with the findings of our study, in that race mattered for those high rather than low in IMS. However, there are a few important differences between our study, in which participants reviewed and formed impressions of a target student's past academic work, and Crosby and Monin's (2007) study, in which students' plans and aspirations were considered. First, communicating to another (presumably White) student is quite different from delivering academic advice directly to a Black student. Concerns about appearing

prejudiced may be more salient in the latter case. Furthermore, forming a positive impression of mediocre past work indicates low expectations, but giving advice to go ahead with a difficult academic plan demonstrates high expectations. Thus, those high in IMS – those most concerned about responding without prejudice – may avoid communicating low expectations of Black students (as was the case in the present study), but may take the opportunity to convey high expectations for Black students (as in Crosby & Monin, 2007). Or conversely, those low in IMS may willingly express low standards for Blacks, but not be inclined to express high expectations about future plans.

Our findings about communication and memory also speak to "shared reality" theory (Etcherhoff, Higgins, Kopietz, & Groll, 2008; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Higgins, 1999) and the "saying is believing" effect (Higgins, 1999; Higgins & Rholes, 1978). The latter refers to a highly replicated phenomenon, whereby communicators – who tend to tune their messages to audience characteristics – later show memory biases in the direction of their communications. For example, Higgins and Rholes (1978) found that descriptions of a target who could be described as either "persistent" or "stubborn" moved in the direction of audience inclinations (persistent if the audience liked the target; stubborn if not), and that later tests of communicator memory were consistent with this tone. Cognitive factors such as rehearsal may contribute to this effect, but it is also likely to be motivated by the desire for social validation, in which communicators create a "shared reality;" a consensual view that carries weight in memory processes.

Our results seem to suggest that communicators do not believe what they say; they communicate positively about Black students but remember them as objectively weaker students. Why isn't memory biased in the direction of their communications? First, of course, our participants have no interaction with an audience, and indeed know virtually nothing about the audience's characteristics (other than that s/he is a fellow student). This may make it difficult for any audience tuning to occur.

But we do acknowledge the likely role of shared cultural stereotypes as a backdrop to the communication process (see Biernat, 2012). Because stereotypes about race and academics are culturally shared, communicators may reference those stereotypes and use the standards they activate. In this sense, stereotypes may serve as a kind of "common ground" from which discussion can proceed (Clark, 1985). Through this joint referencing, communicators – and those who interpret what they say – may come to believe that a Black target who is described subjectively positively is nonetheless objectively less accomplished (Collins et al., 2009). In short, because communications are made with reference to shared cultural stereotypes and shifting standards, the surface content of communications is nonetheless understood to mean something different depending on the target's race. In other words, one could argue that communicators' GPA memory in our study was in fact consistent with their intended message — that the Black student was objectively less competent than the White student.

The issue of shared reality is also relevant to a second goal of this study, which was to examine the downstream consequences of using race-based standards in communication. We suggested that having communicated a favorable impression of a Black student, our White participants might paradoxically leave the situation with more negative racial attitudes. This prediction was based on the possible operation of two processes: high levels of stereotype activation, and the role of positive communication in providing a "moral credential" that legitimates later bias (Monin & Miller, 2001).

This pattern was supported among those low in IMS: post-test anti-Black attitudes were stronger among those who communicated positively about a Black versus White target, and anti-Black attitudes increased from pre- to post-test with increased positivity of subjective communications about Black targets. A comparison of both panels of Fig. 3 indicates that generally, positive communications

were accompanied by drops in anti-Black attitudes *except* in the critical case when low IMS individuals communicated about a Black target. For these participants, subjective positivity toward a Black target was belied by stronger anti-Black attitudes.

A full understanding of this effect will require additional research attention. But these data speak to the possibility that race-based communication may play a role in perpetuating stereotypes and in legitimating later bias. A number of researchers have found that when both stereotype-inconsistent and stereotype-consistent information is known about an individual or group, communication tends to focus on the stereotypic attributes (Clark & Kashima, 2007; Lyons & Kashima, 2003; Ruscher & Hammer, 2006). In serial-reproduction paradigms, where a story or image is described by one individual to another, who then conveys the story to another in a communication chain, content tends to move toward stereotypicality over time (Allport & Postman, 1947; Thompson, Judd, & Park, 2000). Stereotypes that persist over longer periods of time also tend to be high in "communicability;" they are the focus of people's conversations (Schaller, Conway, & Tanchuk, 2002).

This suggests that stereotypes may gain stability in part through communication processes; that the communication process may validate the "shared reality" of group stereotypes. In our research, communication positivity about Black students was quickly followed by anti-Black memory bias. This occurred only among those low in IMS, but it is consistent with the idea that despite the apparent positivity toward Blacks that was prompted by the use of race-based standards, communicators left the setting with a more stereotypical view of the target. And low IMS communicators' anti-Black bias was higher after having described a Black student positively, compared to when they described a White student positively. Whether communicators left the experiment *feeling* unprejudiced because of the positivity expressed toward Blacks, at the same time their expressed racial attitudes were more negative, is an important question for future research.

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