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The Effects of Race and Prejudice Level on the Influence of Famous Figures

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I am a junior at the University of Kentucky majoring in Psychology. I want to continue to be a part of the field of Psychology, so much so that I hope to be an established expert on the subject of Social Psychology one day. Goals that I have for my future entail attending graduate school and obtaining a Ph.D. in Social Psychology. Having done that, I hope to find a position as a professor, which would allow me to teach and to conduct research.

Thus far, my greatest involvement in Psychology has been through the Independent Study projects in which I have participated. During my sophomore year, I worked with my faculty mentor, Professor Saucier, in the spring semester and summer session. While working with him, I learned more about studies regarding prejudice and stereotyping, topics that have become the focus of my interests. He encouraged me to design and carry out a study. I later wrote this manuscript describing that study. As a junior, I presented a poster, for which I was first author, about the study at the Conference for the Society of Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), held in Los Angeles in February, 2003. “Posters at the Capitol,” an event at which undergraduates from Kentucky public universities presented posters describing research to legislators and other state officials, was held that same weekend. Therefore, another student presented a poster of my study there. I am planning to continue working with professor Saucier on a follow-up study, and I hope to be able to present a poster at the SPSP Conference again next year.

I have also participated in projects with Professor Monteith, who asked me to be a part of her research group during the fall semester of my junior year. One of the greatest benefits of participating in her research group was the opportunity to observe and talk with graduate students, which solidified my plans to attend graduate school myself. I have continued working with her this semester, and have made plans to do my Senior Thesis under her supervision. The work that I have done with Professors Saucier and Monteith has been a great experience, and it has given me a realistic view of what Social Psychological research entails.

While at the University of Kentucky I have been awarded several honors. I received the University of Kentucky Commonwealth Scholarship and I have been on the Dean’s List every semester. I was a member of the Alpha Lambda Delta Academic Honor Society, and I have been a member of the Academic Pi Society since Fall 2000. I received the Panhellenic Academic Excellence Award in Spring 2002. I am a member of Pi Beta Phi Women’s Fraternity. I was secretary of my pledge class, Historian, a representative for the Continuous Open Bidding Panel, and Assistant Membership Chair. I recently received the Outstanding Psychology Award for the 2002-2003 academic year.

The study Lindsay reports is well conceived and conducted, and has significant implications for work to combat real social problems. Specifically, Lindsay reports data that suggest counterintuitive interventions to reduce the expression of racial prejudice. In her submission, Lindsay describes how the approach to reduce the expression of prejudice has often been to expose individuals to others who act in a nonprejudiced manner. By observing a model of appropriate behavior, individuals often respond by reducing their own expressions of prejudice.

What Lindsay has shown, however, is that when exposed to extremely prejudiced (not nonprejudiced) models of one’s own racial ingroup, participants responded by expressing less prejudice themselves. In addition, participants reported significantly more guilt and distress when they were exposed to the highly prejudiced ingroup member. The implications are striking, showing that it may be effective to use models of inappropriate behavior to increase the expression of appropriate behavior. Lindsay is currently conducting studies to explore these findings, and has presented portions of her work at the meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology in Los Angeles and the Posters at the Capitol conference in Frankfort. A report of her work is under review by a social psychology journal.
The Effects of Race and Prejudice Level on the Influence of Famous Figures

An Independent Work in Psychology Project

Abstract

We hypothesized that varying the race and prejudice level of a famous individual would alter participants' reactions to the individual, evaluation of the individual, and participants' performance on numerous measures of racism. One hundred and fourteen White undergraduate students participated in a 2 x 2 (race of the famous individual: black or white x prejudice level of the individual's statement: prejudiced or non-prejudiced) independent groups factorial design. Our results showed that, for high-prejudiced famous figures, participants had more negative reactions toward the White individual than toward the Black, and felt significantly guiltier after reading the White individual's statement than after reading the Black's. Further, the participants expressed less prejudice after being exposed to the high-prejudiced White individual than when exposed to the low-prejudiced White individual, contrary to our predictions. These results demonstrate that exposure to extreme opinions of high-prejudiced in-group members may actually reduce the expression of racism.

I would like to thank Tamara Brown and Margo Monteith for their comments on earlier versions of this manuscript.

What is "racism" and what role does it play in today's society? Results from large-scale surveys indicate that Whites' self-reported racial attitudes toward Blacks have become substantially more positive during recent decades (Campbell, 1971; Greeley and Sheatsley, 1971; Kluegel and Smith, 1986; Taylor, Sheatsley, and Greeley, 1978; Schuman, Stech, Bobo, and Krysan, 1997). Also, modern legislation has made it illegal to discriminate against Blacks for group membership or job opportunities, and has created a politically correct movement in which obvious expressions of prejudice are generally unacceptable and favorable treatment toward minorities is fostered (Blanchard, Lilly, and Vaughn, 1991; D'Souza, 1991; Monteith, Deneen, and Tooman, 1996; Plant and Devine, 1998).

With this in mind, McConahay and Hough (1976) developed the social psychological theory of modern racism, which claims that there are two types of racism: an old-fashioned form of racism consisting of ideas prominent during the early 1900s and modern racism resulting from ideas embraced during the 1960s civil rights movement. Further, McConahay, Hardee, and Batts (1981) have shown that participants are able to recognize questions concerning old-fashioned racism as measuring prejudice and are able to adjust their responses when they wish to appear non-prejudiced; however, participants do not recognize questions concerning modern racism as measuring prejudice and answer them consistently, even when placed in a condition designed to generate less-prejudiced responses. (More recent findings by Fazio, Jackson, Dunton, and Williams (1995) suggest that the MRS is now a reactive measure, indicating that individuals have become increasingly able to inhibit the expression of socially unpalatable prejudice.) Such findings suggest that racism has not decreased as much as surveys and legislation might suggest, but rather people are able to disguise their prejudice when convenient and have found less overt, more socially acceptable, means of discriminating. If this is the case, then it is especially important to identify factors that affect people's willingness to express prejudice, if we hope to ascertain ways of reducing this expression.

Monteith, Deneen, and Tooman (1996) hypothesized that increasingly politically correct, non-prejudiced social norms are largely responsible for this change in Whites' expressed attitudes toward Blacks. They investigated how low- and high-prejudiced people might alter their expressions of prejudice when presented with a salient social norm. Experimenters approached participants and asked them to complete an opinion poll. They also asked another passerby (a confederate) to participate. Results indicated that when participants heard the confederate give non-prejudiced responses, they also gave non-prejudiced answers. When they heard the confederate give prejudiced responses, high- to moderately-prejudiced participants gave more prejudiced answers. However, the prejudiced confederate did not cause low-prejudiced participants to respond in a more prejudiced manner. In fact, low-prejudiced participants expressed less prejudice in their responses. Monteith et al. attributed these last results to the activation of personal norms (Schwartz 1973, 1977). In other words, when exposed to a prejudiced or non-prejudiced stimulus, participants must examine their personal norms in order to respond. This induced self-scrutiny makes them especially aware of their own opinions concerning prejudice and racism and, in turn, enables them to express their point of view more effectively than if they had been exposed to a less salient, less involved stimulus.
Similarly, Fazio and Hilden (2001) examined the effects of a salient social norm, a televised public service advertisement (PSA) regarding racial prejudice. The PSA lasted approximately 25 seconds and showed a Black male from the shoulders up. Text appeared slowly (here a slash indicates a line break): “Michael Conrad. / Male. Age 28. / Armed Robbery. / Assault and Battery. / Rape. / Murder. / Apprehended / August 1994 by / Police Lieutenant / Joseph Cruthers, / shown here.” Participants reported being surprised by the outcome of the PSA. As intended, most viewers wrongly assumed that the man shown was the criminal, not a police officer.

Fazio and Hilden found that those participants with positive racial attitudes, those highly concerned with acting prejudiced, and those with a high restraint to avoid dispute all reported feeling guilty after viewing the video. Fazio and Hilden attributed the feelings of guilt to numerous sources, including Higgins’ (1987) self-discrepancy theory. Because the PSA led low-prejudiced participants to react in a seemingly prejudiced manner, which violated their personal values and threatened the way in which they viewed themselves, they felt guilty because they did not react the way that they believed they should have. Similarly, guilt reported by participants highly concerned with acting prejudiced was attributed to them being disappointed in not living up to society’s egalitarian values, rather than disappointment in not acting according to their personal standards, as with the previous group of low-prejudiced participants.

As for participants with high restraint to avoid dispute, results indicating that they felt guilty after viewing the PSA supported previous research by Towles-Schwen and Fazio (2001), who studied the childhood experiences of people who had low internal motivation to behave unprejudiced and high external motivation to behave unprejudiced. They found that such participants generally had prejudiced parents and had few unpleasant experiences with Blacks. These participants did not necessarily have non-prejudiced attitudes, but they used non-prejudiced behavior as a means to avoid dispute, which resulted in agitation because of self-discrepancies between behavior and personal beliefs. As Fazio and Hilden later showed, it resulted in guilt as well.

After examining the emotional reactions of participants with different racial attitudes and motivations, Fazio and Hilden (2001) concluded that the PSA was effective in decreasing prejudiced behavior. As shown by Monteith (1993), feelings of guilt (brought on by the PSA) trigger self-regulatory mechanisms, which can lead to a reduction in prejudiced behavior. Research also shows that brief exposure to prejudiced or non-prejudiced norms affects one’s expression of prejudice, and long-term exposure to such norms could produce changes in one’s attitudes. According to self-perception processes, people want to act consistently with their personal norms. By causing someone to repeatedly behave non-prejudicially, it is possible that he or she will adopt a less-prejudiced personal belief system to avoid the stress caused by thinking one way and behaving another (Chaiken & Baldwin, 1981).

Our objective was different from those of the studies mentioned thus far. It was not to examine normative influences, but rather the fixed, extreme influence of a model person. In reality, it is difficult to measure the effect that the opinions of an average person have on participants, because there is no one average person. People’s mundane interactions vary from person to person; it may be difficult to create a realistic, typical situation. Our manipulation did not involve a complicated cover story, confederate, or social interaction. We were interested in the effect that absolute, highly salient opinions, given by well-known figures, either highly prejudiced or non-prejudiced, would have on participants’ expressions of racism, participants’ opinions of the given individual, and participants’ affect (emotional state).

We varied the race (Black or White) and prejudice level (prejudiced or non-prejudiced) of four famous individuals. In general, we expected the low-prejudiced conditions to elicit lower-prejudiced responses than the high-prejudiced conditions. Saucier and Cox (2002) showed that participant expression of racism changed as a function of the believed-to-be-average expression of racism. Similarly, we expected participants to adjust their responses according to model examples. Given an uncommonly low-prejudiced model, participants might feel obligated to live up to non-discriminatory expectations. Similarly, when presented with a high-prejudiced model, participants might relax their inhibitions and give more racist responses. Our reasoning was consistent with research by Crandall, Eshleman, and O’Brien (2002), who found that individuals’ reported prejudice levels toward social groups (varying from rapists to blind people) was highly positively correlated with the believed normative appropriateness of the prejudice. Such results support the notion that people express the degree of prejudice that they believe to be socially acceptable. Although the famous individuals that we selected do not represent the social norm, we believed that their opinions would affect the degree of prejudice that participants feel comfortable expressing.

We also predicted that participants presented with the high-prejudiced, Black, famous individual would express greater racism and give more negative
evaluations than participants in other conditions. Past research supports this prediction. Henderson-King and Nisbett (1996) found that when White participants observed or heard about negative behavior exhibited by a Black male, participants’ reports of corresponding, negative group-level stereotypes about Blacks became more salient and participants showed avoidance behavior. The negative behavior of one person affected the manner in which the entire group was perceived. Reading negative statements made by a Black male is likely to have the same effect. We expected that a more salient and participants showed avoidance negative group-level stereotypes about Blacks became the manner in which the entire group was perceived.

Methodology

Participants
One-hundred and fourteen White undergraduate students partially fulfilled a class research requirement by participating in the study (19 participants reported that they were not White; 11 Black, 8 “other”) and were, thus excluded, from the analyses. There were a total of 91 females, 22 males, and one participant who failed to report gender. The mean age was 21.40 years with a standard deviation of 3.75. One participant failed to report age.

Procedure and Materials
A 2 x 2 (famous figure prejudice level x famous figure race), independent groups factorial design was used. Questionnaire packets were randomly distributed such that an approximately equal number of participants were randomly assigned to each condition. Participants completed questionnaire packets in groups of about 15 individuals, and were asked to complete them silently and as honestly as possible. Each session lasted 20 to 25 minutes.

Participants were given one of four packets. The packets were identical except for the cover page, which differed depending on the condition. The cover page showed the picture and the quotation(s) of one of the four famous figures. The Black and White high-prejudiced individuals were Minister Louis Farrakhan and Former-Senator David Duke, respectively. The Black and White low-prejudiced individuals were Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. and Pope John Paul II, respectively. All the pictures were black and white and approximately the same size, and all four men were similar in stature. Each picture contained a heading with the person’s name and a short statement made by the individual:

Minister Louis Farrakhan
“White people are potential humans...they haven’t evolved yet”
—Philadelphia Inquirer, 3/18/00
According to a journalist’s account, “Farrakhan called ‘the white man’ the ‘anti-Christ’ to rousing applause.”
—Jackson, MS, 9/19/97, Clarion-Ledger, 9/21/97

Former Louisiana State Senator David Duke
“What we really want to do is to be left alone. We don’t want Negroes around. We don’t need Negroes around. We’re not asking – you know, we don’t want to have them, you know, for our culture. We simply want our own country and our own society. That’s in no way exploitive at all. We want our own society, our own nation...”
—Duke interview with doctoral student Evelyn Rich, who traveled around the country with Duke while conducting research for her dissertation on the KKK. March 1985

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
“I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed, ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal’... I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”
—Address given on August 28, 1963 at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

Pope John Paul II
The Holy See and the Catholic Church as a whole are deeply committed to co-operating with the State of Israel “in combating all forms of anti-Semitism and all kinds of racism and of religious intolerance, and in promoting mutual understanding among nations, tolerance among communities and respect for human life and dignity”
—Fundamental Agreement, article 2, 1

(In retrospect, a famous figure other than Pope John Paul II might have been chosen. Although Pope John Paul II is a low-prejudiced famous figure, his leadership in the Catholic community overshadows
his other attributes, and it is impossible to determine which attribute influenced participants' responses: his prejudice level or his religion. Also, the study was carried out during the year following the climax of the highly publicized Catholic priest scandals, which also might have altered participants' opinions of the Pope and his role as a low-prejudiced leader. Professor Saucier is currently working on a follow-up study in which several famous figures are used to represent each condition, thus improving the validity of the study by reducing the likelihood that characteristics other than prejudice-level are causing the effects.

Figure 1. Measure of participants' standardized racism composite scores by the race and prejudice level of the famous individual they saw.

![Figure 1](image)

Results
Racism Measures

We began by investigating the relationships among the various scales. As expected, the scales were appropriately related (See Table 1). The MRS, ATB, and RAS were significantly highly positively correlated, which was to be expected because they are all measures of racism with higher scores indicating higher levels of prejudice. Because of the significant correlations, a highly reliable (alpha = .87) composite variable for the racism measures was formed by converting the scores on the MRS, ATB, and RAS to z scores and taking the average of the three z scores.

Participants' internal motivation to respond without prejudice had a low, positive correlation with their external motivation to respond without prejudice (see Table 1). Also, participants' internal motivation to respond without prejudice was significantly negatively correlated with the composite racism measure ($r = -.39, p < .001, n = 112$). This indicated that, as expected, participants who had high internal motivation to respond in a non-prejudiced manner did so and had low scores on the racism measures. Participants' external motivation to respond without prejudice was significantly positively correlated with the composite racism measure ($r = .29, p = .01, n = 112$). This similarly indicated that those participants whose responses were based on environmental cues,
rather than internalized, non-prejudiced values, scored higher on racism measures.

A 2 x 2 (prejudice level x race) univariate analysis of variance showed that there were no significant main effects for prejudice level, F(1, 108) = 2.362, p = .127, or race, F(1, 108) = 0.194, p = .660, and no interaction, F(1, 108) = 1.262, p = .264, for participants' scores on the composite racism measure. Neither the race of the famous individual or the degree of prejudice in his statement affected participants' willingness to express prejudice. This is contrary to what we predicted.

However, while the omnibus analysis of variance failed to yield significant effects, planned comparisons showed that participants' expression of racism did vary depending on the condition (see Figure 1). These analyses showed that, for the White target conditions, participants had lower prejudice scores in the high-prejudiced condition (M = -0.26, SD = 0.75) than in the low-prejudiced condition (M = 0.16, SD = 0.91). This difference was substantial, d = 0.36, but only marginally significant, F(1, 108) = 3.54, p < .07. No difference was found in the Black target conditions. Analyses showed that participants had slightly lower scores for the high-prejudiced condition (M = -0.01, SD = 0.93) than for the low-prejudiced condition (M = 0.05, SD = 0.72); however, the difference was not notable, d = 0.06, and not significant, F (1, 108) < 1.

These results were not expected. We predicted that participants would be influenced by the low-prejudiced figures and, thus, score lower on the racism measures. We also predicted that participants would feel uninhibited by the high-prejudiced figures and as a result score higher on the racism measures. Instead, we found that composite racism scores were substantially lower for the high-prejudiced White target condition than for the low-prejudiced White target condition, and that the Black targets' prejudice levels had little-to-no impact on participants' composite racism measure scores.

**Data Reduction**

*Ratings of Figures.* We next investigated the effects of how participants rated the famous individuals. Negative descriptions (prejudiced, awkward, and offensive) were reverse coded so that, for all the items, higher ratings indicate a more positive evaluation. Principal components analysis with varimax rotation of the ratings revealed two strong factors. Seven items loaded (> .50) onto the first factor (eigenvalue = 4.37), (i.e., Tolerant, Ambitious, Friendly, Intelligent, Awkward Reversed, Offensive Reversed, and Prejudiced Reversed), which accounted for 48.59% of the variance and formed a reliable (alpha = .90) composite variable for Positive Attributes. (Two items loaded (> .80) onto the second factor (eigenvalue = 1.86) that accounted for 20.71% of the total variance. The two items were Attractive and Athletic. These items combined to form a reliable (alpha = .70) measure of "Appearance." Effects of famous figures' race and prejudice level were not theoretically relevant (e.g., Martin Luther King was rated higher in Appearance than Pope John Paul II) and will not be discussed further. Participants' ratings of their agreement with the statements remained the solitary "Agreement" measure. Finally, "How Good of a Leader" and "Suit for Position of Authority" were combined to form a highly reliable composite variable for "Leadership" (alpha = .96).

*Affect.* Similar to the evaluation of ratings of the figures, participants' positive affect ratings (delighted, relaxed, amused) were reverse coded so that higher ratings for all items indicated more negative reactions. Principal component analysis with varimax rotation revealed two strong factors. Five items loaded (> .60) onto the first factor (eigenvalue = 3.34) and accounted for 37.07% of the variance. The items included Uneasy, Distressed, Uncomfortable, Delighted Reversed, and Relaxed Reversed and combined to form one reliable (alpha = .87) measure, which we labeled "Uneasy." Three items (Embarrassed, Guilty, and Ashamed) loaded (> .65) onto the second factor (eigenvalue = 2.54), which accounted for an additional 28.21% of the total variance, and formed one measure of "Guilt" (alpha = .80).

**Analysis**

*Ratings of Figures.* A 2 x 2 (famous figure prejudice level x famous figure race) multivariate analysis of variance on ratings of famous individuals and participants' affect showed that there were significant main effects for both race, F (6, 102) = 8.03, p = .0001, and prejudice level, F (6, 102) = 148.70, p = .0001. The main effects were qualified by a significant interaction, F (6, 102) = 14.60, p = .001.

Accordingly, 2 x 2 (model prejudice level x model race) univariate analyses of variance revealed the specific effects. There was a significant main effect for race on agreement, F (1, 107) = 21.55, p = .0001, such that participants agreed more with Black individuals (M = 5.25, SD = 3.68) than with White (M = 4.18, SD = 3.40). There was also a significant main effect for prejudice level on agreement, F (1, 107) = 732.14, p = .0001, as would be expected, such that
participants agreed more with low-prejudiced individuals (M = 7.96, SD = 1.61) than high-prejudiced (M = 1.42, SD = 1.15). These effects were not qualified by an interaction, F(1, 107) = 2.41, p = .124.

There was a significant main effect for race on positive attributes, F(1, 107) = 12.14, p = .001, such that participants rated Black individuals as having more positive attributes (M = 42.96, SD = 14.88) than White individuals (M = 37.98, SD = 15.97). There was also a significant main effect for prejudice level on positive attributes, F(1, 107) = 307.95, p = .0001. Participants rated low-prejudiced individuals as having more positive attributes (M = 53.52, SD = 6.72) than high-prejudiced individuals (M = 27.24, SD = 9.60). These effects were not qualified by an interaction, F(1, 107) < 1, p = .546.

There was a significant main effect for race on leadership, F(1, 107) = 17.88, p = .0001, such that White individuals were seen as less capable leaders (M = 9.96, SD = 5.99) than Black individuals (M = 12.25, SD = 5.73). There was also a significant main effect for prejudice level on leadership, F(1, 107) = 319.38, p = .0001. As would be expected, participants rated low-prejudiced figures as being more capable leaders (M = 16.09, SD = 2.12) than high-prejudiced (M = 6.05, SD = 3.97). These effects were not qualified by an interaction, F(1, 107) = 0.24, p = .628.

Affect. The significant effects of the multivariate analyses of variance reported above allowed us to use a 2 x 2 (famous figure prejudice level x famous figure race) univariate analysis of variance to analyze these composite affect variables. It indicated a significant main effect for prejudice level, F(1, 107) = 178.72, p = .0001, and race, F(1, 107) = 9.50, p = .003, which was qualified by a significant interaction, F(1, 107) = 7.22, p = .008 (see Figure 2). Participants had similar, less uneasy, more positive reactions to both the low-prejudiced White individual and low-prejudiced Black individual. However, concerning the prejudiced individuals, participants reported being more uneasy in the White individual condition than with the Black individual. Additional simple effects and effect size analyses also showed that, for White targets, participants felt more uneasy, F(1, 107) = 127.72, p < .0001, d = 2.19, in the high-prejudiced condition (M = 36.67, SD = 8.07), than in the low-prejudiced condition (M = 16.32, SD = 6.24). For Black targets, participants again felt more uneasy in the high-prejudiced condition (M = 29.36, SD = 5.88) than in the low-prejudiced condition (M = 15.82, SD = 6.34), F(1, 107) = 57.58, p < .001, d = 1.47.

There was a significant main effect for race on guilt, F(1, 107) = 15.05, p = .0001, and prejudice level on guilt, F(1, 107) = 33.70, p = .0001, however, these effects were qualified by an interaction (see Figure 2), F(1, 107) = 21.69, p = .0001. Participants reported similar, lower levels of guilt for both the low-prejudiced White and low-prejudiced Black figures. However, participants felt much guiltier when they read the high-prejudiced White individual’s statement than when they read the high-prejudiced Black individual’s statement. Further, simple effects and effect size analyses revealed that, for White targets, participants felt much guiltier, F(1, 107) = 54.23, p < .001, d = 1.42, in the high-prejudiced condition (M = 13.30, SD = 7.58), than in the low-prejudiced condition (M = 4.18, SD = 2.09). However, there was no significant simple effect for the Black target conditions, F < 1. Using participants’ levels of prejudice as a predictor of guilt (i.e., as an independent variable rather than a dependent measure) in interaction with the famous figures’ race and prejudice levels did not produce significant results.

Discussion

Contrary to what was hypothesized, the results indicated that participants expressed less racism after being exposed to famous, high-prejudiced, White individuals than they did after being exposed to famous, low-prejudiced, White individuals. Further, participants’ expressions of racism were surprisingly not significantly different after being exposed to a high- and low-prejudiced famous Black individual.

As predicted, participants rated low-prejudiced individuals more favorably than high-prejudiced, and
also had more favorable affect scores for the low-prejudiced individuals. What was unexpected was the difference in the ratings and affect scores with regard to race. There were main effects indicating that participants agreed more with the famous Black individuals than with the White, participants rated the Black individuals as having more positive attributes than the White, and rated the Black individuals as being more capable leaders than the White. In addition, participants felt more uneasy and guiltier in the high-prejudiced, White individual condition than in the high-prejudiced, Black individual condition. Overall, participants reacted overwhelmingly more positively toward the Black individuals.

Perhaps participants were particularly fastidious in judging the White individuals because they were in-group members and therefore were held to higher standards. Harber (1998) discovered similar behavior when he investigated the way students evaluated poorly written essays. He found that Whites supplied more lenient feedback to Blacks than to fellow Whites, which he partly attributed to shifting standards (Bierat & Manis, 1994). Participants typically change the standards by which they judge others depending on others’ race, sex, and general group membership. Stereotypically, Whites are considered to have better verbal abilities than Blacks. Harber reasoned that White participants expected less of Black writers and relaxed their standards when critiquing those essays. In the same respect, participants in our study might generally expect more prejudiced, negative behavior from Blacks, and hold them to lower standards.

Another possibility is that participants felt more comfortable evaluating members of their own race and were more honest in their assessments, but felt less comfortable evaluating members of another, minority race. Accordingly, participants may have coddled the Black individuals in fear that negative evaluations would be seen as prejudiced, socially undesirable conduct. Harber (1998) also found that the higher the accountability on the participants’ part, the more lenient their evaluations became. For example, there was a much greater difference in the subjective evaluations (essay content) of Black and White essays, than in the objective evaluations (essay mechanics). A negative evaluation concerning mechanics could be defended using a dictionary or grammar textbook. A negative evaluation concerning an essay’s content could be more easily disputed, because it is largely based on personal opinion. A White person rating a Black person’s essay negatively could be misconstrued as being racist. Realizing this, participants might have relaxed their standards. Such reasoning could also explain the results in our study. Overall, White participants gave more positive evaluations to the Black famous individuals than they gave to the White famous individuals. Perhaps participants were aware that their responses would be analyzed and were concerned with appearing prejudiced. They may have lowered the standards by which they evaluated the Black figures in an effort to appear less prejudiced.

Of the famous individuals, David Duke (high-prejudiced, White) was the person against whom participants made the harshest ratings and had the most negative reactions. Participants exposed to David Duke also expressed the least amount of prejudice of any condition. Especially noteworthy is the large degree of guilt that participants felt. To Whites, Duke is a prejudiced, socially unpalatable in-group member. We suggest that being associated with him caused participants to take partial responsibility for his statement, which in turn caused them to feel guilty and ostracize him with much more negative responses than those received by Minister Louis Farrakhan (high-prejudiced, Black). Monteith et al. (1993) found that discrepancies between how people believe that they should act and how they would act result in guilt and compunction. What our results suggest is that these feelings of guilt and compunction not only result from discrepancies in personal standards and one’s own actions, but may also stem from inconsistencies between the actions of other in-group members and society’s standards.

Guilt is said to be a self-conscious emotion (Lewis, 1993), for if it is to occur one must have a set of personal standards, deviation from which results in feelings of guilt, shame, and/or embarrassment. However, Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, and Manstead (1998) showed that feelings of guilt result not only from one’s violations of personal standards, but that it is common to experience guilt through association with a group. They cite a book published in 1996 by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen entitled Hitler’s Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust in which he blames the inactions of the German people for the success of the Nazis during the Second World War. As expected, the older generation of Germans reacted strongly to the controversial book. Surprising, however, was the equally forceful reaction of the younger generation, none of whose members had personally participated in the events of World War II. This second generation seemed to take responsibility for their fore-fathers’ inactions and responded with frustration and guilt.

Guilt at the group level can be explained by two modern theories. Social identity theory (Tajfel &
Turner, 1986) states that the concept of one’s self stems from one’s own actions and beliefs, but also from one’s association with social groups. Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1986) posits that people naturally categorize themselves and others into social groups in an effort to gain perspective over their environment. When people are associated with a group, they are associated with that group’s general actions and ethics and, thus, assume partial responsibility for any member’s success or embarrassment. Doosje et al.’s (1998) study did not define in- or out-group members by race or nationality, but categorized participants as inductive thinkers after having completed a problem solving exercise. Participants reported feeling guilty that inductive thinkers had systematically undervalued deductive thinkers in the past, although it was made clear that their current group had not done so. Personal behavior was shown to have no effect on feelings of guilt; it was purely the result of others’ past actions.

Doosje et al.’s (1998) study examined guilty reactions to past unpalatable in-group behavior. Similarly, Marques et al. (1998) examined participants’ reactions to deviant behavior of current in- and out-group members. This study also did not define in- and out-group members in terms of race, but rather participants were told that they were grouped according to their justifications for ranking characters in a murder case in terms of importance during a mock jury exercise. Results showed that by making in-group accountability salient, in-group bias increased. Participants considered themselves more similar to other group members and derogated deviate in-group members more strongly. This could explain why participants in our study rated David Duke so severely, shunning him, and then responded in an extremely low-prejudiced, socially agreeable manner, characteristic of how they would like their group to be perceived.

Future studies might investigate the effect of this resulting guilt. Lydon et al. (2000) found that self affirmation ameliorated prejudiced-induced guilt. An extension of our study could investigate the effects of self affirmation on guilt caused by group association. Participants could be given an opportunity to compensate for Duke’s statements as a means of alleviating their guilt. For instance, upon completing the booklet, participants could be given the option of participating in an inter-racial discussion group or could be given the opportunity to socially interact with a Black individual. This would be a simple means of assessing the immediate impact that the guilt might have on subsequent behavior.

We must acknowledge that the attitudes of students in this study generally reflect the more liberal, tolerant atmosphere characteristic of universities. Also, our sample was entirely comprised of White participants. It would be instructive to assess and compare Black participants’ responses. Given these restrictions, it is worth noting that contrary to former, similar research, our stimuli were not normative, but were extreme opinions of famous individuals. Thus, the effects of our stimuli are not limited to social norms that can change with situation and region, but are applicable to the broad population generally exposed to such famous individuals.

In sum, we were surprised to find that participants felt much guiltier and more uneasy in the high-prejudiced White target condition than they did in the high-prejudiced Black target condition. Moreover, participants exposed to a White, high-prejudiced, famous individual expressed less racism than those exposed to a White, low-prejudiced, famous individual, and the participants’ expression of racism was unaffected by the prejudice level of the Black individuals. These findings suggest that, in some instances, presenting the public with negative examples of socially unpalatable, racist, famous in-group members may be a more effective tool in curbing the expression of racism than presenting them with positive, non-prejudiced role models.

For the Bibliography, see the on-line version of this article at www.uky.edu/kaleidoscope/fall2003.