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UNDERSTANDING RACIAL COLOR BLINDNESS AND MULTICULTURALISM IN INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS: COGNITIVE AND EMOTIONAL TENSIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS

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Even though minorities comprise 37% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), an astounding 30% of Americans interact exclusively with family members, friends, and coworkers who are of their own race (Reuters, 2013). Given these statistics, it is perhaps not surprising that despite increasingly favorable views of racial integration, interracial interactions in the United States continue to be anxiety provoking (Plant, 2004; Plant & Butz, 2006; Toosi, Babbitt, Ambady, & Sommers, 2012; Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009). Even for the most well-intentioned individuals—those who actively make an effort to have positive cross-race contact experiences—interactions with a member of a racial or ethnic outgroup can be awkward and threatening (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Mendes, Blascovich, Lickel, & Hunter, 2002; Mendes & Koslov, 2013). As such, cross-race peers have more difficulty building rapport and developing relationships than same-race peers, even under optimal conditions of contact

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(Shook & Fazio, 2008a, 2008b; Trail, Shelton, & West, 2009; West, Shelton, & Trail, 2009).

In response to the difficulties that Whites and minorities face in forming relationships across the racial divide, scholars and lawmakers have attempted to develop interventions that improve interracial interactions by targeting the psychological and interpersonal processes that undermine interracial relationship development. In this review chapter, we focus on two conceptual frameworks that influence the way people think about race and, subsequently, how they interact with others of a different race: racial color blindness and multiculturalism.

We begin with a review of the evidence regarding each approach's effectiveness at fostering the formation and development of interracial relationships, touching on the unique costs and benefits associated with both. We explore the psychological mechanisms through which these approaches influence Whites' and minorities' behaviors and perceptions of their partners during interracial interactions, as well as potential downstream consequences of entering interracial interactions with a racially color-blind or multicultural mind-set (e.g., increased prejudice and being disliked by cross-race interaction partners). We conclude by briefly comparing the effectiveness of color-blind and multicultural approaches to interracial interactions with alternative methods for cultivating interracial relationships.

Because interracial relationships necessarily involve at least two people, throughout this review, we take an *actor–partner interdependence model* approach (Kashy & Kenny, 2000) in which we consider how having a color-blind or multicultural mind-set might influence both members of dyadic interracial interactions. Specifically, we consider how individuals' color-blind or multicultural mind-set influences not only their own outcomes (e.g., their liking for and desire to interact with their interaction partner in the future, termed the *actor* effect) but also their partner's (e.g., their partner's liking for and desire to interact with them, termed the *partner* effect). We also consider how these two mind-sets differentially influence Whites and minorities as actors and partners. Before a review of the extant research on how color-blind and multicultural mind-sets influence interracial relationship formation, we begin with a brief definitional overview of racial color blindness and multiculturalism.

WHAT ARE COLOR BLINDNESS AND MULTICULTURALISM?

Although they share the same ultimate goal of facilitating positive interracial experiences, color-blind and multicultural mind-sets are quite different in how they propose individuals think about race and racial diversity

within interracial contexts. Proponents of a color-blind approach to race argue that to reduce prejudice and discrimination, people must act as if they are "blind" to race (see Gotanda, 1991; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000; *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 2007). Historically, endorsing a color-blind mind-set to race meant embracing a world in which race cannot be used as a foundation for inequality. As the plaintiffs argued in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), "That the constitution is color-blind is our dedicated belief." Proponents of a color-blind approach claim that if people do not recognize and acknowledge one another's race, then prejudice and discrimination based on race will not have the opportunity to emerge. Given the straightforward and intuitive appeal of the color-blind approach to race, it is unsurprising that it is a popular method for reducing prejudice and discrimination in a number of social contexts, including organizational (Ely & Thomas, 2001; Thomas & Ely, 1996), educational (Apfelbaum, Pauker, Ambady, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Pollock, 2004; Schofield, 2007), and legal (Kang & Lane, 2010; Peery, 2011; Sommers & Norton, 2008) settings.

In contrast to the color-blind approach, the multicultural approach stems from the notion that it is important to acknowledge and empower all races by celebrating each other's diverse backgrounds (Markus et al., 2000; Plaut, 2002; Wolsko, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2000). The United States is growing in racial diversity—racial minorities make up more than half of the population in California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012)—and within the next 50 years, minorities will begin to outnumber Whites (Ortman & Guarneri, 2009). In direct contrast to the color-blind perspective of ignoring race, multiculturalism seeks to celebrate the importance and harness the power of the perspectives and experiences that come with each individual's unique background. In the context of interpersonal interactions, the multicultural approach can help people accurately gauge the individual motivations and perspectives of one's cross-race interaction partners.

EFFECTS OF A RACIALLY COLOR-BLIND MIND-SET IN INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS

How does harboring a racially color-blind mind-set influence interpersonal interactions? Despite the good intentions behind this approach, being color blind to race going into an encounter does not facilitate positive experiences for both partners; rather, it can impair communication, lead people to appear avoidant through displays of negative nonverbal behaviors, and lead to cognitive depletion (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008; Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura, & Ariely, 2006).

Individuals, especially Whites, often feel concerned about appearing prejudiced when interacting with a racial outgroup member (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010; Plant & Devine, 1998; Richeson & Shelton, 2007). Attempting to appear color blind to race is one way to manage the concern of trying to appear unprejudiced. Indeed, acknowledging race is a necessary precursor to racism, and so individuals who do not want to appear racist might say to themselves, "If I do not notice race, then I cannot be a racist" (Norton et al., 2006, p. 949). However, race is encoded automatically and without conscious effort (Ito & Urland, 2003), and this incongruity between trying to appear as if one has not noticed race while still automatically noticing race can lead to a host of negative downstream consequences during interpersonal interactions.

Like other strategies in which individuals try to manage self-presentational concerns of trying to appear unprejudiced (e.g., Shelton, West, & Trail, 2010), individuals who try to appear color blind to race also appear more uncomfortable, more anxious, and less friendly during interracial interactions. In the first investigation of how attempts to appear color blind backfire during interracial interactions, Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura, and Ariely (2006, Study 2) asked White participants to work with a partner (a Black or White confederate) on a cooperative task. Participants were given 32 photographs of Black and White targets while their partner (the confederate) was given one photograph at a time. The participants' goal was to ask their partner questions to figure out which of the 32 photographs their partner was given. In this task, race is a diagnostic tool, and mentioning the race of the target in the photograph would help one's partner identify the correct photograph.

When the confederate was White, participants asked about the race of their partner's photo 94% of the time. However, when the confederate was Black, participants suppressed their race-related questions and only mentioned the race of the person in the photo 64% of the time. Further, these color-blind behaviors during interracial interactions were associated with participant's negative nonverbal behaviors. When White participants interacted with a Black confederate, the less they mentioned race, the less eye contact they made with their partners and the less friendly they appeared. In addition, extensions of Norton et al.'s (2006) research revealed that trying to act color blind to race during interactions with an interracial partner can lead to more negative nonverbal behaviors in general (Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al., 2008).

Like Norton et al. (2006), Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al. (2008) had White participants interact with White and Black confederates while completing a race-relevant person identification task; however, Apfelbaum and colleagues manipulated the behavior of the participants' interaction partner

(the confederate). To cue participants to suppress or acknowledge race during their interaction, confederates either acted color blind (i.e., did not voluntarily ask questions about the race of targets shown in the person identification task) or acknowledged the race of the targets shown in the person identification task. In response to their interaction partner's behavior, participants with a racially color-blind interaction partner mentioned race only 26% of the time, whereas participants with a race acknowledging interaction partner mentioned race 91% of the time. Most important, an investigation of participant's nonverbal behaviors during the interaction revealed that interacting with a color-blind interaction partner led to more negative nonverbal behaviors for those in interracial interactions. Thus, while Norton et al.'s findings suggest that Whites' own attempts at racially color-blind behavior can result in the individual exhibiting negative nonverbal behaviors, Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al.'s research shows that minorities' refusal to acknowledge race can lead their White partners to exhibit racially color-blind verbal behaviors and negative nonverbal behaviors. Taken together, these findings indicate both actor and partner effects of being color blind on behaviors. Individuals who espouse a racially color-blind mind-set engage in more negative nonverbal behaviors (e.g., anxiety), indicating an actor effect, and engaging in an interaction with a partner who acts in a racially color-blind fashion also leads one to engage in more negative nonverbal behaviors, indicating a partner effect.

These findings add to a growing body of literature demonstrating the effects that impression management concerns have on nonverbal behavior within interracial encounters. But how might interacting with someone who *displays* negative nonverbal behaviors affect the relationship? Within interracial interactions, having a partner who appears anxious might be particularly problematic because the meaning underlying nonverbal anxious behaviors is ambiguous and open to interpretation (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002), and Whites and minorities in interracial interactions are especially prone to interpreting anxious nonverbal behaviors, such as averting the gaze, as indicative of dislike and unfriendliness (Dovidio, West, Pearson, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2007; Trail et al., 2009). In same-race encounters, these same behaviors are not interpreted negatively and have been shown even to be interpreted positively (e.g., as signs of genuine interest and attempts to make a good impression; West, 2011). For example, Trail et al. (2009) used a daily diary method to measure new roommate relationships over several weeks and found that perceptions of roommates' anxious behaviors (e.g., avoidance of eye contact, shifting attention), above and beyond people's own anxious experiences, predicted lower levels of intimacy and a weaker desire to develop a friendship with a cross-race, but not same-race, roommate. Shelton et al. (2010) further showed that within the first 2 weeks of living together, among

people who felt anxious when interacting with their cross-race roommate, once those roommates were able to pick up on their anxiety (around Day 10 of the study), they were less interested in forming a friendship with them. These findings suggest that anxious behaviors resulting from attempts to act racially color-blind might serve as a roadblock for interracial relationship formation, leading to greater assumed disinterest by the partner and contact avoidance. Future research could explicitly examine these outcomes in both one-shot interactions and relationships that develop over time.

Because exhibiting anxious behavior can be deleterious to the formation and development of interracial relationships, research has also considered *why* attempting to be racially color-blind leads to negative nonverbal behaviors for White actors in particular. Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al. (2008, Study 2) demonstrated that trying to act color blind results in cognitive depletion (i.e., taxes cognitive resources) for Whites, thereby limiting their ability to suppress negative nonverbal behaviors. Using the same photo identification task as Study 1, Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al. (2008, Study 2) again had White participants interact with White and Black confederates, but rather than prompting participants to act color blind, researchers measured participants' innate tendency to act color blind, after which they measured cognitive depletion with the Stroop task (Richeson & Shelton, 2003). Results indicated that avoiding the topic of race with a cross-race partner was associated with cognitive depletion, and cognitive depletion mediated the relationship between color-blind behavior and nonverbal unfriendliness in interracial interactions, such that increases in cognitive depletion due to avoidance of race-based target descriptions led to more negative nonverbal behaviors among White participants. These finding suggest that because active attempts to suppress unwanted behaviors tax Whites' cognitive resources, Whites no longer have sufficient resources to successfully control their negative nonverbal behaviors.

Consistent with findings from Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al. (2008), Vorauer, Gagnon, and Sasaki (2009) found that attempts to suppress negative behaviors lead to expressions of negative affect for Whites. The authors asked White and minority participants to interact with one another and manipulated both partners' approach to the interaction by asking them to read a news article that promoted a racially color-blind approach, promoted a multicultural approach, denounced racism, or did not promote a specific approach. The authors found that during interracial interactions, adopting the racially color-blind approach led Whites to focus on suppressing negative behaviors, and this focus mediated the relationship between color-blind ideology and the behavioral expressions of negative affect. These results suggest that Whites in interracial interactions who attempt to appear color blind do not have sufficient resources to monitor the negativity of their own nonverbal behaviors, and that these negative behaviors can "leak out" (see

also Shelton et al., 2010). It is also worth noting that, in line with research showing that interacting with interaction partners who exhibit subtle signs of racism can be cognitively taxing for minorities (Murphy, Richeson, Shelton, Rheinschmidt, & Bergsieker, 2013; Richeson, Trawalter, & Shelton, 2005), interacting with racially color-blind White interaction partners can lead to cognitive depletion for minorities (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). These findings reveal both actor and partner effects of racial color blindness on cognitive depletion. Depletion of cognitive resources is important when one considers the interactional contexts in which color-blind approaches to race are often implemented: schools and organizations. If interracial interactions in these settings are cognitively taxing, students and workers may not have sufficient cognitive resources to complete difficult or complex tasks, and as a result, those working together in diverse settings will underperform relative to those in more racially homogeneous settings.

Thus far, we have focused on how being racially color-blind influences White actors and their minority partners, raising the following question: Are racial minorities also affected by embracing a racially color-blind mind-set? To compare the effects of adopting a racially color-blind strategy on Whites and minorities, Vorauer et al. (2009) found that being instructed to adopt a racially color-blind mind-set did not have a significant effect on a desire to prevent negative behaviors or expressed behaviors for minority participants, suggesting that the inhibitory effects of the color-blind approach to race only apply to Whites. These findings may be attributed in part to evidence indicating that minorities' impression management concerns center around being the target of prejudice, rather than being perceived as prejudiced (Richeson & Shelton, 2007). However, future research should more fully explore how adopting a color-blind perspective of race affects minorities, given the paucity of research on the topic.

Despite continuing support for racially color-blind ideology among White Americans (Ryan, Hunt, Weible, Peterson, & Casas, 2007), the research presented herein depicts a dark picture of the consequences of entering interracial interactions with a racially color-blind mind-set. Research consistently shows that attempts to act racially color blind lead to expressions of negative nonverbal behaviors and cognitive depletion for Whites in interracial interactions (Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al., 2008; Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Norton et al., 2006), and interacting with Whites who exhibit negative behaviors is taxing for their minority interaction partners (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). Furthermore, research on the relational consequences of expressing negative nonverbal behaviors during interracial interactions suggests that exhibiting negative nonverbal behaviors disrupts rapport between interaction partners in both the short (Pearson et al., 2008) and long (Shelton et al., 2010; Trail et al., 2009) term.

EFFECTS OF A MULTICULTURAL MIND-SET IN INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS

Unlike findings regarding the consistently negative consequences of racially color-blind mind-sets, research on how adopting a multicultural mind-set influences interpersonal processes during interracial interactions is more mixed. Some research on the influence of a multicultural mindset on behaviors during interracial interactions demonstrates positive effects. For example, Vorauer et al. (2009) found that relative to a control condition, participants who adopted a multicultural mind-set made more positive other-oriented remarks (i.e., statements directly referencing their partner in a positive light) during written exchanges with a future interaction partner (Study 1) and during actual interactions with an interracial interaction partner (Study 2), relative to a control condition. Furthermore, the positive behavioral effects associated with multiculturalism were observed for both White and minority members of the interaction (Vorauer et al., 2009, Study 2), showing that multiculturalism can lead to positive interpersonal consequences. Similarly, Holoien and Shelton (2012) found that when asked to interact with a minority partner, Whites primed to take a multicultural approach to the interaction exhibited more positive behaviors that were less indicative of prejudice than Whites primed to act racially color blind.

When considered from an actor–partner interdependence model perspective, the positive behaviors that people engage in during interracial interactions are just as important as the negative nonverbal behaviors in shaping interracial rapport and relationship formation. Just as negative nonverbal behaviors can hinder relationship building, research shows that positive behaviors (e.g., perceptions that a partner smiles and appears engaged and interested) play a large role in fostering the development of interracial relationships (Trail et al., 2009). For interracial roommates, Trail et al. (2009) found that being perceived as engaging in positive intimacy-building behaviors was just as important as being perceived as engaging in anxiety-related behaviors in predicting relational outcomes, such as a greater desire to live with their roommate in the future for both the actor (the person perceiving the behaviors) and their partner (the person whose behaviors were perceived).

At first glance, the multicultural approach appears to be an ideal intervention for improving interracial interactions. It enhances perspective taking (Todd & Galinsky, 2012), promotes positive other-oriented remarks (Vorauer et al., 2009), and increases positive behaviors without taxing interaction members' cognitive resources (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). However, research on how multiculturalism influences behaviors during interracial interactions suggests that the relationship between multiculturalism and

interracial rapport is not simple and straightforward, and investigations into the importance of context and individual differences present a more nuanced picture of how multicultural ideology may shape interracial interactions.

One important question that recent research has examined is: For whom is a multicultural perspective most likely to effectively promote positive interracial contact? Multiculturalism can be threatening to Whites' values and identities, and for right-wing authoritarians (i.e., people who value respecting authority and societal norms and who view challenges to their social structure and values as threats; Asbrock et al., 2010; Jost, 2006), adopting a multicultural perspective can even lead to more rather than less bias (Kauff, Asbrock, Thörner, & Wagner, 2013). Because right-wing authoritarians are threatened by nonconformity (Duckitt, 2001), they find multiculturalism's emphasis on disrupting current social dynamics by taking power away from Whites (i.e., the current social norm) and redistributing it to empower all races to be extremely threatening. As a result, exposure to multicultural messages leads to decreased acceptance of diversity.

In addition to threatening right-wing authoritarians, adopting a multiculturalism perspective might also lead Whites to feel excluded by the focus on culture and individuality that is espoused by multiculturalism, to the extent that they not feel that their White identity contributes to multiculturalism (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011). As a result, Whites who feel a strong need to belong show less interest in working for an organization that endorses a multicultural rather than a color-blind approach to race (Plaut et al., 2011), and if White Americans strongly identify with their ethnicity, priming multiculturalism can increase their prejudice toward racial minorities (Kauff et al., 2013; Morrison, Plaut, & Ybarra, 2010).

The potential for negative effects of multiculturalism has also been observed in the context of interracial interactions. In the only study to our knowledge that has examined the moderating factors that can influence the relationship between multiculturalism and behavior during interracial interactions, Vorauer and Sasaki (2010) asked participants to exchange notes with an interracial partner with whom they believed they would have the opportunity to interact at the end of the study. Focusing on multiculturalism before writing to their partner allowed low-prejudice people to relax and exhibit more warmth toward their interracial partner in the written exchange, but for high-prejudice people, multiculturalism was threatening and led them to demonstrate less warmth toward their future interracial partner. As previously reviewed, to the extent that the partner in turn picks up on these behaviors, they will be less likely to want to engage in long-term contact with their White partner (Trail et al., 2009).

Although the research discussed here introduces a potential "dark side" to multiculturalism, it does not preclude the use of multiculturalism

as an intervention to foster interracial relationships. Instead, research suggests that it is important to enact multicultural approaches in appropriate settings, where it will help rather than hinder rapport in burgeoning interracial relationships. If, for example, multiculturalism was fostered in settings where Whites are low prejudice and have a tendency to endorse color-blind approaches to race, the advancement of a multicultural approach to interracial interactions could potentially override the negative behavioral effects of color-blind ideology. Although multiculturalism is a potentially effective tool for improving interracial interactions for Whites who are well intentioned and motivated to appear unprejudiced, in contexts in which Whites are high in right-wing authoritarianism or prejudice, multiculturalism may harm rather than help interracial interactions. As discussed in the following section, we suggest that researchers must consider: (a) ways in which the message underlying multiculturalism could be reframed to reduce threat to specific White populations and (b) alternative interventions that benefit a wider range of populations.

SEEKING ALTERNATIVE METHODS FOR IMPROVING INTERRACIAL INTERACTIONS

We presented evidence of how racially color-blind and multicultural mind-sets can influence both partners in interracial interactions. For Whites, adopting a racially color-blind approach can result in cognitively taxing attempts to suppress negative behaviors that ultimately backfire, resulting in ironic increases in negative nonverbal behaviors. For minorities, interacting with these racially color-blind Whites can be cognitively taxing and unpleasant. However, in contrast to color-blind approaches to race, multicultural approaches can have both positive and negative effects on interracial interactions. When Whites in interracial interactions are low in prejudice, multiculturalism can promote positive behaviors that facilitate relationship development, but for Whites who find multiculturalism threatening—like those who are prejudiced, those who are threatened by the idea of change to societal values and structure, or those who fear racial exclusion—multiculturalism can lead to increases in bias and negative behaviors during interracial interactions.

Despite its good intentions, racially color-blind ideology backfires during interracial interactions, and because multiculturalism only fosters positive interracial interactions for low-prejudice individuals, it cannot be blindly applied to any situation. As such, neither can be broadly applied to all interracial interaction contexts, raising the question of whether there exists a panacea for interracial interactions. Although research has yet to uncover

this perfect intervention for improving interracial interactions, we present in this section several alternative approaches to interracial interactions that show promise.

Unlike the color-blind approach to race, which seeks to deemphasize group membership, and the multicultural approach, which highlights everyone's unique group membership, dual-identity models emphasize both people's shared (e.g., students at a university, employees at a company) and unique (e.g., racial) identities. Similar to findings from research on multicultural approaches to reducing bias, allowing people to have dual identities (i.e., a common identity and subordinate identities) can be problematic when an interactions partner's subordinate identities are threatening to the values or identities of the other member of the interaction (Crisp, Stone, & Hall, 2006; de la Garza, Falcon, & Garcia, 1996; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Smith & Tyler, 1996). However, recent research from Scheepers (2009) and Alter, Aronson, Darley, Rodriguez, and Ruble (2010) suggests that it may be possible to reframe threats into challenges (i.e., making participants feel like they have the resources to handle a frightening or overwhelming situation), providing a promising future avenue for research on how both multiculturalism and dual-identity approaches can improve interracial interactions. Scheepers (2009), for example, found that framing status differences among groups as *stable* (i.e., suggesting that groups will maintain their current status) leads members of high-status groups to frame an intergroup competition in a positive, challenge-oriented rather than negative, threat-oriented light. If researchers, for example, reassure White members of interracial interactions that Whites are and will remain higher status than minority racial groups, Whites should feel less threatened by their minority interaction partner. However, researchers must use caution because framing status differences as stable, rather than in flux, increases threat felt by low-status groups, and as a result, it is possible that the suggested reframing may negatively affect perceptions or behaviors of minority members of interracial interactions. Moreover, framing inequality as stable and increasing social threat for minorities may perpetuate social inequality by worsening the psychological and physical health of minorities (Cole, Kemeny, & Taylor, 1997; Major & O'Brien, 2005), worsening minority performance on stereotype relevant tasks (Steele, 1997) and causing minorities to avoid stereotype-relevant situations (Major, Spencer, Schmader, Wolfe, & Crocker, 1998; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002)

The option just presented suggests supplementing multiculturalism with additional messages to improve its effectiveness. However, because the effects of modified versions of multiculturalism are not yet known, research must also explore other avenues for fostering interracial relationship development. We see promise in two such avenues: (a) interventions that increase

perceptions of outgroup variability and (b) interventions that make people feel similar to outgroup members on nonthreatening dimensions. Recent research shows that increasing individuals' perceptions of variability in outgroup members' traits (e.g., showing people that members of the outgroup are different from each other and have different personalities and traits) can decrease prejudice and discriminatory behaviors toward the outgroup (Brauer & Er-rafiy, 2011; Brauer, Er-rafiy, Kawakami, & Phills, 2012), and Brauer et al.'s (2012) research shows that manipulations of perceived outgroup variability are most effective at reducing prejudice when participants are exposed to the outgroup's negative and positive traits rather than just positive traits of the outgroup. Manipulations of perceived outgroup variability have also been shown to be effective outside of the laboratory. Er-rafiy, Brauer, and Musca (2010) exposed people in the real world (e.g., students and clients seeing a physical therapist) to posters that showed Arabs who varied in age, gender, facial expression, and descriptors accompanying their photo. They found that exposure to the posters not only reduced prejudice toward Arabs but also increased participants' willingness to sit in close proximity to an Arab stranger.

A second promising intervention comes from West, Magee, Gordon, and Gullett (2014). In this work, we manipulated perceived interpersonal similarity between cross-race partners as they entered interactions. Our manipulation of similarity focused on two key attributes. First, the similarities should be *peripheral* to the goals of the interaction and be perceived to have no relationship to any given interaction context. Second, the dimensions must be perceived as self-revealing in that they communicate something important about the self while having no clear valence. Importantly, people need not actually be similar across these dimensions; they just need to think that they are. Participants responded to a series of seemingly trivial dilemmas (e.g., "Would you rather fly or be invisible?"). In cross-race encounters, those who perceived similarity (above and beyond actual similarity) experienced less anxiety, greater interest in sustained contact, and greater accuracy in reading their partner's interest in contact. In small task groups, manipulating perceived similarity bettered communication between partners and subsequently bettered performance on a group task. This work demonstrated one successful approach for promoting positive contact experiences across racial lines that focuses on the importance of improving interpersonal dynamics, rather than racial dynamics, between partners. Although this research has been successfully applied to interracial interactions, researchers have yet to specifically explore whether interaction members' level of prejudice moderates the relationship between perceived similarity and the outcomes we explored. Moreover, explicitly examining whether similarity manipulations are successful for promoting positive interracial interactions in contexts in

which race may be seen as threatening (e.g., interactions with the police) would also be an interesting avenue for future research.

CONCLUSION

In sum, although this chapter touched on many promising avenues for improving interracial interactions, scholars must continue to work on improving existing tools and developing new methods for fostering interracial relationships. Despite their popularity across many settings (Apfelbaum, Pauker, et al., 2008; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Kang & Lane, 2010; Peery, 2011; Pollock, 2004; Schofield, 2007; Sommers & Norton, 2008; Thomas & Ely, 1996), color-blind approaches to interracial interactions worsen actors' nonverbal behaviors (Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al., 2008; Norton et al., 2006), cognitively deplete actors (Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al., 2008), and cognitively deplete their interracial partners (Holoien & Shelton, 2012). Although multicultural mind-sets promote positive behaviors during interracial interaction for well-intentioned individuals (Vorauer et al., 2009; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2010), multiculturalism can be threatening to White Americans' identities and values, and as a result, threatened actors behave less warmly toward their minority interaction partners (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2010).

Going forward, researchers should explore not only methods for improving the effectiveness of interventions based on multiculturalism but also alternative tools for cultivating interracial relationships. Interventions promoting a multicultural mind-set must consider ways in which evoked feelings of threat can be reduced by either: (a) modifying the underlying message of multiculturalism in so that Whites no longer feel that their identity or status is being threatened or (b) pairing multiculturalism messages with other tools that reduce the threat by Whites with strong racial identities and Whites who are right-wing authoritarians. In conjunction with developing tools based on multiculturalism, researchers must also explore new methods for improving interracial interactions by investigating whether tools, like those presented here, effectively promote positive interracial interactions for populations susceptible to feeling threatened by minority populations, such as Whites with strong identities and right-wing authoritarians.

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