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Researching Peace, Conflict, and Power in the Field

Methodological Challenges and Opportunities

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Chapter 6
Confronting Conflicting Attitudes About Racial Bias in the United States: How Communicator Identities Shape Audience Reception

Keith B. Maddox, Chelsea S. Crittle, Samuel R. Sommers, and Linda R. Tropp

In the United States, racial disparities in domains such as education, business, income and wealth, housing, criminal justice, and mental and physical health reflect historical and continuing interpersonal and institutional forms of racial bias (Jost, Pelham, Sheldon and Sullivan, 2003; Sidanius, Pratto, van Laar, and Levin 2004). However, not all Americans share this belief. Whites tend to be less aware that bias remains an issue in today's society and, in fact, often perceive *themselves* to be even more likely targets of bias than members of historically disadvantaged racial groups (Norton and Sommers 2011). This denial may be defensive, motivated in part by Whites' concerns over being characterized as racist (Frantz et al. 2004; Monteith et al. 1993). In the domain of law enforcement, this distinction characterizes the divide between recent large-scale social and political movements such as Black Lives Matter and counter-movements such as Blue Lives Matter. A similar divide exists at a smaller scale within the memberships of a wide range of organizations in the U.S. – organizations that struggle with the challenges afforded by an increasingly diverse society (e.g., Thomas 2012). Given that Whites have traditionally occupied a majority and dominant status position in the U.S. racial hierarchy, we need to develop effective methods to confront White Americans' denial of the nature and impact of racial bias if we are to find effective and sustainable strategies to counteract it (e.g., Schultz and Maddox 2013).

In this chapter, four academic social psychologists discuss insights from their experiences in communicating research about the causes and consequences of racial bias to various audiences in the United States – audiences whose members often

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sharply disagree about the nature of, causes of, and remedies for racial disparities in U.S. society. Our message focuses on the existence and nature of racial bias: the cognitive and motivational qualities of individuals that contribute to historical and structural inequality. Specifically, racial bias reflects the extent to which an individual's mental representations of racial groups can influence their perception and behavior toward persons and policies associated with these groups. This bias can occur regardless of an individual's motivations or intentions toward these groups. Across three sections, each author considers how aspects of their and/or their audiences' identities and motivational states influence how they confront attitudes about racial bias. While our experiences vary, one common takeaway is that who we are and with whom we are communicating can affect how our message is received; factors such as race, gender, and professional status afford both advantages and disadvantages in our confrontation efforts.

Chelsea Crittle, a Black female doctoral candidate, describes the challenges faced from academics during the development of her identity as a psychological scientist focused on racial issues. Chelsea confronts psychologists' beliefs about the illegitimacy of research on racial bias. Focusing mostly on confrontation efforts with non-academic audiences, Linda Tropp, a White female professor, describes the interplay between her efforts to understand audience perspectives and the approaches she uses to facilitate discussions of racial bias. In particular, Linda confronts audiences to recognize and understand ways in which their own experiences and views often differ from those of historically underrepresented or disadvantaged racial groups. Keith Maddox, a Black male professor, and Sam Sommers, a White male professor, describe how framing bias confrontation as a persuasive communication influences the structure and content of their team approach to informing audiences about the consequences of racial bias. Keith and Sam confront audiences' beliefs that racial bias may characterize other people, but not themselves.

6.1 Chelsea S. Crittle

As a young Black woman from Houston, Texas, navigating a psychology doctoral program at a small wealthy northeastern university has come with its challenges. At a meeting for a university organization aimed at identifying and reducing racial bias, I was asked to reflect on the question, "What does it feel like to be heard?" As the only graduate student of color in a room full of mostly White tenured professors, I began to consider the ways in which my identity had impacted my effectiveness in communicating the reality of racial bias in our society. My reasons for deciding to conduct research related to racial conflict stemmed from my early experience in social justice and my desire for racial equity. For me, confronting social issues impacting my community has always been at the forefront of my life goals, and pursuing a degree in social psychology has merely been a means of addressing said goals. On the other hand, many social psychologists that I have encountered enter into a PhD out of a love of scientific exploration, and the potential to remedy

pertinent social issues come as a secondary benefit. This key difference in motivation to pursue science has significantly shaped my approach to psychological research focusing on racial bias.

After earning my bachelor's degree in psychology, I started a PhD program in social psychology, conducting research focused on racial bias confrontation. My early work examined the impact of race on Black and White individuals' reactions to discussions of racial bias. I believe that the confidence and self-assurance that was instilled in me by my undergraduate institution not only helped me to navigate the world as a Black woman but also buffered me against some of the negative psychological effects of entering academia, such as stereotype threat. My undergraduate experience at Spelman, a historically Black college in the U.S., affirmed my existence as a Black woman, so rarely have I questioned whether I'm qualified or deserving of a doctorate. However, my transition from a Black college in a predominantly Black city, to a university in a predominantly White city where roughly three percent of the graduate students identify as Black, made me hyperaware of my identity in relation to my peers. Often being the only Black graduate student in overwhelmingly White spaces, influenced what I researched, how I conducted said research and the ways in which I relayed scientific findings to others (for more on power dynamics see Maseko 2020 in this volume). Even when conducting race research, Whiteness is often at the center of the research question. Thus, with every project, I was very intentional about centering marginalized voices as the main focus of my research.

Social psychological research suggests that, despite well-documented evidence that racism is a persistent issue in the United States, historically advantaged group members (i.e., Whites, men) tend to be less aware or unwilling to accept that bias is an issue in today's society. In fact, individuals from historically advantaged groups often perceive themselves to be more likely to experience bias compared to those from historically disadvantaged groups (i.e., Blacks, women; Norton and Sommers 2011). Thus, we can consider the act of relaying research related to racial bias to be persuasive in nature, such that we are attempting to convince people to *buy into* our scientific findings. Research also suggests that, ironically, even though members of historically disadvantaged groups are more likely to experience bias and discrimination they experience more backlash when they discuss issues of bias than do members of historically advantaged groups. For example, women and Blacks who attribute negative outcomes to discrimination are more likely to be viewed as complainers, hypersensitive, irritating, and troublemakers compared to individuals who do not make such attributions (Gervais and Hillard 2014; Kaiser and Miller 2001, 2003). Thus, individuals from marginalized groups studying the experience of individuals from their in-group are faces with additional pressures of getting people to *buy into* the fact that racial or gender bias, depending on the audience. As such, the threat of this pushback could shape the nature of their future research by shifting their focus away from the less commonly understood experiences of marginalized groups towards topics that are more desirable for mainstream audiences.

Communicating psychological research about the existence and essence of racial bias has its challenges, particularly when the individual relaying the information

holds intersecting marginalized identities. Before entering my PhD program, I reached out to a recent graduate from the lab that I was considering, to get a sense of her experience as a Black woman navigating academia. She began to speak about the perception of race research within our department, by those from other psychology areas (e.g., biological, cognitive). What stuck out the most from that conversation was the idea that—in her opinion—social psychology, specifically research focusing on race, was not as respected as other areas in the department. Entering a doctoral program as a 22-year-old Black woman with an interest in studying racial discrimination made me cognizant of how characteristics related to my identity would shape others' perceptions. Early in my graduate career, I noticed that during departmental talks, there was a discrepancy in the types of questions that I received from prominent professors in the department, compared to questions that the more biological or cognitive focused psychology graduate students would receive. It seemed that questions I received focused on the rigor of the methodological approach or simply expressed skepticism about the phenomenon of interest. In addition, questions asked to me by mostly White individuals outside of the social psychology area were often over-simplified, signaling to me doubts regarding the rigor of the work. Experiences like these were extremely complicated and layered. The over-arching issue that any social psychologist can experience, regardless of race or gender, is the skepticism or over-simplification of social psychological theories surrounding bias. The more nuanced issue has to do with my identity as a Black woman being the deliverer of the message. Individuals from stigmatized groups often experience what psychologists refer to as attributional ambiguity, in which they have difficulties determining whether negative feedback is a result of their work or their marginalized identity. These early experiences tempted me to approach my research differently. *Should I be more cognitive in my approach? Would adding a White participant reference group increase the legitimacy of my research?* Long before entering graduate school, I was told by my undergraduate advisor, who obtained her PhD in social psychology, that in order to study the lived experiences of Black people I would always need to include a majority group (e.g., Whites, men) as a comparison to the minority groups of interest (e.g., Blacks, women) in order to for White academics to fully grasp the value of my work.

Research suggesting that people are seen as less persuasive when they are seemingly operating out of their own self-interests could be used to partially explain the pushback that I have experienced in academia (Petty et al. 2001). Black scholars who study concepts related to racial bias are often accused of doing "me-search" (Ayoub and Rose 2016). The term me-search is pejorative, suggesting that non-White people who examine issues closely related to their own identity are subjectively biased. As a result, Black researchers studying marginalized groups must overcome challenges to being heard and respected and for their work to be seen as important. When conducting literature reviews, it is difficult to find the experiences of marginalized groups –that do not center whiteness– in notable mainstream journals. Consequently, I often find myself going to specialty journals (e.g., *Journal of Black Psychology*) in order to find research examining the lived experiences of Black Americans. For me, this reinforces the idea that researchers from

underrepresented groups examining the lived experiences of members from their own group will never have a place in prestigious, mainstream journals. Lesser or stronger forms of this bias might contribute to the historic lack of research focused on underrepresented groups in psychology (e.g., Guthrie 2004). Ironically, many White scholars who conduct research outside of the scope of racial bias also engage in what could be considered “me-search.” Meaning that, for each of us, our life experiences shape our perspectives, which influence our approach and the topics we study. Unfortunately, academia’s pushback towards “me-search” is a by-product of the pervasive White patriarchal hegemony within our society. Despite this awareness, I have grappled with altering the nature of my research to cater to an academy that values and rewards both publications and Whiteness. However, my unwavering motivation to study issues that adversely impact my community has allowed me to stay true to my interests while growing as a scientific scholar.

As a social scientist, I believe that I have a duty to conduct rigorous research that positively impacts peoples’ lived experiences. Despite this priority, conducting research reflecting very timely social issues can be challenging. The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election took many who expected a Democratic victory by surprise. The day after the election results there was a scheduled social psychology talk in my university department on the topic of prejudice. Later that day I was set to do a presentation on stereotyping and prejudice from the perspective of stigmatized individuals. However, that morning, I found it difficult to even get out of bed, let alone face the idea of discussing research. In that moment, it was difficult to see the relevance of my work and social scientific research in general. I found myself frustrated by the idea that academia seemed to be this echo chamber, and that the community that inspires my work would never benefit from our research. This moment signified to me the importance of extending my research beyond academia and into context such as policy.

Constantly seeing news coverage of blatantly racist incidents, ranging from a discriminatory Starbucks barista to a murderous police officer, often led me to wonder: “*How can my work make a real difference?*” After a few years of graduate school, I began to join organizations with a commitment to addressing social issues through empirical research and policy. The summer after my 3rd year, I served as the Dalmas A. Taylor Summer Policy Fellow for the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues. During the first week of my fellowship, I had the opportunity to deliver a short speech at a listening session hosted by the Federal Commission on School Safety (FCSS) at the Department of Education. The aim of this session was to provide comments on the FCSS’s proposal to implement armed guards in schools. My task was to use my expertise as a social psychologist researching stereotypes, racial bias, and discrimination to provide scientific evidence suggesting that this particular proposal would negatively impact Black students. I presented research showing the disparities in school discipline for Black students compared to other groups, as well as the over-policing of Black communities vs. others. For the first time, I was relaying scientific research to a non-scientific audience in an attempt to impact a very real and imminent national decision. As one of the younger speakers in line, I first began to question my expertise as a social psychologist. In fact, the

term *expert* was jarring. Being in a completely new context outside of academia allowed past criticism regarding the rigor of my research to seep into my thoughts. I wondered if I, of all people, was fit to relay this information to government officials. Despite my anxieties, I recognized my obligation to communicate the findings of racial bias research beyond academia. After reciting my speech, I was met with praise by several members of the audience, mostly Black women, who stressed to me the importance of understanding the science behind real-world decisions. This experience was a much-needed reminder of the reason that I entered into the academy: to use empirical research to address the lived experiences of people who look like me.

When I find myself in overwhelmingly White spaces discussing issues of bias, I remind myself that both my perspective as a young Black woman and my expertise on racial bias make me more than qualified to have a seat at the table. In order to find common ground within and outside academia, I tend to base any of my comments or suggestions in empirical research and reason, rather than personal experience and emotion. Knowing that academics (and some government officials) value science, I lean heavily on that common identity in order to heighten the chances of people *buying into* my argument. More often than not, my message is well-received within these spaces, but I know that this is not the case for many young Black women in the field. I believe that this is largely because my work on allyship (i.e., non-marginalized individual committed to fighting against oppression) focuses on the perceptions of Black folks, but it still caters to the interests of dominant audiences.

When posed the question, “what does it feel like to be heard?” my answer is, “it feels right.” As scientists and citizens of the world, we each bring to the table a unique perspective that can potentially allow for positive changes to society. However, due to structures of inequality, some voices are “heard” or “valued” more than others. Each of us holding privileged identities (e.g., academic, male, White) has a duty, not only to do work that uplifts communities but to make efforts to remove barriers for marginalized individuals who are already doing said work. Based on my experiences, I would encourage other researchers to work hard to stay true to their values and goals, continue to make certain that their work reflects the lived experiences of underrepresented groups, but to ground their confrontation efforts in empirical research.

6.2 Linda R. Tropp

To provide some background, I am a White, female professor who teaches undergraduate courses on prejudice and intergroup relations at a large public university in the U.S. On campus, I am often called upon to participate in panels, teach-ins, or campus-wide events that seek to confront racial bias and bridge divides between racial and ethnic groups. Beyond the university campus, I am regularly invited to deliver talks, lead seminars, and facilitate workshops on racial bias and intergroup

relations for non-academic audiences, including educators, public defenders, civil rights litigators, and legislative staffers.

Whether I find myself engaged in this work with predominantly White audiences or more racially and ethnically mixed audiences, one insight about which I am reminded, again and again, is how easy it is for us to forget how much our perspectives on the world are shaped by our lived experiences. People come into our workshops and discussions of racial bias with distinct constellations of interactions and touchstone moments that have forged their views of different groups and the multifaceted society in which we live. Correspondingly, my approach to confronting racial bias often involves challenging people—especially White people—to recognize that other people's experiences of race do not necessarily match their own.

I have found that people often question or wonder why a White woman like me would invest so much energy into studying race relations, or in seeking to transform racial bias or ease the tensions that emerge between racial groups in our society. I could easily respond to this question by sharing a bit more about my personal background, such as the fact that I was born and raised in a predominantly Black industrial steel town in the Midwestern U.S. during the 1970s–80s, and that I gained some meaningful insights from this life experience, as well as a certain degree of comfort in talking about race. But, to me, posing the question actually feels like part of the problem itself—that there is a presumption that White people should not care about race. Instead, I would be inclined to have us flip the question to ask ourselves and others: *why is there a presumption that White people should not care about race?* Investigating that question might yield its own useful insights regarding the nature of race relations in U.S. society today.

As we engage in this work, it is also important to remember that any single workshop or brief intervention pertaining to racial bias is unlikely to completely transform a person's attitudes or worldviews. Rather, at the earliest stages of this work, I believe we should consider focusing our efforts on more modest goals—such as introducing greater flexibility and spaciousness in how people think about race and race-related issues and enhancing their capacity to listen to others' views and experiences of the world. Such an approach can enhance the extent to which people may at least be willing to recognize the range of perspectives that can grow from distinct life histories and to accept that others' views are as valid as those that represent their own lived experiences.

This approach to addressing race-related issues may also be considered consistent with the phenomenological perspective in social science research (Allport 1954), whereby researchers seek to identify processes and mechanisms that guide individuals' psychological responses to their social environments. Researchers in this tradition typically seek to understand how people perceive and experience their social worlds and the psychological motivations and needs that underlie their emotional and behavioral responses to what they perceive in their worlds. Underlying this approach is an assumption that the better we understand the forces that drive group members' perceptions, emotional responses, and concerns in interracial contexts, the more effectively we will be able to communicate and enhance audience members' receptiveness to information about racial bias and inequality.

Correspondingly, I tend to approach the task of leading workshops and discussions about race-related issues with deep wells of compassion for people on all sides of the racial divide. I often view my facilitating role as that of a translator, through which I attempt to envision or channel how people from different racial groups might differentially interpret the same racialized situations or intergroup encounters. I also seek to be a resource for everyone in the room in the pursuit of greater understanding regarding the role that racial bias plays in our society. This means that I will, to the extent that I can, wrestle with potential feelings of defensiveness, threat, frustration, or anger that may emerge, and bear the brunt of any such emotions when people feel their worldviews are being challenged. In particular, I feel it is my responsibility, as a White woman, to engage other White people in these challenging conversations. This sense of responsibility is based, in part, in the hope that White people who find it difficult or threatening to talk about race may be more likely to feel heard and listened to by a fellow White person. This sense of responsibility also stems, in part, from a desire to share the burden of offering alternate perspectives on race with the People of Color in the room, rather than necessarily expecting them to "educate" their White peers.

Granted, such work is not always easy, nor is it always a simple task to engage parties from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds to a comparable degree, particularly when the people in the room have different expectations for what our discussions will entail or are at different starting points in thinking about the role of race in our society. Relatedly, I often find when I teach undergraduate courses on prejudice and intergroup relations that many students of Color appear to be relatively prepared to engage in class discussions and speak their minds, whereas many White students appear more hesitant, and perhaps concerned about what they say and how they say it. Therefore, at the very start of the semester, I set ground rules for discussion to ensure that we establish an atmosphere of active listening and mutual respect. I also inform students that I believe everyone has something valid to contribute to discussions of race because we have all been socialized in a society where the significance of racial categories permeates virtually every aspect of our lives.

Nonetheless, most White people in the U.S. have not been raised to feel prepared or ready to engage in discussions of racial bias, racial inequality, or other race-related issues. More typically, from a young age, we are encouraged not to notice or emphasize racial differences, which likely contributes to a sense of unease or lack of dexterity in addressing race-related issues as we emerge into adulthood (Cashin 2017). It is therefore not uncommon during racial bias workshops for a White person to express something such as "*I don't see race*"—not realizing how unrealistic or offensive such a statement might be perceived from the perspective of a Person of Color. People of Color are likely to be chronically aware of racial group membership in interactions with White people and in many social and cultural institutions across the U.S. (Pinel 1999). Perhaps what they really mean to say is something more along the lines of "*I don't see people merely on the basis of race*," in an attempt to convey that they recognize more of the full humanity of People of Color without necessarily reducing them to their membership in racial categories. In such cases, part of our work together involves helping these White people to gain a deeper

understanding of how members of other racial groups might interpret their comments, regardless of what they may have intended to convey.

Alternatively, during race-related discussions, some White individuals may express ways in which they feel misunderstood or upset if and when something they say is referred to as racist. I typically see such moments as opportunities for learning and reframing, acknowledging the feelings that people are expressing, as well as the challenging nature of having candid discussions about race. Instead of focusing on static dimensions of the individuals involved or portions of the conversation—such as "who they are" or "what they said"—I have found it useful to reframe discussions around alternatives that the individuals involved now have in light of being given access to new information—as if to say, for instance, "*now that you know what you know, how you are inclined to handle this type of situation in the future?*" Such reframing offers people, who may otherwise feel threatened, more room to move, and future trajectories to pursue, rather than leaving them feeling stuck or remaining focused on labels that could provoke feelings of intergroup anger, guilt, or resentment. At the same time, such reframing introduces a certain degree of responsibility for individuals to change—in how they think and in how they speak about racial issues—based on the new knowledge and insights they have gained.

In response to what I have described above, I could easily envision how my attempts to acknowledge and attend to the feelings of White people might be seen as frustrating or disappointing to some People of Color, such that I would appear to be too lenient in the face of defensive responses from White people or other forms of White fragility (Diangelo 2018). For the most part, though, I have found both White people and People of Color to be quite receptive to having an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which racial bias functions, and introduces dysfunction, within their organizations. As one recent example, a couple of years ago, I was asked by our university chancellor's office of equity and inclusion to deliver a campus-wide talk summarizing "White" perspectives on racial and ethnic diversity. I drew on research from many of my colleagues in social psychology to speak about ways in which White people tend to avoid talking about race (Apfelbaum et al. 2008), feel excluded from discussions about multiculturalism (Plaut et al. 2011), and are threatened by the prospects of losing status (Craig and Richeson 2014; Lowery et al. 2006). Though I had originally intended for these components of the talk to speak to the motivations and concerns of White people, I was surprised to learn that this work provided meaningful insights for People of Color in the audience, many of whom came up to thank me after my talk. Additionally, in doing this work, one of the things that has perhaps struck me the most is how often people—including both White people and People of Color—have come up to speak with me after workshops and seminars to ask "*How did you get so comfortable talking about race?*" Overall, I have found that People of Color in the organizations where I have worked tend to appreciate my efforts to engage their communities in open, candid discussions of race-related issues across group lines—and perhaps they also appreciate that, as a White person, I am willing to share some of the burden associated with introducing these topics for discussion.

6.3 Keith B. Maddox and Samuel R. Sommers

We are experimental social psychology professors teaching at a small, private, research-based university in the northeastern U.S. We are an interracial team (Keith is Black and Sam is White), and both of us were raised in suburban, Midwestern U.S, middle-class families. Our collaboration began several years ago in the wake of a racial bias incident on our campus. In December of that academic year, a conservative campus publication published several Christmas carol parodies. One, titled "Oh Come All Ye Black Folk," implied that the entire class of African-American freshmen that year lacked the academic qualifications for "legitimate" admission. Instead, it suggested that they had been admitted in order to help the university achieve a racial quota. While the representatives of the publication considered the carol a satirical attack on affirmative action, others on campus interpreted it as hate speech and demanded that the University respond.

The following semester, one component of the response from the administration was to hold a town hall-style event in order to help the community process the incident and think more generally about our goals related to campus climate, diversity, and inclusion. We were asked to present at the meeting to provide an academic lens through which to view stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination. We continue to give versions of that initial presentation today—to a variety of constituencies on our campus but also more widely—in which we seek to inform and empower individual and organizational efforts to mitigate the expression and impact of intergroup bias. In areas of conflict like these, minority group members often experience bias in a variety of forms, both interpersonal and institutional. Members of the majority may disagree, and even deride those who claim to experience bias. In this section, we frame our efforts to confront bias as a persuasive communication in which we consider potential interactions between characteristics of the messenger(s), the message, and the audience in order to facilitate acceptance and mitigate potential backlash (Schultz and Maddox 2013; Swim et al. 2009). We begin by situating our workshop in the context of these variables and then discuss how their interactions shape our efforts.

As messengers, we recognize various aspects of our identities that afford us privilege in some contexts and disadvantage in others. For example, academic audiences may be more receptive to us based on their familiarity with and implied status of our roles as professors. Non-academic audiences see some authority in our roles as professors (particularly male professors), but can also be a bit more skeptical due to our lack of "real-world" experience working in the "ivory tower" of the academy. Thus, we emphasize the fact that we are academic researchers, often with little to no specific knowledge about the specific policies and practices within any particular organization—an acknowledgment that may help to enhance our credibility by offsetting any suspicions that we are outsiders claiming to know more about the organization than its members. Similarly, we intentionally avoid making specific recommendations, reasoning that we lack the expertise and experience of those who are engaged in this work daily. Instead we attempt to empower our audience's

present and future efforts by providing general guidelines gleaned from psychological research that can be applied to understanding how bias can impact their personal and professional activities.

Our racial identities are also important considerations. A Black man confronting bias alone is subject to potential backlash by White audiences who may wonder whether his viewpoint lacks objectivity due to his identity. Similarly, a White man presenting this message alone may be subject to backlash from minority audiences who may wonder about the credibility and motives of an individual who ostensibly cannot speak from experience. Theoretically, these concerns are mitigated when the presentation is given jointly (for more on the value of a mixed research team see Taylor et al. 2020 in this volume). The skepticism and concerns of one subset of the audience about one speaker are less plausible when applied to the other. From that perspective, a joint presentation by a minority and majority group member has the potential to mitigate backlash and facilitate acceptance. Additionally, the "tag-team" nature of our presentations (i.e., we take turns addressing the audience while working cooperatively toward the same goal) provides a positive model of cross-race dialogue and interaction as we support and extend each other's comments. Indeed, the feedback that we have received has been overwhelmingly positive—in several cases citing these features, as well as the rapport that we share as friends and colleagues.

We have, individually and jointly, led workshops for several audiences, large and small, across several types of organizations, comprised of individuals playing a variety of roles (e.g., secondary and higher education, businesses, and professional organizations). We have led workshops for students, faculty, administrative staff, administrative leadership, businesspeople, engineers, lawyers, police officers, judges, doctors, nurses, and mental health practitioners. These organizations have goals ranging from mere exposure to information about implicit bias to seeking recommendations for implementing strategies to facilitate dialogue and mitigate bias.

Whenever possible, the research evidence that we introduce is selected based on the most relevant domain for the audience. For academic audiences of faculty or students, we may discuss the concept of stereotype threat and the role of race in attributional thinking (Crocker et al. 1991; Steele and Aronson 1995). For legal audiences, we may discuss the role of race in law enforcement and judicial outcomes (Correll et al. 2002; Eberhardt et al. 2004). For staff and administrators, we typically introduce evidence of how race can influence résumé screening and personnel interviews (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2003; Word et al. 1974). We select these domains based on our assumption that research that is more personally and professionally relevant can facilitate attention and effortful processing.

In our workshops, we confront the idea that social and material outcomes in society are guided by egalitarian processes. In our message, we offer the perspective that many of the processes that shape outcomes that disadvantage members of underrepresented groups reflect interpersonal and institutional biases. Specifically, we contrast the idea of implicit bias to more traditional (explicit) conceptions of bias and discuss the implications that both types of bias have for judgment and

behavior. We do this with a combination of interactive demonstrations and the presentation of empirical findings from the social sciences (e.g., Maddox and Sommers 2017). Our message is derived from, and consistent with, the critical mass of social psychological research suggesting that stereotypes and prejudice can affect our perception, judgments, and behavior in ways of which we are sometimes unaware (Kawakami et al. 2017). It validates minorities' experiences of discrimination and the subsequent consequences for their material and psychological outcomes. It also recognizes that traditional ways of conceptualizing racial bias—stemming from the actions of people who are dispositionally racist—cannot capture the full range of bias expression. Finally, it recognizes that efforts to increase and maintain diversity is not only a social justice imperative, but it also contributes to higher creativity, perseverance, and performance in a variety of domains (Juvonen et al. 2018; Phillips 2014; Phillips et al. 2006; Sommers 2006).

Unsurprisingly, not all audiences are equally receptive to this message. Individuals and organizations can be resistant for a variety of reasons, but one that we find most prominent is the idea that they do not see themselves as a part of the problem (Thomas and Plaut 2012). We are also cognizant that, for the most part, the audiences that we speak with are majority White, male, and liberal-leaning. Here, we use the concept of implicit bias to introduce the possibility that bias can be expressed by individuals who consider themselves to be egalitarian. This is a critical message that alerts individuals to the possibility that they may not be as egalitarian as they think. To do so, we use a group-based version of the race-based implicit association test (IAT) in our workshops (Greenwald et al. 1998). The critical trials of our modified version of the test require participants to categorize names and words by slapping their left or right leg, using responses that either reflect stereotypic pairings (e.g., left for Black/unpleasant, right for White/pleasant) or counter stereotypic pairings (e.g., left for Black/pleasant, right for White/unpleasant). A rough estimate of aggregated level of bias is determined through a gross comparison of the time it takes to get through the stereotypic vs. counter stereotypic pairings. While the magnitude of the difference varies, audiences typically take longer to finish the counter stereotypic than the stereotypic trial.

The underlying nature and predictive validity of the IAT has been criticized in the literature (Blanton et al. 2009). We embrace this skeptical mindset by asking respondents to place themselves in the shoes of researchers, posing questions that critique the task and the potential implications of its findings. The responses we get mirror those we get in the classroom: procedural critiques (e.g., order effects or handedness), stimuli questions (e.g., familiarity with names), "what if" questions about the identity of the respondents (e.g., racial group memberships, cultural background), and alternative conceptual explanations (e.g., cultural associations with color words "black" and "white" as opposed to racial groups). We are typically able to provide evidence addressing these critiques by referencing the literature and reflecting on our experiences in past workshops (e.g., we regularly switch the order in which respondents complete the critical trials, with little to no effect on the overall pattern of results). While most seem to appreciate this approach, there are times when some individuals refuse to acknowledge the validity of the task, insisting that

the demonstration is rigged in some way, intentionally or unintentionally, to demonstrate a desired outcome. For these individuals, we validate their concerns about this specific task while pointing out that it is just one task with weaknesses that are not necessarily shared by others that explore implicit social cognition (Gawronski and De Houwer 2014). If we lack time to address all questions, we often invoke the concept of suspension of disbelief to encourage participants to retain, but temporarily hold their skepticism at bay as they consider the bulk of the evidence conveyed in the presentation. By the end, some may still doubt the veracity of the IAT, but most seem convinced by the overall message conveyed through empirical findings. In addition, we make it clear that the IAT demonstration is not a diagnostic tool that allows us to assess and curtail any individual's expression of bias. Instead, we use it to encourage individuals to consider a broader range of factors that can influence the existence and expression of bias. Specifically, when individuals can recognize how cognitive and motivational processes, organizational policies and procedures, and social contexts can breed and foster bias, they may become more willing to engage across racial boundaries to develop and or support new and creative programs and policies to help mitigate the expression, perpetuation, and impact of racial bias.

Sometimes we find that an organization is actually in a place beyond the message we can offer. On some occasions, individuals approach us after the workshop to say that they were looking for information on what the next steps should be, and how to take them. This kind of mismatch is challenging, but even in these cases, audiences can benefit from repeated exposure to a familiar message, like re-reading a book and seeing elements of the story you might have missed the first time. Accordingly, these members of the audience do express some degree of appreciation at hearing the message again. Others recognize that their peers in the organization may benefit from repeated exposure to the message. One of the most common responses that we have noticed comes from audience members from underrepresented groups, who have told us that they themselves were familiar with our message, but grateful because their majority colleagues were not—and needed to hear it. As members of minority groups, there are several contextual forces that conspire to limit confrontations, with interpersonal and professional consequences. These individuals are often appreciative that we say things that they feel they personally could not. One person who had become weary of making similar claims within the organization said they appreciated having this message come from an outside source and watching their colleagues grapple with our message as a spectator rather than a messenger.

For those organizations or individuals who are already well aware of the ways that bias can impact judgments and even the mechanisms that underlie it, our message can be frustrating. Nonetheless, we have become even more explicit about what we can and cannot offer during our initial discussions with the organizers who enlist our services, characterizing our effort not as a solution, but rather the beginning of a conversation about racial bias that requires continuation.

As experimental social psychologists, our focus is largely on understanding how the social context can influence intrapersonal processes related to bias expression. For the most part, we attempt to "stay in our lane" and discuss the science of stereotyping and prejudice rather than exploring historical or political forces; each of

which represents rigorous disciplinary perspectives outside of our expertise as experimental social psychologists. However, we do emphasize that the approach we offer should be taken in the context of other intellectual and practical approaches that can also meaningfully inform individual and organizational efforts. To put our approach in context, we often introduce several terms that also contribute to the complicated relationships between race and societal outcomes—terms such as privilege, structural bias, and power. Thus, we also hope to make the connections to how societal context and institutional factors can contribute to the expression and impact of bias.

Organizations vary greatly with respect to their self-awareness of the challenges that they face. When it comes to compositional diversity, most recognize that they lack racial diversity, while others with similar composition may see themselves as quite diverse. This can provide a sense that they are already doing a good job, and thus individuals may resent the need for our message. We recognize how this framing may affect how receptive people in the organization are to our message. This is akin to the type of threat experienced by individuals who consider themselves egalitarian but are confronted with evidence that bias can influence their judgments (Howell et al. 2017). To address these concerns, we offer suggestions for other kinds of efforts that organizations can attempt beyond increasing the diversity of their membership. Compositional diversity is usually what people point to and where they direct their energies—for good reasons. However, we propose that if the organization is not prepared to support a diverse membership, those efforts to increase diversity are for naught. For example, the concept of inclusion suggests that we consider the nature of the institutional climate and the extent to which is welcoming to those from underrepresented backgrounds. Several organizations we have visited have rooms decorated with portraits of their past leaders, and almost invariably, these portraits display older White men. We point out that organizations have a right to celebrate their history, but it may come at the cost of denying others a sense of belonging. Also, in contrast to a “if we build it, they will come” approach, the membership should be active in encouraging those from underrepresented backgrounds to participate in organizational activities.

When it comes to recruitment, retention, and advancement, we encourage organizations to examine the procedures and policies in place for potential bias opportunities and to consider strategies to mitigate its influence. For example, recruitment through collaborations with minority-serving organizations can expand the pool of potential candidates. In addition, finding better metrics for the qualities desired in a successful employee can help organizations move beyond conclusions gained from heuristics like where a candidate went to school. Finally, we encourage organizations to set standards for progress and assess their efforts periodically. These data should guide efforts to revise or discard unsuccessful efforts and to replicate and expand successful ones.

In summary, interactions between message, messenger, and audience characteristics play an important role in determining how a confrontation effort is received. Consideration of these potential interactions can help individuals design confrontation techniques for maximum potential impact—with important emphasis on

potential. Our work as an interracial team that considers our audiences and the limitations of our message seems to be effective—people report enjoying our presentation. However, there is an important caveat—while we can view our effort through the lens of empirical research, we lack data on how it translates into actual organizational outcomes. Researchers and practitioners alike should not only use evidence to craft interventions, but also work to assess the degree to which these efforts contribute to the reductions in the expression and impact of racial bias in organizations comprised of individuals who hold conflicting views about the existence, causes, or consequences of racial bias.

6.4 Conclusion

We have outlined several elements with which we wrestle regularly, in our continuing development as scholars who seek to raise awareness among various audiences, but there are undoubtedly other elements that we have not addressed. For example, the audiences that we speak to typically attend these sessions voluntarily. When voluntary, we assume that those who are "turned off" by the topic will decide not to attend and thus are not in the room. In light of the ever-changing political climate, our concerns about who is not in the room have only grown. In the wake of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election representing a shift toward conservatism, it would seem imperative to reach out beyond our comfort zones in an effort to reach audiences that we typically do not reach—those that are more conservative, rural, or non-college educated. This has led to something of a crisis of confidence, as we wonder whether we are targeting our work toward those audiences who need it most. We are convinced that the challenges faced by well-meaning individuals in organizations that seek out this message voluntarily are real and meaningful. However, in order to affect more widespread change, these efforts need to be adapted and scaled to reach a much broader range of individuals in our society.

To summarize, each of our efforts has evolved over time to reflect a variety of challenges that we face in the context of informing others about the nature and impact of racial bias. Our identities and motivations shape each of our experiences in different ways, affording advantages and disadvantages depending on the identities and motivations of our audiences. For Chelsea, her identity as a Black woman pursuing social justice-oriented research elicits challenges to her credibility from fellow psychologists and politicians. But her identity as a HBCU graduate helps to buffer her from experiencing these challenges as more than just minor setbacks in the pursuit of her goals. For Linda, her identity as a White woman confronting racial bias can lead others to question her motives—suspicions that may be a reflection of the larger problem our society faces. But that same identity affords her a certain freedom and privilege to make discussion of racial disparities more normative among White people, and to approach this task with respect and empathy for their own lived experiences. For Keith and Sam, their identities as a Black man and a White man confronting racial bias can lead audience members to question their

motives as well. But, by working as a team and selecting audience-relevant material, they can offset the impact of these challenges to benefit understanding and acceptance.

The examples we discuss provide some insight as to how we leverage this information to facilitate our efforts to confront bias in organizations experiencing conflict. If we were to make a recommendation to others, it would be that a consideration of identity should shape research and practice surrounding racial bias confrontations efforts. Confrontation efforts are persuasive communications that can be tailored to your strengths and weaknesses, and the motivational needs of your audiences. In order to make those efforts more effective, consider your own identity and that of your audience to better anticipate reactions to your message. While perhaps not directly applicable to all readers, we hope that this elaboration of our experiences is enlightening. Ultimately, the choices we make will depend on who we are, and the specific contexts of conflict in which we work.

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