

4-8-2016

# Presenting Information About White Privilege and Systemic Racism: Message vs. Messenger

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## Abstract

In our study, we found evidence for some effect on how students perceive information about systemic racism and White privilege based on the perceived identity of the presenter.

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## Recommended Citation

Aiello, Aileen; Glassock, Maci; Schubert, Catherine; and Edwards, Jared, "Presenting Information About White Privilege and Systemic Racism: Message vs. Messenger" (2016). *Student Research*. 5.

[https://dc.swosu.edu/cpgs\\_sbse\\_psychology\\_student/5](https://dc.swosu.edu/cpgs_sbse_psychology_student/5)

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# Presenting Information About White Privilege and Systemic Racism: Message vs. Messenger

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## Abstract

In our study, we found evidence for some effect on how students perceive information about systemic racism and White privilege based on the perceived identity of the presenter.

### Introduction

- American audiences are continually presented with information regarding racially and gender driven discrimination.
- With inspiration drawn from the Battle, Hill, and Zorwick (SWPA 2015) research, and contemporary cross-racial violence capturing the nation's attention, we were driven to examine the ideas young people had about White privilege and systematic racism as defined by Sue and Sue (2012).
- We wanted to know if our collective perception regarding this information is changed when the presenter's race, gender, or nationality changes.

### Methods

#### •Participants

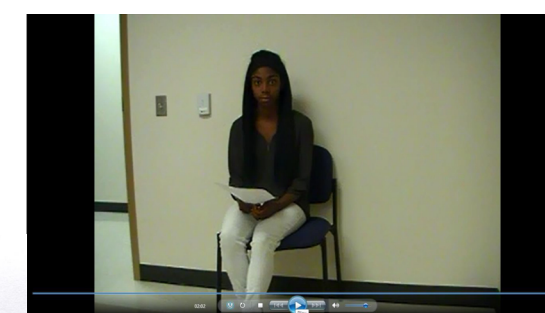
- 146 General Psychology students
- 69% female
- 66.4% European American
- Mean Age of 19; Modal Age of 18

#### •Materials

- Materials for this study consisted of 8 short videos of students presenting information on White privilege and systemic racism, a demographic questionnaire, and a survey about the information.

#### •Procedures

- Four students- two students of European decent (one male and one female) and two students of non-European descent (again one male and one female) were filmed presenting scripted information.
- Each student filmed the script twice, once identifying themselves as American and once identifying themselves as an international student.
- First, the participants were given a demographics questionnaire, then shown a video condition, and finally given a survey concerning how they felt about the film's content and how it affected the world around them



Institutional Racism and White Privilege Script

Hello,  
My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
I am (a student from Oklahoma) (2 an international student), and I am going to talk to you about institutional racism and white privilege.

Institutional racism is a systemic issue where some people benefit to the detriment of others in contrast to the individual racism of a single person's choices of how to react to and relate to people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Institutional racism can be found in political, educational, and industrial institutions. Those perpetuating institutional racism are often well intentioned, and those benefitting from institutional racism are often passive and unaware recipients of those benefits.

White privilege is based on receiving the benefits of institutional racism in the United States. For example if loan officers at a bank explicitly or implicitly trust White loan applicants more than applicants from other racial groups, it is easier for people who are White to buy a house. The White home buyer did not necessarily seek an advantage based on race, but the impact on other potential home buyers who are not White is real.

Here are some examples of other cases where White privilege may play a role:

- Being given the benefit of the doubt when shopping in a store.
- Not being seen as suspicious when driving through an affluent neighborhood.
- Not being seen as suspicious when driving an expensive car.
- Not having to prove that you are smart because of teachers' initial reactions to your race or ethnicity.
- Being able to believe that everyone is treated fairly and being able to consider racism an issue of the past.
- Not having to be seen as a representative or your entire racial or ethnic group when race and ethnicity are discussed.

All of these are examples of benefits that come from being White in a system of institutional racism, whether the person knowingly seeks them out or not.



### Results

- Outcomes were explored based on presenters' racial identity, gender, and nationality.
- There were no main effects or interactions for the presenters' concerns/issues; however, there were significant results for the other three outcome variables.
- For the question of whether the presentation was informative, there was a significant main effect of the presenters' gender ( $F(1, 7)=8.88, p=.003$ ).
- For the question of whether the presenter changed the participant's view of race in society, there was a significant interaction between the presenter's race and gender ( $F(1, 7)=5.50, p=.02$ ).
- For the question of whether the presenter did a good job explaining the concept, there was a main effect of the presenter's race ( $F(1, 7)=5.21, p=.02$ ).

### Discussion

- The results suggest that there is a significant relationship between the gender of the person providing information and how informative the presentation is perceived to be.
- The perceived race of the presenter predicted how well the participants felt the information was explained
- Finally the combination of the presenter's gender and race predicted the experienced impact on view of race in society.
- These results suggest that there is an underlying racial and gender-based privilege that translates to students' willingness to accept information about privilege.

