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Ambivalent Prejudice in News Media: Does Social Hierarchy Threat Change How We View Reporters?

Rebecca E. Burchette

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AMBIVALENT PREJUDICE AND NEWS MEDIA: DOES SOCIAL HIERARCHY THREAT CHANGE HOW WE PERCEIVE REPORTERS?

by

REBECCA BURCHETTE

(Under the Direction of Amy A. Hackney)

ABSTRACT

Despite research demonstrating the importance of news media, there remains a gap in the literature on how the reporter influences the perception of the information. This current experiment aims to fill that gap by evaluating how reporter race and social hierarchy threat alters perceptions of both the reporter and the information. White participants read an article with content that indicated that the current racial hierarchy is either under threat or likely to continue; the article was written by either a Black or White reporter. Participants then completed measures of perceptions of warmth and competence of the reporter, acceptance levels towards the information provided in the article, and social dominance orientation. The primary hypothesis was that social dominance orientation would modify the perception of Black and White reporters providing information that either threatened or confirmed the existing racial hierarchy. A majority of participants did not pass the manipulation and attention check questions that were preregistered with the Open Science Framework (OSF). The results did not support any of the hypotheses, which was most likely due to the very small sample size of participants who passed the manipulation and attention checks. The sample size must be increased before coming to any conclusions about the effects of racial hierarchy information and reporter race on perceptions of the reporter and news content. This research has implications for increasing participant attention to subtle manipulations and the reporting of racial inequality and diversity in the newsroom.

INDEX WORDS: Competence, Informant, Ingroup, News media, Prejudice, Reporter, Outgroup, Race, Social dominance orientation, Social hierarchy, Warmth

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A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

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MASTER OF SCIENCE

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Every day, nearly all Americans (99%) are exposed to some sort of news media (Purcell, Raine, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, 2010). Most Americans (92%) view the news from multiple sources including television, print, and online via computers and mobile phones (Purcell et al., 2010). With the steady consumption of news media, it follows that it has an influential power in society. For example, Behr and Iyenger (1985) conducted a longitudinal study comparing the salience of topics on people's minds with the number of lead news stories reported on the topic. Results demonstrated that the number of lead stories was positively associated with the topic salience (Behr & Iyenger, 1985). Another study reestablished the association between reported stories and topic salience by finding that the more coverage a nation received on American news, the more important viewers perceived a topic (Wanta, Colan, & Lee, 2004).

These studies establish that the news plays a vital role in how Americans view the world around them. However, past research does not address the role that the reporter plays in the perception of news media. Surveys by the American Society of Newsroom Editors have found that the number of Black journalists has hardly changed from 5.42% to 5.98% in the last twenty years (ASNE, 1997; ASNE, 2017). National surveys of unemployment rates of minority journalists in general is starkly higher (44.9%) than White journalists (27.2%) (Becker, Vlad, & Simpson, 2014). Although there are undoubtedly several interpersonal and structural factors underlying this racial disparity in employment, the purpose of this thesis is to experimentally examine one potential contributing factor: does the majority White population have a negative attitude towards Black journalists in news media and the information that Black journalists are presenting?

Group Identification and Information Perception

While there is a lack of research directly assessing news media reporters, past research has assessed whether ingroup and outgroup identities affect the perception of information. Even infants have a preference for information from an ingroup member. For example, infants prefer unknown objects when the objects are introduced to them by a native speaker of their language when compared to unknown objects presented by a foreign speaker. This was demonstrated by the infant spending more time looking at the novel object presented by the native speaker than the foreign speaker due to the familiar accent (Marno, Guellai, Vidal, Franzoi, Nespor, & Mehler, 2016). While this result is based on accent, it does establish that a preference for ingroup members is present early in life. This preference for ingroup members as reporters does not seem to change as people age. In a sample of adults, Esposito, Hornsey, and Spoor (2013) found similar results using a criticism of Australians (i.e., racism or laziness) as a stimulus from either an ingroup (Australian) or outgroup member (English, American, or French). Participants were randomly assigned to one of three arguments that either had no justification, weak justification, or strong justification for the statement made (Esposito et al., 2013). The quality of the argument consistently influenced the acceptance of the information only when the reporter was an ingroup member, such that a strong justification was much more likely to be accepted over a weak justification or no justification. However, the information was significantly more likely to be rejected from an outgroup member, no matter the quality of the justification (Esposito et al., 2013).

The phenomenon of ingroup preference can also be observed with racial identities. Rosenberg-Kima, Plant, Doerr, and Baylor (2010) studied how race and gender affect the desire to be an engineer. Female participants heard either a male or female computer model that was either White or Black explaining why they should think about going into engineering (Rosenberg-Kima et al., 2010). Overall, the participants preferred a female model, matching with their sex. Additionally, the White participants preferred a White model, and the Black participants preferred a Black model, consistent with their racial identity (Rosenberg-Kima et al., 2010). In another study using health information, participants read a story either by a spokesperson with a high ethnic identity or a low ethnic identity (Spence, Lachlan,

Spates, Shelton, Line, & Gentile, 2013). The spokesperson was always a Black Female, but would randomly be shown with a Facebook page either featuring posts that associated her with high ethnic identity (stories focusing on Black subjects) or a low ethnic identity (neutral stories about baseball or celebrities) (Spence et al., 2013). White participants perceived the spokesperson with low ethnic identity as more credible, and the Black participants perceived the spokesperson with high ethnic identity to be more credible (Spence et al., 2013). Since the information presented both times was the same, it suggests that perceptions were affected by the feelings that are activated based on the association with the spokesperson. Based on this information, I would expect White participants to generally trust information from a White reporter more than from a Black reporter due to ingroup preference towards White reporters. However, what if the information is varied such that the information is discussing a racial social hierarchy?

Past research indicates that preference for information about social hierarchy depends on whether the person is a victim of the topic discussed. When being confronted about racial issues, a distinct pattern takes place with targets of prejudice and nontargets of prejudice. Czopp and Monteith (2003) assessed White participants' reactions to being approached about a racially biased response while changing the race of the confronter. If the confronter was White (nontarget), participants experienced less guilt and discomfort than if the confronter was Black (target) (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). If the confronter was Black, participants saw the confrontation as an overreaction to the situation. Furthermore, participants were more likely to feel irritated and antagonistic toward the Black confronter as compared to the White confronter (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). In another study, White participants read about how their implicit prejudices made them part of a societal problem. The information they read was written by either a Black or White author. The participants then reported their perception of the author and of the information (Gulker, Mark, & Monteith, 2003). Participants were more accepting of the information if the author was White (Gulker et al., 2013). Participants reported that the Black author's argument met their expectations, in that they were not surprised that the Black author was upset about the situation, but they perceived the

author with less respect (Gulker et al., 2013). In terms of the current research, these studies on racial information suggest that White participants will be more accepting of information on the social hierarchy from a White reporter and feel more positively toward the White reporter compared to a Black reporter because of the lack of acceptance and negative emotions associated with hearing information from a victim of the social hierarchy. However, a White participant who is conscious of and actively fighting their own anti-Black racism would not show these patterns of behavior (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). A difference in Social Dominance Orientation can account for this difference in responses from White participants.

Social Dominance Orientation

Social Dominance Orientation is based on Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) Social Dominance Theory that describes the recursive relationship between social and institutional mechanisms and the group-based social hierarchy. The group-based social hierarchy differs from an age-based hierarchy or gender based hierarchy because the groups are established using arbitrary reasoning such as stereotypical behaviors (i.e., wearing hijabs, speech patterns, etc.) or physical attributes (i.e., nose width, skin tone, etc.) (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). The theory also argues that it is not only the behavior of the dominant group members that keeps the hierarchy in place, but the behavior of the subordinate group members as well (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

For instance, if a subordinate group is seen as aggressive and then is publicly seen violently protesting and fighting for equal rights, it can establish a self-fulfilling prophecy. Specifically, if the dominant group oppresses the subordinate group for perceived aggression, that creates an environment where the subordinate group feels as though they need to be aggressive to stop the oppression; the dominant group, in turn, will have their belief about the aggressive subordinate group confirmed and defend the oppression of the subordinate group. At the same time, subordinate groups also show lower levels of ingroup favoritism when compared to dominant groups and can even favor the dominant group if they see the hierarchy as legitimate, creating asymmetrical behavior (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

Asymmetrical behavior occurs when the subordinate group sees the legitimacy of the social hierarchy and demonstrates more outgroup favoritism and less ingroup favoritism than the dominant group (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Rates of asymmetrical behavior are low, but still are impactful on the social hierarchy. By having legitimizing beliefs in favor of the social hierarchy, members of dominant groups and members of subordinate groups can justify the social stratification between them (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

The belief in the social hierarchy can be measured using Sidanius and Pratto's (1999) Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). The SDO consists of two subdimensions, belief in egalitarianism and dominance. Those who believe less in egalitarianism and those who believe in dominance will have higher SDO scores (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Other measures, such as liberal political leaning or openness from the Big Five Personality Traits, have been found to negatively correlate with anti-Black bias, but these measures do not consider exceptions that SDO does (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). For instance, conservatism has a high positive correlation with belief in a social hierarchy, but liberalism can also be associated with a belief in a social hierarchy (i.e., Communist leaders over the worker population) (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDO accounts for the similarities in direction of political leaning and the belief in social hierarchies by not asking about political beliefs, but rather belief in some groups of people being dominant over other groups.

Based on the evidence of positive associations between high levels of SDO and dominant group members' beliefs in the social hierarchy, I can predict that White participants higher in SDO will be more threatened by a news article discussing racial progress, which will threaten the social hierarchy and, therefore, their dominant position in the social hierarchy. Specifically, a study by Wilkins and Kaiser (2013) found that White participants who believed that the social hierarchy is legitimate (accounted for in SDO) were threatened by information about racial progress and were more likely to report belief in the existence of anti-White bias. However, Wilkins and Kaiser's (2013) study did not include a stimulus that establishes the social hierarchy (lack of racial progress) which I will include. I believe it would follow the logic that White participants would not be as threatened by the information, but also still might perceive

the outgroup reporter (Black author) more antagonistically due to seeing the reporter as a complainer (Gulker et al., 2013).

Warmth and Competence

In terms of these antagonistic emotions, I would expect it to be observed through ambivalent prejudice. The theory of ambivalent prejudice suggests that people judge others based on two dimensions: warmth and competence. Warmth indicates the perceived intent of the target; higher warmth indicates good intentions (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Competence indicates the perceived ability to act on intent; higher competence indicates better ability to act on that intent (Fiske et al., 2002). People evaluate these dimensions based on competence and status. Specifically, status is negatively correlated with competence, and competition is negatively correlated with warmth (Cappariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Fiske et al., 2002; Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2015; Russel & Fiske, 2008). These stereotypes can be mixed (i.e., high competence but low warmth; low competence but high warmth), and people tend to prefer the positive trait when describing the target individual or group (Bergsieker, Leslie, Constantine, & Fiske, 2012; Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske, 2018). Specifically, a person is more likely to describe someone who is low in competence and high in warmth using only terms associated with warmth while leaving out their competence. Bergsieker and colleagues (2012) have found that this is predicted by audience publicity and mediated by social self-preservation; that is to say, a person is more likely to omit negative information to an acquaintance than to a close friend due to wanting to preserve a positive self-image.

Stereotypically, White Americans regard other White Americans as high in both warmth and competence, but regard Black Americans as slightly lower in warmth and lower in competence (Bergseiker et al., 2012). However, White Americans also view Black professionals as slightly higher in both warmth and competence than other Black Americans (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007). This would suggest it is possible that White participants would evaluate a Black reporter posed as a journalist with a similar pattern to a Black professional, but I would not expect similar ratings in warmth between the Black reporter and the White reporter. The expectation to the different warmth ratings is due to the Black

reporter presenting information on a racial topic as a target that can create more of a perceived threat, and, therefore, create perceived competition for resources. This would lower their warmth ratings according to past research (Cappariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Fiske et al., 2002; Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2015; Russel & Fiske, 2008). However, due to the perceived status of both reporters as journalists, I do not expect a difference in participants' ratings of competence (Cappariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Fiske et al., 2002; Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2015; Russel & Fiske, 2008).

Based on the research on Social Dominance Theory, having only White participants should increase the activation of racial prejudice. White populations have a higher likelihood of possessing high SDO scores (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and White populations have a higher chance of being threatened by racial progress due to being dominant in the social hierarchy (Wilkins & Kaiser, 2013). Therefore, White participants are more likely to be influenced by the manipulation of reporter race and level of threat to the social hierarchy.

Hypotheses

Overall, this analysis leads me to five main hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1. Based upon the findings that people prefer information from ingroup members (Esposito et al., 2013; Gulker et al., 2013; Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Rosenberg-Kima et al., 2010; Spence et al., 2013; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2013), it is hypothesized that White participants will be more accepting of information from an ingroup member (White reporter) when compared to an outgroup member (Black reporter) regardless of the type of social hierarchy threat. In sum, there will be a main effect of reporter race on ratings of acceptance such that White participants will rate higher acceptance of information from a White reporter than a Black reporter (Figure 1).

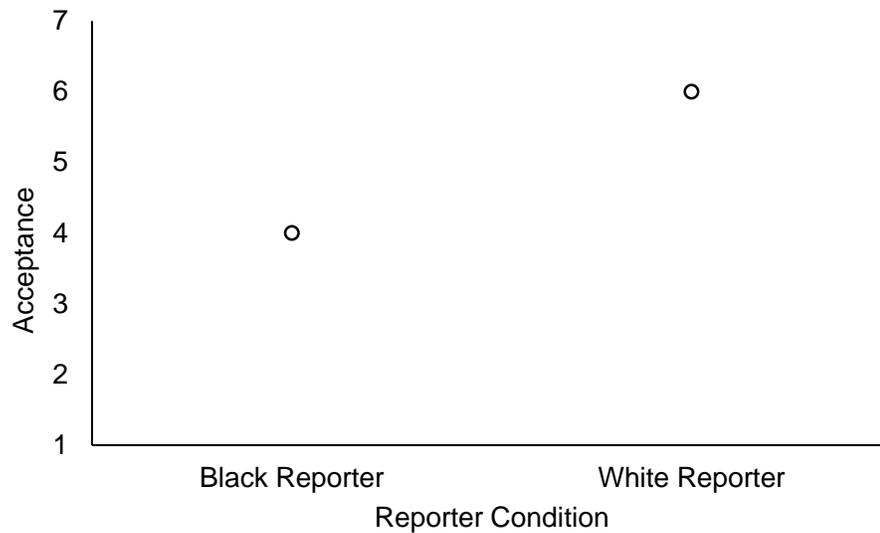


Figure 1. Main Effect of Reporter Race on Acceptance

Hypothesis 2. Based on findings suggesting that people higher in SDO feel threatened by a change in the social hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2013), it is expected that participants higher in SDO will rate reporters of the social hierarchy threat as less warm than reporters of social hierarchy establishment regardless of the race of the reporter. In sum, there will be an interaction of SDO and type of racial information such that participants higher in SDO will rate reporters of social hierarchy establishment higher in warmth than reporters of social hierarchy threat (Figure 2).

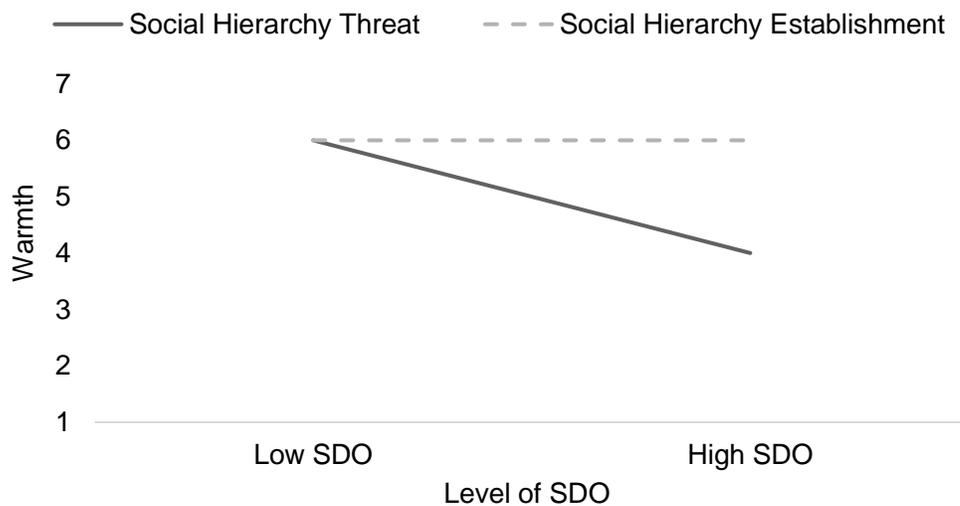


Figure 2. Interaction of SDO and Threat Condition on Warmth

Hypothesis 3. Based on findings suggesting that people higher in SDO feel threatened by subordinate groups with high status and that they are more likely to see the target of information as complaining, (Gulker et al., 2013; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Wilkins & Kaiser, 2013), it is hypothesized that participants higher in SDO will perceive more warmth in the White reporter than the Black reporter regardless of the type of social hierarchy threat. In sum, there will be an interaction effect of SDO and reporter race such that participants higher in SDO will rate the White reporter higher in warmth than the Black reporter (Figure 3).

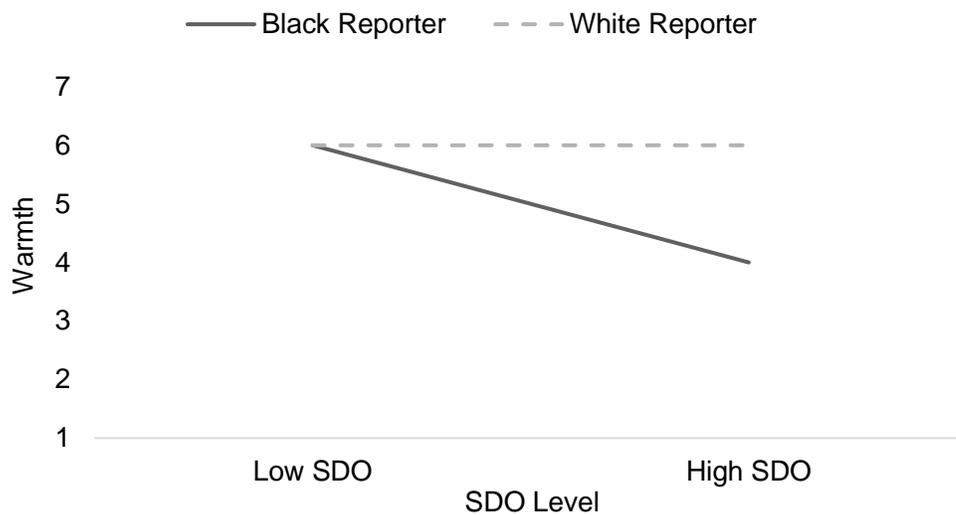


Figure 3. Interaction of SDO and Reporter Race on Warmth

Hypothesis 4. Based on the two previous hypotheses, I would also expect a three-way interaction between SDO, type of social hierarchy threat, and reporter race such that those low in SDO will not show variation in perceptions of reporter warmth regardless of type of social hierarchy threat and reporter race; it is expected that those high in SDO will show variation in perceptions of reporter warmth due to both type of social hierarchy threat and reporter race. Specifically, participants high in SDO will rate the White reporter presenting the social hierarchy establishment information highest in warmth (no different than participants low in SDO), followed by the White reporter presenting social hierarchy threat information and the Black reporter presenting social hierarchy establishment information. Participants high in SDO

will rate the Black reporter who is presenting social hierarchy threat information lowest in warmth (Figure 4 and Figure 5).

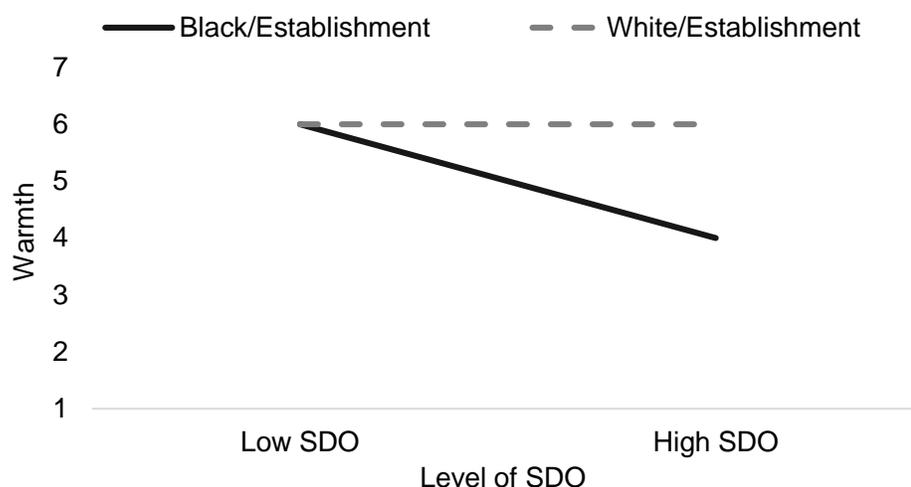


Figure 4. Three Way Interaction on Warmth (Social Hierarchy Establishment)

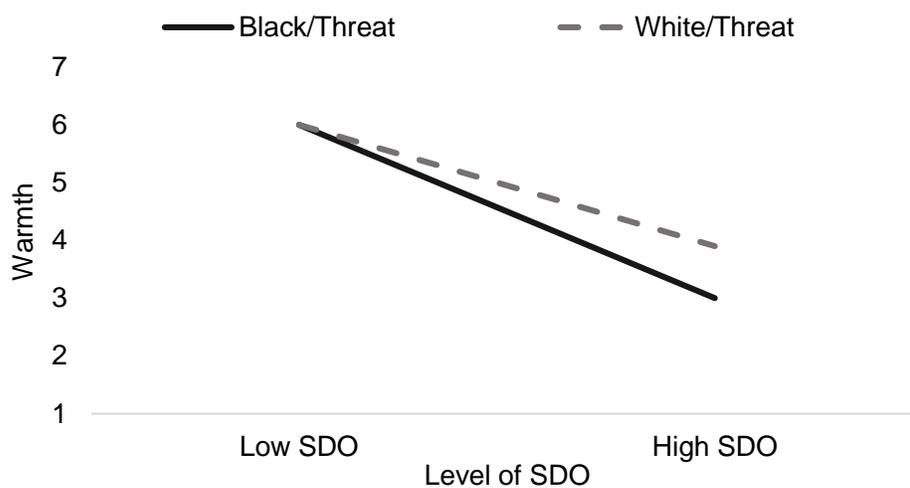


Figure 5. Three Way Interaction on Warmth (Social Hierarchy Threat)

Hypothesis 5. Due to findings that competence is influenced by status (Cappariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Kervyn, Fiske, & Yzerbyt, 2015; Russel & Fiske, 2008; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and that Black professionals are rated equally in competence as other White populations (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002), it is hypothesized that White participants higher in SDO will rate the Black reporter no differently in competence than the White reporter, no matter the type of racial information presented. In

sum, there will be a lack of interaction between SDO and reporter race on ratings of competence for the reporters.

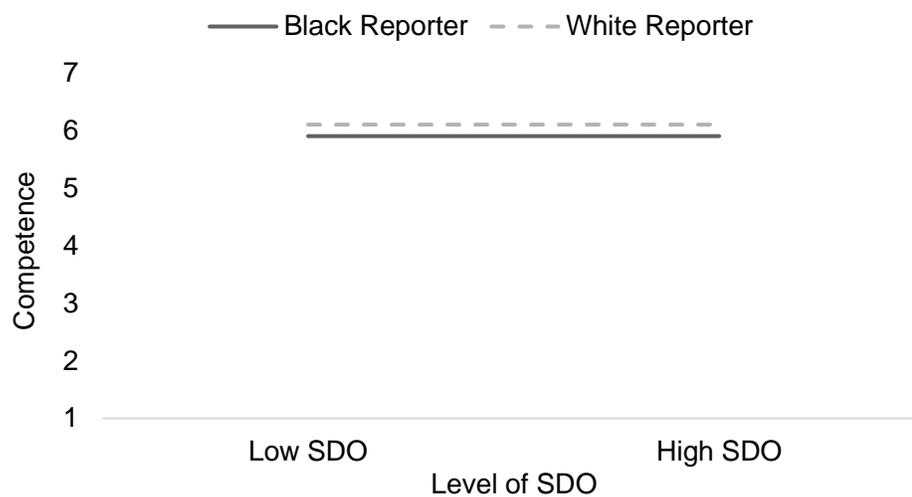


Figure 6. Interaction of SDO and Reporter Race on Competence

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Participants

We recruited 150 participants from Georgia Southern University's SONA system. Participants received SONA credits towards their course of choice. A G-power analysis recommended 119 participants for the design of the current research (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). After exclusionary criteria, the sample used in data analysis was 47% male and 53% female. Participants had an average age of 19.68 ($SD = 1.67$) that ranged from 18-24.

We allowed students of any racial identity to complete the study, but we decided *a priori* only to analyze the data from White participants. White populations are more likely to have more variability in SDO scores (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and more likely to be threatened by a change in the social hierarchy (Wilkins & Kaiser, 2013) due to being dominant in the social hierarchy.

Materials

Informed Consent. All participants read over, evaluated, and signed an informed consent before participating in the study. The informed consent described the purpose, risks and benefits, confidentiality, participant rights, and the primary investigator's and faculty mentor's contact information.

Article Stimuli. The experimental article used in Study 2 and 3 from Wilkin and Kaiser's (2013) study was used as the stimulus for social hierarchy threat. The article for social hierarchy threat described accomplishments of minority leaders (i.e., President Obama) that showed that racial based social classes are on the decline (Wilkin & Kaiser, 2013). In order to create a similar control stimulus that establishes the social hierarchy, I modified the experimental article. Instead of suggesting racial progress, the control article I created suggested that the racial social status does still exist despite salient minority leaders (i.e.,

“Despite the increase of minority leaders such as President Obama, we still witness racial discrimination on a daily basis in the form of social issues such as police brutality and the rise of the alt-right.”).

Reporter Stimuli. The author was presented as a group of names at the top of the article. The authors were either depicted with Black names or White names in order to manipulate the race of the reporter.

Research has shown that it is possible to manipulate race via names that have been confirmed to activate thoughts of African American and White origins at face value (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Cotton, O’Neill, & Griffin, 2012). Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) used White and Black names based on birth name trends and pilot tested the names to confirm that they would elicit an association with the given race. The latter study by Cotton and colleagues (2012) used the names directly from Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) as well as racially ambiguous uncommon names and Russian names. This study also confirmed that the White and Black names used in Bertrand and Mullainathan’s (2004) study are associated with their given race (Cotton et al., 2012). Due to a lack of findings suggesting that gender would play a role in the responses from participants in the current study as well as Cotton and colleagues (2004) study finding that female Black names are perceived as less Black than male Black names, the current research only used male names. The White reporters’ first names were Brad, Greg, and Todd; the Black reporters’ first names were Darnell, Tyrone, and Jermain. In terms of surnames, a recent analysis of the 2010 census indicates that the three most common surnames are Smith, Johnson, and Williams which were used for the Black and White reporters (Comenetz, 2016).

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). For the study, I used SDO₇, the most recent SDO scale, to measure the belief in social dominance (Ho et al., 2015). Participants agreed via a 7-point Likert scale to sixteen statements (i.e., “Group equality should be our goal” and “Some groups of people must be kept in their place”). After reverse scored items were calculated, the scores for each question were averaged for a cumulative SDO score.

The SDO₇ can be split into two subdimensions of dominance (SDO-D) and egalitarianism (SDO-E) and be analyzed separately (Ho et al., 2015). The first eight questions referred to SDO-D and the latter eight questions referred to SDO-E. Ho and colleagues (2015) described people high in SDO-D as preferring to actively suppress subordinate groups to sustain the social hierarchy and willing to use aggressive measures to do so whereas those high in SDO-E prefer more political methods of keeping inequality and are more likely to have “subtle legitimizing ideologies” than those high in SDO-D. Based on Ho and colleague’s (2015) description, SDO-E was also more consistent with the status legitimizing beliefs (SLB) measure used in Wilkins and Kaiser’s (2013) study which used the social hierarchy threat article that I use in the current study. However, SDO-E is a recent update to the SLB and has more literature to support its use (Ho et al., 2015; Levin, Sidanius, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1998). While SDO-E and SDO-D do correlate with each other’s criteria (e.g., SDO-E is positively correlated with zero-sum competition, a criteria of SDO-D), each one more effectively accounts for their own criteria. Finally, Ho and colleagues (2015) discussed that because aggressive methods of inequality are decreasing, there was more likely to be an influence of SDO-E in existing social hierarchies than SDO-D, which would suggest that SDO-E was more relevant to the population of interest. Both subdimensions were used in the current study. For this sample, the SDO₇ measure was reliable ($\alpha = .88$).

Warmth & Competence. Warmth and competence were measured using 10 statements that the participants agreed to using a 7-point Likert scale. The statements began with “This author is...” and were followed by either 4 different words correlated with warmth or 4 different words correlated with competence (Fiske, 2018). The words correlated with warmth were warm, trustworthy, friendly, and honest (Fiske, 2018). The words correlated with competence were competent, intelligent, skilled, and efficient (Fiske, 2018). Each sub dimension (warmth and competence) was averaged for a cumulative score. For this sample, the warmth dimension was reliable ($\alpha = .68$) and the competence dimension was reliable ($\alpha = .90$)

Article Acceptance. To measure acceptance, a modified version of the PANAS (Hepler & Albarracin, 2013) measured the participants' positive and negative affect in terms of the article information. Participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to 10 statements, five measuring positive affect and five measuring negative affect (i.e., "This article makes me feel hostile" or "This article makes me feel proud"). Finally, one statement established trust in the information presented (i.e., "I trust the facts presented in this article."). During analysis, the negative subdimension for the PANAS was reverse scored and averaged as one score. For this sample, the PANAS measure was reliable ($\alpha = .95$).

Procedure

Participants came into the lab to take an online survey in person to gain control over the environment in which participants completed the experiment. Upon consent, they were instructed to begin an online survey on Qualtrics. Participants were run in groups consisting of a maximum of three people. Within the lab, there is one computer on the left side wall and three computers on the right side wall separated by a privacy screen. For added privacy, the middle computer on the right side was not used so that there was an empty spot between participants.

The survey started by instructing participants to read an article from an online news source and evaluate it. When participants proceeded from the instructions, they saw one of two reporter stimuli (Black names or White names) and one of two article stimuli (social hierarchy threat information or social hierarchy establishment information). After reading the article and confirming to a yes or no question that they did read the article, participants viewed questions evaluating how they perceived the article (acceptance) and the reporter (warmth and competence). The sections evaluating the reporter and article were counterbalanced such that participants were randomly asked to evaluate the article first and the reporter second or vice versa. Once they responded to the stimuli assessment, participants took the SDO₇ to establish their level of belief in social dominance. Afterwards, participants answered demographic questions. To confirm that participants were paying attention, they were asked three manipulation check

questions that asked details about what the article was about and who wrote it as well as a randomly placed catch question in the evaluation of the author (“Please select strongly disagree for this statement”). Finally, they also answered an additional manipulation check question (i.e., “The main point of the article was...”), a response check question (“Did you respond seriously to all questions asked in this study?”), and a suspicion check question (“What do you think the purpose of this study was?”) to confirm that participants did not catch on to the race and social hierarchy hypothesis in the research. All of these questions were asked with assurance that the responses would not affect the credit that participants would receive for the study. They were then thanked for their time and emailed a debriefing statement at the end of data collection. See figure 6 for a model of the procedure.

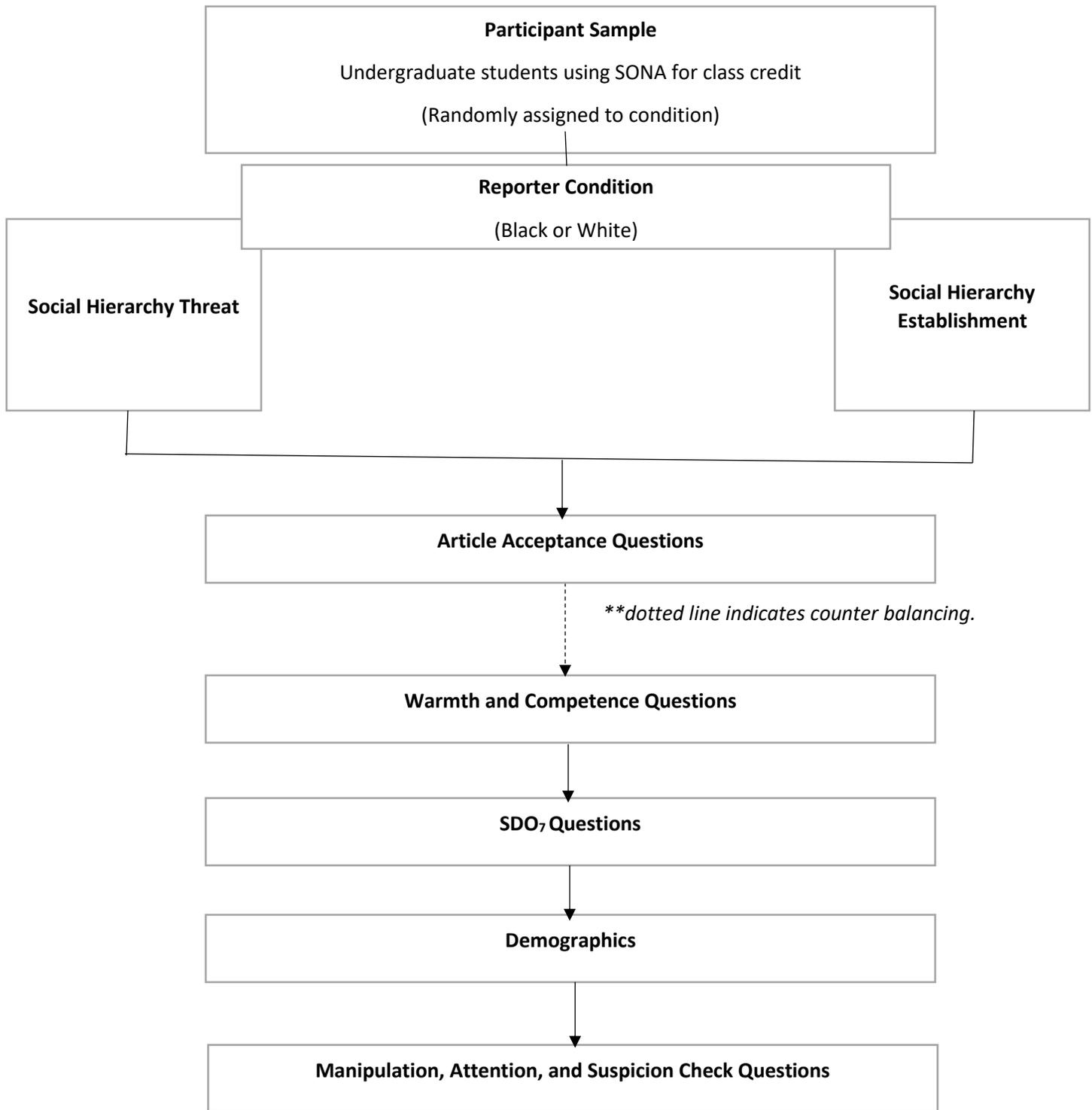


Figure 7. Procedure Model

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Exclusionary Criteria. The criteria below were preregistered with the Open Science Framework (OSF).

Overall, there were 150 respondents. Before data analysis, a number of filters were run on the data to exclude careless participants or participants who did not qualify. It was decided *a priori* to run only White participants as high SDO scores are more likely for those at the top of the social hierarchy and, therefore, are more likely to feel threatened by changes to the social hierarchy (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). I removed 53.33% of participants who did not respond with the ethnicity of “White.” At this point, 70 White participants were in the sample for data analysis.

In addition to indicating a racial identity of White, participants had to answer catch questions correctly. For an attention check, participants were asked to choose “somewhat agree” for a Likert-type scale statement. Those who did not select “somewhat agree” were filtered from the data. I removed 7% of the White participants based on this criterion.

Participants were also asked at the end of the survey if they answered all questions seriously and if they answered any questions randomly. Participants who said they did not answer seriously or answered randomly were removed from the data. I removed 7.14% of White participants based on this criterion.

As a manipulation check, participants were asked about the main point of the article, the sex of the author, and the race of the author. The responses from participants who did not answer correctly were filtered out of the data. I removed 22.86% of the White participants who did not respond correctly to the main point of the article, 31.43% who did not respond correctly to the sex of the author, and 48.57% who did not respond correctly to the race of the author.

Finally, participants were asked to write about their beliefs regarding the purpose of the study. Research assistants who were blind to the hypotheses and conditions of the experiment were instructed on how to identify participants who had guessed the hypothesis of the research. Those who correctly guessed the hypothesis were filtered out of data analysis. Only two participants correctly reported the hypothesis.

Once all the exclusionary criteria was filtered, I retained 27.14% ($N = 19$) of White participants who participated in the study.

Data Analysis. Each result is written in the order of the hypotheses presented.

Hypothesis 1. I predicted that there would be a main effect of reporter race on ratings of acceptance such that ratings of acceptance would be higher for the White reporter when compared to the Black reporter. To test this hypothesis, I ran an independent samples t -test.

Participants who read an article written by a White reporter ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.54$) were similarly accepting of the article information as participants who read an article written by a Black reporter ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.14$), $t(17) = -.27$, $p = .79$.

The results are illustrated in the graph below.

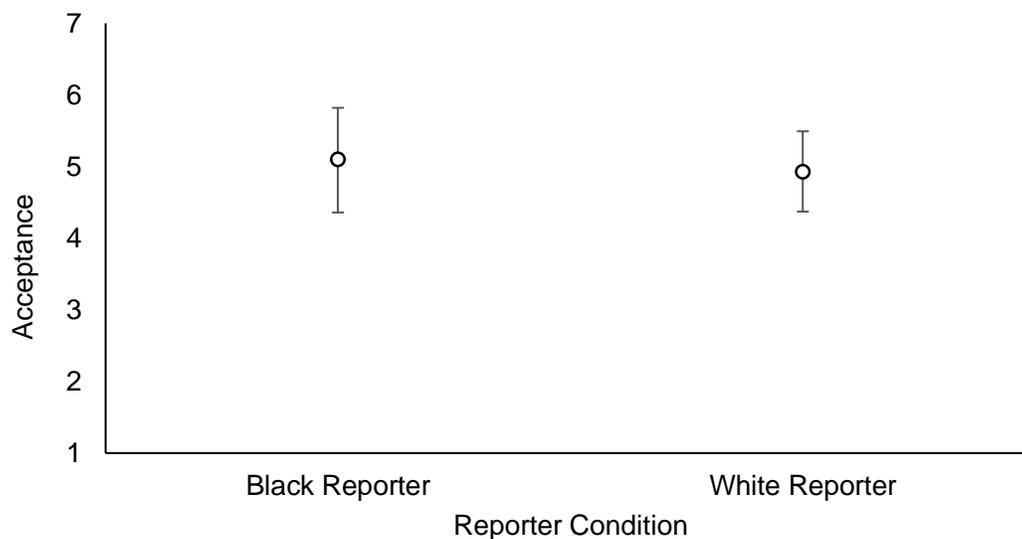


Figure 8. Nonsignificant Main Effect of Reporter Race on Acceptance

Hypothesis 2. I also predicted that participants higher in SDO would rate the reporters of social hierarchy threat as less warm than reporters of social hierarchy establishment regardless of the race of the reporter. Specifically, there would be an interaction between SDO and threat condition.

To test this hypothesis, I ran a two-step hierarchical regression in which the first step evaluated the effect of SDO scores and threat condition separately. The variables did not account for a significant amount of variance in warmth ratings (see Table 1 in Appendix A).

In the second step, I added the interaction term between SDO scores and threat condition to the model which also did not account for a significant amount of variance in the warmth ratings (See Table 1 in Appendix A).

The results are illustrated in figure 8 below in which the lines represent the best fit line for all data points within the labeled group (i.e., the dotted line represents the best fit line for all data points for those in the Social Hierarchy Threat condition).

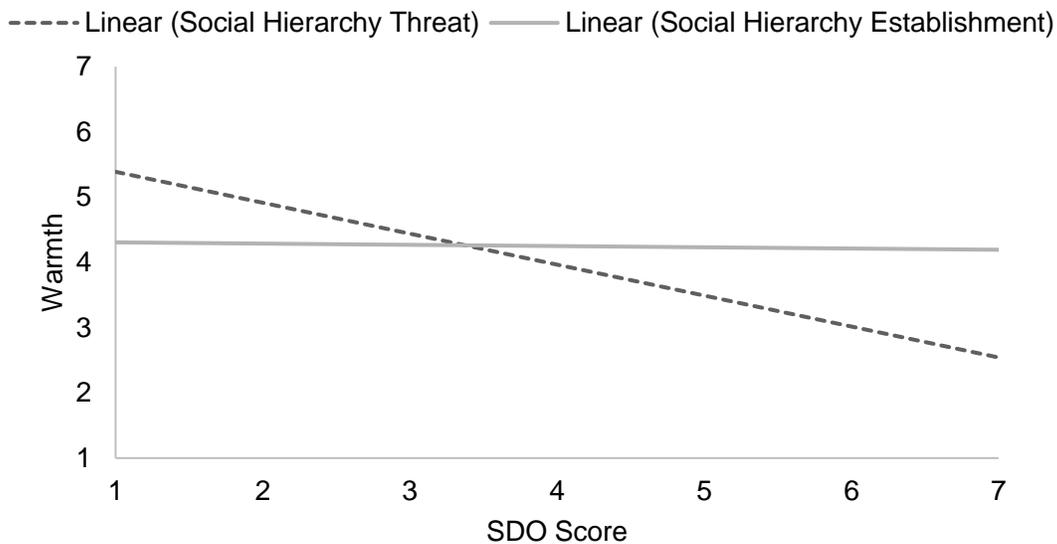


Figure 9. Nonsignificant Interaction between SDO and Threat Condition on Warmth

Hypothesis 3. I hypothesized that participants higher in SDO would rate White reporters higher in warmth than Black reporters regardless of threat condition. Specifically, there would be an interaction between SDO and reporter race.

To test this hypothesis, I ran a two-step hierarchical regression in which the first step evaluated the effect of SDO scores and reporter race separately. The variables did not account for a significant amount of variance in warmth ratings (see Table 2 in Appendix A).

In the second step, I added the interaction term between SDO scores and reporter race to the model which also did not account for a significant amount of variance in the warmth ratings (see Table 2 in Appendix A). The results are illustrated in Figure 9 below.

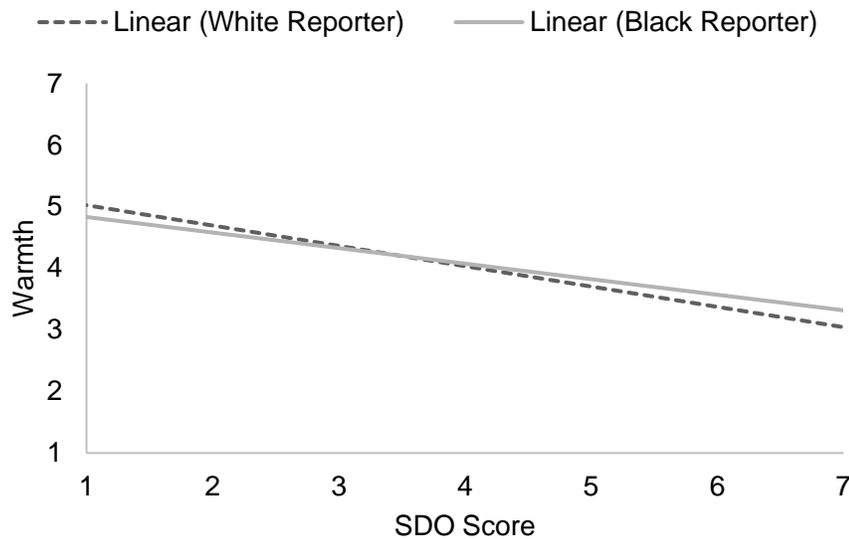


Figure 10. Nonsignificant Interaction between SDO and Reporter Race on Warmth

Hypothesis 4. In addition, I hypothesized that those higher in SDO would rate the Black reporter of social hierarchy threat lowest in warmth followed by the White reporter of social hierarchy threat and the Black reporter of social hierarchy establishment and, therefore, rate the White reporter of social hierarchy establishment highest in warmth as compared to the other conditions. Specifically, there would be a three-way interaction between SDO, reporter race, and threat condition on ratings of warmth.

I ran an ANCOVA to analyze the data in which SDO was entered as a covariate. The predicted interaction on warmth was not significant, $F(4,14) = 1.54, p = .24$. The results are illustrated in figure 11 and 12 below.

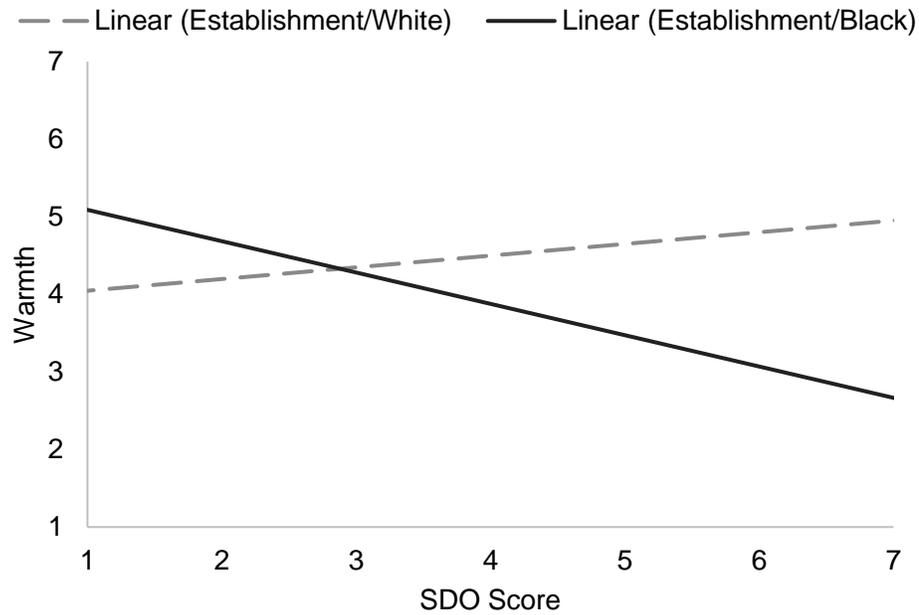


Figure 11. Nonsignificant Three Way Interaction with Social Hierarchy Establishment on Warmth

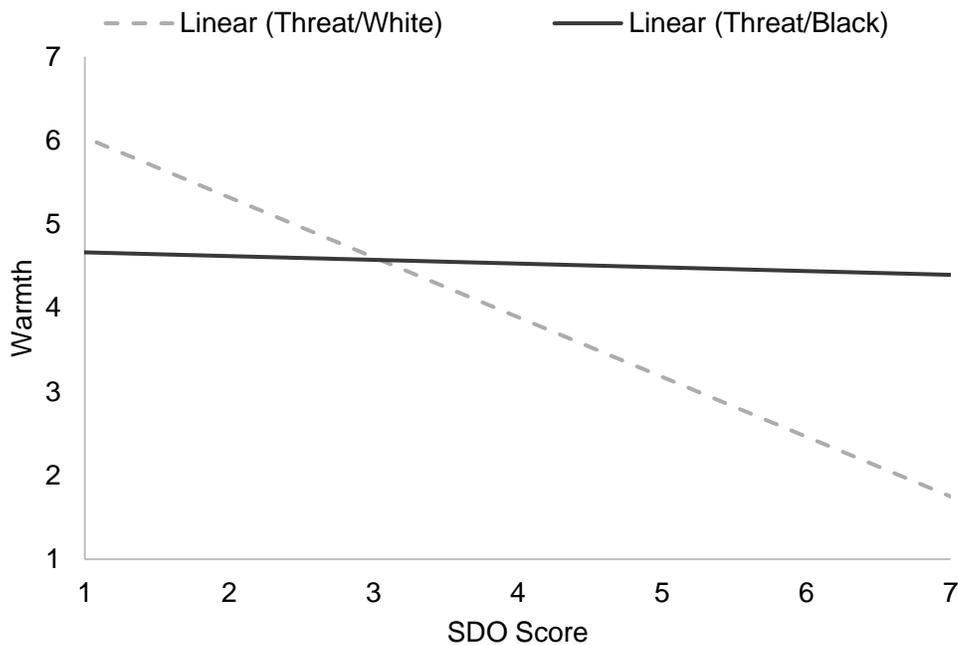


Figure 12. Nonsignificant Three Way Interaction with Social Hierarchy Threat on Warmth

Hypothesis 5. Finally, I hypothesized that those higher in SDO would rate the White reporter no differently in competence than the Black reporter. Specifically, there would be a lack of interaction between SDO and reporter race on ratings of competence.

I ran a two-step hierarchical regression to analyze the data in which the first step evaluated the effect of reporter race and SDO scores on competence separately. The variables did not account for significant variance in competence ratings (see Table 3 in Appendix A).

In the second step, I added the interaction term of reporter race and SDO scores to the model. The interaction term did not account for significant variance in competence ratings (see Table 3 in Appendix A). The results are illustrated in figure 12 below.

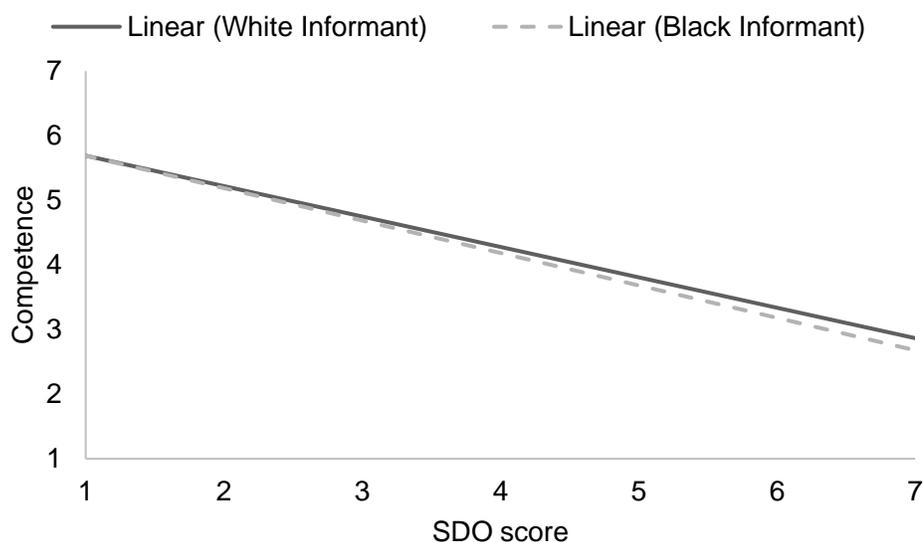


Figure 13. Nonsignificant Interaction Between SDO and Reporter Race on Competence

Exploratory Analyses. I preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) that all the exclusionary criteria as listed in the beginning would be included. Therefore, the results above are presented to reflect the preregistered information. However, it was found that 31.43% of White participants ($n = 22$) did not answer the author sex question correctly, and 48.57% ($n = 34$) did not answer the author race question correctly. In the instructions, participants were not specifically told the sex or race of the author but told to focus on the article. Since the sex and race of the author were presented

through name only, and there is evidence that race can be primed unconsciously (Craemer, 2010; Dovidio et al., 1997; Graham & Lowery, 2004), it is possible that the race of the reporter was effectively manipulated without the conscious knowledge of the participant. Additionally, two of the check questions (“Did you respond seriously to all the questions...” and “Did you respond randomly to any questions”) could have caused confusion over the meaning of “responding seriously” or “randomly.” These questions excluded less than 10% of White participants ($n = 5$), but due to the possibly confusing nature of the questions, I removed them from the filter. After removing these questions from the exclusionary criteria, roughly 70% of White participants ($n = 49$) remained in the data set. Therefore, the results were ran again without the exclusionary criteria of recalling the author sex and race.¹

¹ The exploratory analyses did not alter the results; although some p values were lower, none were statistically significant.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to examine how reporter race and level of hierarchy threat within the information alters how people perceive both reporter and the information, especially when accounting for people's belief in the social hierarchy.

Specifically, in this study participants rated the warmth and competence of a reporter and acceptance of the information after being randomly assigned to be exposed to either a Black or White reporter writing about either a change in the current racial hierarchy or a lack of change in the current racial hierarchy. Based on the results, only one hypothesis was supported. It was not supported that participants would rate the information from the White reporter higher in acceptance than from the Black reporter. It was also not supported that participants higher in SDO would rate the White reporter higher in warmth than the Black reporter regardless of threat condition, nor was it supported that participants higher in SDO would rate the reporter of the social hierarchy establishment article higher in warmth than the reporter of the social hierarchy threat article regardless of race of the reporter. Consequently, it was not supported that these previously stated two-way interactions would combine such that participants higher in SDO would rate the White reporter of the social hierarchy establishment article highest in warmth, followed by the White reporter of the social hierarchy threat article and the Black reporter of the social hierarchy establishment article, and ending with the Black reporter of the social hierarchy threat article rated lowest in warmth. In support of the last hypothesis, however, participants did not rate the White reporter any differently in competence than the Black reporter. This could be based on the fact that White populations and Black professionals are not seen as any differently in competence (Cuddy et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002), but with such a small sample size, drawing such conclusions would be premature. The limitations of our sample will be discussed in the following section.

Limitations

The small sample size creates extreme limitations with drawing any conclusions from the current research. Small sample sizes are known to have low power, creating a barrier from finding results in support of the hypotheses, as well as creating a greater likelihood that any significant results are false positives due to the individual differences between the groups (Button, Ioannidis, Mokrysz, Nosek, Flint, Robinson, & Munafo, 2013). Therefore, with a sample of 19, or even 45, it is hard to draw conclusions on the unsupported hypotheses or even the one supported hypothesis showing a lack of influence of reporter race and SDO score on competence.

One of the reasons for the small sample size was the amount of participants who incorrectly recalled the reporter race. The race of the reporter was a crucial part of the manipulation for the current study, and yet participants failed to recall such information. One possible explanation is that because participants were not explicitly told the sex or race of the reporter and were told to pay attention to the content of the article, they did not explicitly report the correct race and gender of the reporter. However, it is possible that participants were unconsciously exposed to the race of the reporter, such that associations with race were automatically activated and influenced the interpretation of the article information and beliefs regarding the reporter; past research on subliminal priming supports this possibility (Craemer, 2010; Dovidio et al., 1997; Graham & Lowery, 2004). However, even when such exclusionary criteria were removed from the filtering process, the sample size was still too small with the current data to draw conclusions ($n = 45$).

The other major criteria that limited the sample size was participants' racial identities. Only 47.78% identified as White in the original sample. However, with the SONA system, there lacks a way to discretely filter candidates for studies. It is possible to let participants know that only White candidates can participate in certain studies, but not without explicitly saying something to the effect of "White students only" in the study description for all candidates to see. Advertising that only students of a particular racial identity are eligible for a study would likely lead to participant selection effects as well as raise suspicion regarding the purpose of the study. Therefore, the most logical solution for this situation is

to continue collecting data until the sample size of White participants is sufficient (at least 119 as the g-power analysis suggests).

Finally, the participants in the current sample had a significantly lower average SDO score ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.08$) than the average score for White populations found by Ho and colleagues (2015) ($M = 2.98$). One possibility for this difference is due to our limited sample of Georgia Southern University students while Ho and colleagues (2015) used a national survey with a variety of ages and education levels.

Future Directions

Foremost, such a study needs many more participants than the current data allows. Creating a larger sample size will give a more accurate depiction (Button, Ioannidis, Mokrysz, Nosek, Flint, Robinson, & Munafo, 2013) of how reporter race and hierarchy threat condition affects perceptions of warmth and competence of the author and acceptance of information while accounting for belief in social dominance. The diversity of the population should also be expanded outside of the college population. Our current sample had significantly lower SDO scores which was most likely caused by the limitations of our college-aged sample (Ho et al., 2015). With SDO scores being lower, it is most likely that this altered participants responses to minority reporters and information threatening the social hierarchy. If the sample was increased and diversified to a community sample, it is more likely that SDO scores would better reflect the national average, and, thus, have more expected responses to the predictors.

The effectiveness of the reporter race manipulation can be improved. In the instructions of the survey, participants were explicitly told to pay attention to the content of the article with no mention of the authors. This strategy seems to effectively convince participants that it is something about the article content that is the focus of the study, rather than the reporter; indeed, only two participants out of the original 150 guessed the true purpose of the study. While I effectively masked the presentation of the reporter race manipulation, it appears that the manipulation was not strong enough to affect participants'

thoughts and feelings. It may be possible to more effectively manipulate the reporters' race within the article by adding a short line such as "As Black men in America we see..." and make it obvious that the "Black men" are the authors of the article (same for "White men" in the White reporter condition). These changes could lead to race being more salient in the minds of participants while still hindering them from consciously thinking about how the race of the reporter is altering their responses.

Ideally, the names should be changed to pictures that could explicitly show the participant the race of the reporter. In order for this to be effective, the pictures would have to be of a group of reporters as groups are more likely to be stereotyped while individuals may be seen as an exception to a stereotype (Stangor & Schaller, 2000). The pictures would also have to be clearly White and Black as any ambiguity in race is less likely to prime stereotypes for said race (Maddox & Duke, 2008). However, there is a stark lack of diverse face databases that are controlled for in traits such as warmth and competence. Any face database I found with controlled pictures lacked racial diversity and was comprised of mainly White faces. Even harder to find was any controlled picture database with groups of people. Groups of people existed in picture databases, but the pictures were varied and did not control for confounding variables that would have disrupted the manipulation. There is a need in this field for diverse face databases and controlled picture databases consisting of groups of people.

Conclusions

Overall, while no conclusions can be drawn from the current data, this research is an important start in the literature on whether or not White populations have a negative view of Black journalists and the information they present, especially when that information threatens the current social hierarchy. Changes need to be made to the current manipulations and sample size, but this research could possibly tell us how people process information based on reporter race as well as their own individual beliefs. In a society where diversity is becoming more common, there remains a stark lack of change in the last 20 years in news media in terms of journalist diversity (ASNE, 1997; ASNE, 2017). My research aims to find out if this area remains predominately White because of how the dominant population in America,

White Americans, perceive nonWhite reporters, especially for White Americans who have a strong belief in the current social hierarchy. If we find that perceived threats to the racial hierarchy affects the diversity in news media, research can address how to change viewer's perceptions of nonWhite reporters as well as the information they present, thus increasing diversity. In the words of Dr. King (1947): "An individual has not begun to live until he can rise above the narrow horizons of his particular individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity."

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APPENDIX A

TABLES

Table 1 <i>Results of the Linear Regression Analysis of the interaction between SDO and threat condition</i>									
	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	LLCI	ULCI	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. R^2
Step 1									
Overall Model						2.26	2, 16	.137	.123
Intercept	11.07	.000	5.47	4.42	6.52				
SDO Scores	-1.83	.086	.32	-.69	.05				
Threat Condition	-1.20	.247	-.44	-1.20	.340				
Step 2									
Overall Model						2.10	3, 15	.143	.155
Intercept	10.21	.040	5.86	4.64	7.09				
Interaction Term (<i>SDOxThreat</i>)	1.27	.224	.455	-.31	1.22				
<i>Note.</i> The dependent variable for this regression was warmth									

Table 2 <i>Results of the Linear Regression Analysis of the interaction between SDO and reporter race</i>									
	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	LLCI	ULCI	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. R^2
Step 1									
Overall Model						1.44	2, 16	.266	.152
Intercept	10.18	.000	5.21	4.13	6.30				
SDO Scores	-1.70	.109	-0.31	-.69	.08				
Reporter Race	-.22	.827	.09	-.733	.91				
Step 2									
Overall Model						.91	3, 15	.458	.154
Intercept	5.88	.000	5.08	3.24	6.93				
Interaction Term (<i>SDOxRace</i>)	.19	.854	.08	-.81	.96				
<i>Note.</i> The dependent variable for this regression was warmth									

Table 3 <i>Results of the Linear Regression Analysis of the interaction between SDO and reporter race</i>									
	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	β	LLCI	ULCI	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. R ²
Step 1									
Overall Model						3.21	2, 16	.067	.197
Intercept	11.49	.000	6.14	5.01	7.28				
SDO Scores	-2.53	.022	-.48	-.88	-.08				
Reporter Race	.11	.914	.04	-.81	.90				
Step 2									
Overall Model						2.01	3, 15	.156	.144
Intercept	6.85	.000	6.19	4.27	8.12				
Interaction Term (<i>SDOxRace</i>)	-.07	.943	-.03	-.96	.89				
<i>Note.</i> The dependent variable for this regression was competence									