


Trumping Racism: The Interactions of Stereotype Incongruent Clothing, Political Racial Rhetoric, and Prejudice Toward African Americans

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ABSTRACT. Clothing type and exposure to racial rhetoric may influence prejudice toward African Americans. We used a between-group design with clothing type (stereotype congruent or incongruent) and exposure to racial rhetoric (strong/weak/none) as independent variables. We found a main effect for clothing type ($p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .71$) and racial rhetoric exposure ($p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .65$), but no interaction. Participants' Symbolic Racism scores were significant covariates, positively related to prejudice. Participants rated African American models in stereotype incongruent clothing more positively. Viewing President Trump speak negatively about African Americans significantly decreased participants' prejudice of African American models. The findings of this study show how the clothing one wears, the racial oratory one views, and symbolic racism can drastically impact one's perceptions. Research should seek to reduce automatic judgments and continue to pursue how other clothing styles affect perceptions, as well as how major political figures can play a role in those judgments.

Keywords: stereotypes, clothing, symbolic racism, President Trump, perception



Open Data and Open Materials badges earned for transparent research practices. Data and materials are available at <https://osf.io/vhcu8/>.

People of color face the harmful consequences of racism and oppression (Culotta, 2012; Davids, 2002; Hesse, 2004). African Americans in particular have faced these consequences for hundreds of years, from the African slave trade that dates back to the mid-1550s, to the Jim Crow Laws of the late 1800s, and to current evidence of modern racism (Folmsbee, 1949; Henry & Sears, 2002; Pfeifer & Bernstein, 2003; Wheat, 2011). Further examination of the ways to reduce the epidemic of racism toward African Americans is necessary. Although reducing racism in a single study may be overly optimistic, we set our goals on reducing prejudicial perceptions. We merged two disparate research areas and explored whether

wearing stereotype incongruent clothing decreases prejudicial perceptions, and if exposure to racial rhetoric increases prejudice.

Prejudice Toward African Americans

For many years, scholars have documented how people of color are stereotyped and the prejudice against them (Culotta, 2012). The consequences of these prejudicial perceptions have severe negative effects, especially for African Americans (Brief, Dietz, Cohen, Pugh, & Vaslow, 2000; Johnson, Ashburn-Nardo, & Lecci, 2012; Lybarger & Monteith, 2011; Tukachinsky, Mastro, & Yarchi, 2015). For example, racism can have employment ramifications (Brief et al., 2000). Participants

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who scored high on the Modern Racism Scale and had a business-related reason to discriminate against African American job applicants selected a significantly smaller number of these candidates (Brief et al., 2000). When hired, African Americans have less opportunity to be promoted to managerial positions than European Americans due to discrimination in the workplace (Tomkiewicz, Brenner, & Adeyemi-Bello, 1998). Prejudice is also related to mental health, as demonstrated in a study on African American residents in two New York neighborhoods who faced increasing frequencies of racism and consequently displayed more distress, symptoms of depression, and reported more poor mental health days (i.e., days where symptoms are abundant and cause substantial impairment; Kwate & Goodman, 2015).

There are also judicial consequences of prejudice. In one study, participants acted as mock jurors by reading descriptions of juvenile defendants, reading the defendant's trial transcript, answering questions pertaining to the strength of the evidence, and determining the consequences the defendant should face. These mock jurors believed that African American-on-European American crimes were more plausible. Male mock jurors displayed more prejudicial racial bias in judgments of guilt for juvenile African American defenders (Stevenson & Bottoms, 2009). A study on people's perceptions of rape victims found that participants, specifically those with higher scores on authoritarianism, were less likely to agree with an African American victim's claim of rape against an African American defendant compared to a European American victim's rape claim (Landwehr et al., 2002). The effects of prejudice and racism, especially against African Americans, can be detrimental to many aspects in the lives of numerous individuals.

Clothing and Prejudice

Clothing choice may moderate prejudicial biases by activating either positive or negative schemas. Bartlett (1932) defined a schema as a tool used to actively arrange generic knowledge obtained from past experiences for the benefit of future interactions. On one hand, schemas can negatively influence one's perception of others, specifically based on their race (Clemans & Graber, 2013). On the other hand, activating positive schemas in people's minds makes them perceive the individual they see as a part of their in-group, thus reducing prejudicial notions (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998).

Clothing is a major way to activate schemas with the presence of specific clothing having the potential to alter perceptions (Kahn & Davies, 2017). For example, college students rated models wearing formal business attire as more authoritative, credible, responsible, competent, knowledgeable, reliable, intelligent, trustworthy, willing to work hard, efficient, approachable, courteous, friendly, and business-like as compared to models wearing semiformal or informal clothing (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998).

Individuals have particularly strong reactions to stereotypical clothing (i.e., clothing typically associated with a certain group). For example, participants showed higher rates of prejudicial racial bias in an Active Shooter Simulator video game when targets wore "threatening clothing" (i.e., baggy gray sweatshirt, a gray headband, and a black baseball cap, worn to the side), and were in a "threatening neighborhood" (i.e., South Central Los Angeles). The threatening clothing was stereotypical for gangs. Participants reported low prejudicial racial bias when targets wore "safe clothing" (i.e., a light button up shirt and a tie) and were in a "safe neighborhood" (i.e., Beverly Hills; Kahn & Davies, 2017). Given it is clear that some forms of clothing lead to positive perceptions, we explored if clothing could also reduce prejudice. We specifically tested if clothing is a potential mechanism to reducing prejudicial stereotypes of African Americans.

Priming and Exposure to Racial Rhetoric

We wanted to go beyond the volume of work done on clothing and perception to add another important factor to understanding prejudice. We brought in a completely separate research literature and also tested for the effects of racial rhetoric as a priming device.

Priming or exposing a participant to a stimulus has been well-demonstrated to influence behavior and change perceptions. In one study, participants who watched a lot of television reported beliefs of social reality that coincided with the content of the shows they watched (Shrum, Wyer, & O'Guinn, 1998). Experimental studies show that specific priming can lead to direct changes. For example, students from a private religious university made different moral judgments based on a priming intervention (Moon, Wright, Broadbent, & Robinson, 2017). In a prosocial cooperation condition, students primed with a moral fable made harsher judgments. More closely related to

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our study, Givens and Monahan (2005) primed participants with video images of stereotypical African American women (e.g., Mammies, Jezebels). Participants then observed a mock employment interview. Participants primed with stereotypical video images rated African American interview candidates more negatively.

Although contemporary television does not frequently include stereotypical images of African American Mammies or Jezebels, viewers are exposed to political rhetoric, some of which is racial in nature. Values expressed by politicians may also prime perceptions. Research has clearly shown that political party identification has a major influence on how one perceives a wide range of political issues and events including specific events such as the Persian Gulf War or National Football League players kneeling during the National Anthem to protest racial inequality (Bartels, 2002; Wong, 2018). Sometimes, political leaders explicitly link actions to values. Outspoken leaders such as President Trump may have even more of a role in modifying perceptions. For example, during the January 2018 State of the Union address, President Trump associated standing for the National Anthem with being American, suggesting that those who did not stand were less American (Amicus Humani Generis, 2018; Livingston, 2018). President Trump has also made many open stereotypical comments toward African Americans, Mexican immigrants, and Muslims (Bobo, 2017). Such racial rhetoric may serve as a prime and either activate racist schemas leading to higher prejudice, or if blatant, it may activate a need to be politically correct and compensate by leading to lower prejudice. We feel that more research is needed to examine the influence of racial rhetoric on racism specifically toward African American individuals. We tested these possibilities to examine the impact of political videos containing racial rhetoric from leaders such as the President of the United States on perceptions of African Americans.

The Current Study

We explicitly integrated two different literatures to extend previous work on clothing and priming to better predict prejudice. By blending the findings and research designs of clothing research with work on priming, our goal was to go beyond past work. Research has tied clothing to perceptions in terms of race (i.e., are some clothing styles associated more with a certain race), but we did not find research manipulating clothing to examine

reductions in prejudice. Similarly, although priming studies have examined prejudice (e.g., Givens & Monahan, 2005), we did not find priming and prejudice work focusing on clothing. We built on work that has established a correlational link to establish a causal relationship. Our study went beyond correlational studies of race-based perception with our manipulation of two previously separate factors.

We decided to use a trait-based approach to study prejudice. Using this approach, we operationalized prejudice as higher ratings of African Americans on traits related to negative African American stereotypes (Lamont, Yun Park, & Ayala-Hurtado, 2017; Livingston & Pearce, 2009). We also expected ratings of prejudice to relate to standard measures of racism, so we measured racism as a possible confound. Studies of racism have taken into account the changing context in which racism takes place and that, instead of manifesting itself explicitly, racism today may be more implicit and subtle. In fact, current research uses the term *symbolic racism* to represent how “new forms of prejudice embody negative feelings towards Blacks as a group combined with a sense that Blacks violate cherished American values” (Henry & Sears, 2002, p. 254). We did not believe our experimental manipulations would change symbolic racism due to its stable nature, but did measure this variable as a possible confound.

We explicitly hypothesized three possible mechanisms in the form of two main effects (clothing type and exposure to racial rhetoric; ERR) and an interaction (i.e., a combination). We used a 2 (clothing type: stereotype congruent, stereotype incongruent) x 3 (ERR: strong, weak, none) between-subjects design. We tested the hypothesis that wearing stereotype incongruent instead of stereotypical clothing can improve perceptions of African Americans and exposure to racial rhetoric can influence beliefs toward African Americans. Based on previous research, we expected a main effect of clothing as well as a main effect of ERR. Although past research led us to hypothesize that participants would rate African Americans in stereotype incongruent clothing more positively, we did not have an a priori directional hypothesis for the effects of ERR. It was likely that ERR would activate racist schemas leading to higher ratings of prejudice against our African American models (as compared to a control video). It was also likely that ERR would make racism more salient, making participants compensate and rate our African

American models more positively (as compared to a control video). We also hypothesized a clothing type by ERR interaction because we expected ERR to lead to different perceptions based on the different types of clothing.

Method

Participants

This study included 85.31% European American, 5.65% Asian American, 5.08% Hispanic/Latino, 2.82% African American, 1.13% Native American or Alaska Native, and 1.13% Biracial, predominantly first-year undergraduate students ($N = 177$) from a midsized Midwestern university in the United States (86% women, 12% men, 2% transgender or nonbinary). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 55 years ($M = 20.55$, $SD = 5.90$). Participants reported their political party affiliation quite evenly (35% Republican, 34% Democratic, 19% Independent, 2% Green Party, and 10% as Other). We recruited respondents largely from introductory Psychology and Human Development courses using a department participant pool. Participants received research credit for their participation in the study as part of their course requirement. We told participants that they would “Complete a number of different tasks (e.g., rating a video and sharing your perspectives on pictures).”

Materials

Stimuli. We reviewed the literature to establish what has previously been used to operationalize “stereotypical clothing” for African Americans (Kahn & Davies, 2017). The pictures and clothing we picked satisfied these criteria (i.e., ball cap, bandana, baggy shirt, and baggy jeans or black shirt, gold chain, and baggy jeans). We used public social media sites and other online websites to collect pictures of four different African American male models who wore clothing that fit the criteria for this study. The final set of models we used were selected from a much larger set by a team of research assistants. We only used pictures that four research assistants rated as fitting the criteria (i.e., for inter-rater reliability). Similar to other studies on clothing and perception where pictures are included that do not relate to the main hypotheses, we added two additional pictures (Kahn & Davies, 2017; Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998). We also collected two additional non-African American models to obfuscate the racial focus of our study. Race of model was not a variable in the study and is consequently, not included in the analyses. Three models (two African American,

one non-African American) wore stereotype congruent clothing as operationalized above. Three models (two different African American, and one different non-African American) wore stereotype incongruent (i.e., suit coat, tie, dress shirt, dress pants) clothing. Research assistants examined each photograph and validated that each fit the needed criteria. Photographs showed mostly full body shots of the models in different settings.

Videos were approximately 2 minutes in length. The length of the videos correlate to previous research seeking to elicit a response from participants (Demaree, Schmeichel, Robinson, & Everhart, 2004). We used two videos of President Trump and a control video. One featured a segment from the State of the Union address and did not explicitly address race (Weak ERR, 1:36 min). The second featured a CNN (2018) compilation of President Trump video clips in which he explicitly refers to African Americans often in a negative way (Strong ERR: 2:24 min). We collected videos from YouTube. The Nature Relaxation Video, our control (No ERR: 2:12 min) was uploaded to YouTube as a public video, and the President Trump Videos were edited and uploaded onto one of the researchers' YouTube channels as private videos (Amicus Humani Generis, 2018; CNN, 2017; Livingston, 2018a, 2018b; Nature Relaxation Films, 2016).

Dependent measures. We measured prejudice, our dependent variable, using traits from previous research on African Americans (Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, 2002; Hart & Morry, 1997; Jones, Moore, Stanaland, & Wyatt, 1998; Saguy & Gruys, 2010). Participants rated each model on six traits: hard-working, trustworthy, intelligent, lazy, warm, and aggressive. The response scale for these traits ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). We reverse scored the two negative items so higher scores showed less prejudice. An exploratory factor analysis using the principle component method with a varimax rotation showed there was only one underlying factor in the dependent variables. Consequently, we summed the six variables to compute a composite measure of prejudice. Reliability for the composite was acceptable, Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$.

Control variables. We measured participants' general attitude toward African Americans using all items of the Symbolic Racism Scale (Henry & Sears, 2002, p. 266). The Symbolic Racism scale contains 16 rating scale items such as, “Over the past few years, Blacks have gotten less than they deserve” and “How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think Blacks

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are responsible for creating?” that are focused on measuring participants’ beliefs on current and past racial issues faced by African Americans. Questions vary in the response scale used. For example, 10 questions had Likert-type four response choices: *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, and *disagree*. One question has four amount level response choices: *a lot*, *some*, *just a little*, *none at all*. One question has four amount level response choices: *all of it*, *most*, *some*, and *not much at all*. One question has four amount level response choices: *very responsible*, *somewhat responsible*, *somewhat not responsible*, *very not responsible*. The remaining three questions had three response scale options (see Henry & Sears, 2002, for full details). We converted scores to z scores and calculated a single symbolic racism score. Internal reliability was moderate, Cronbach’s $\alpha = .86$ in this sample.

We also measured mood, demographics, and participants’ level of exposure to cultural diversity. Mood was measured by participants answering the question, “To what extent are you feeling each of the following?” and rating their mood on a 4-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*) on eight mood adjectives (lousy, tired, confident, happy, angry, lazy, productive, and horrible), Cronbach’s $\alpha = .73$. This mood measure was developed by modifying items from the Profile of Mood States (Curran, Andrykowski, & Studts, 1995). We measured exposure to cultural diversity by asking participants to “Please rate your level of exposure to cultural diversity” and selecting from four choices: No prior exposure at all, A little exposure, Quite a bit of exposure, and I am exposed ALL THE TIME. This measure of cultural diversity was written for this study. Participants answered questions about their age, their race, the population of their hometown, political party affiliation, gender, and year in school.

Manipulation check. We included manipulation checks for our pictures and videos. Participants rated each model on three traits to allow us to check if our pictures operationalized the clothing factor as planned: well-dressed, attractive, and stereotypical. The response scale for these traits ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). One variable, funny, was a distractor. Participants rated each video on nine variables (inspiring, funny, colorful, joyful, calming, scary, well-produced, exciting, and depressing) using a 6-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 6 (*strongly disagree*), Cronbach’s $\alpha = .89$. The manipulation check did not measure for levels of racism in the video to avoid alerting

the participant to the goals of the study. Instead, we wanted to measure the affective and evaluative reactions to each video.

A final question asked participants if they noticed anything different about the models. We also asked participants to identify the race of each model with the pictures reshown and race selections provided. All measures and data are available via the following link: <https://osf.io/vhcu8/>.

Procedure

After the institutional review board provided approval, students volunteered for the study by picking the study from many listed on the participant pool website. We randomly assigned participants to experimental conditions using a randomizer in Qualtrics software. Participants completed the study anonymously online and remotely in return for research credit.

Participants first read a consent form, then if consenting, watched the video and then rated three models (order of presentation randomized to counterbalance). The models’ pictures stayed on the screen while participants answered questions. Participants in the stereotype congruent condition saw three models dressed in stereotype congruent clothing. Participants in the stereotype incongruent condition saw three models dressed in stereotype incongruent clothing. Next, participants completed the Symbolic Racism Scale, rated their mood, and the remaining questions. The study took approximately 15 minutes and the link to the study could only be accessed once by participants.

Results

Manipulation Checks

The manipulation check for the race of the models showed that participants could correctly identify the race of each model. A high percentage of participants correctly identified every African American model as being African American (95.29% Model1, 89.41% Model2, 100% Model3, and 91.55% Model4). Similarly, nearly no participants misidentified our non-African American model as African American (3.53% Model1, 0% Model2).

Our manipulation check of videos, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with all ratings, showed that the three videos varied on all characteristics, Pillai’s $F(2, 174) = 33.68, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .65$. For example, the Strong ERR video was rated higher on “inspiring” ($M = 4.88, SD = 0.19$), than the No ERR video ($M = 3.39, SD = 0.16$), and the Weak ERR video ($M = 2.51, SD = 0.15$). Participants’

moods were not significantly different across conditions. As a manipulation check on clothing, a MANOVA showed participants rated models in stereotype incongruent clothing as significantly more well-dressed and attractive, Pillai's $F(2, 177) = 206.72, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .71$, than those in stereotype congruent clothing. Models in stereotype congruent clothing were rated as being significantly more "stereotypical," $F(1, 177) = 65.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .276$. Ratings of attractiveness of models did not vary.

Tests of Main Hypotheses

To test our main question, we predicted prejudicial ratings with an Analysis of Covariance using Clothing Type (stereotype congruent; stereotype incongruent) and ERR (Strong, Weak, None) as fixed factors. We used Symbolic Racism Scale scores as a covariate. Means and standard deviations of all six ratings and the prejudice composite score are seen in Table 1.

When comparing the effects of Clothing Type on prejudice toward the African American models, we found a significant main effect, $F(1, 177) = 27.40, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .50$. Participants rated African American models in stereotypical clothing significantly lower than models in stereotype incongruent clothing. We also found a significant main effect of ERR in predicting prejudice, $F(2, 177) = 1.98, p = .025, \eta_p^2 = .07$. Participants rated the African American models significantly higher in the Strong ERR condition than in either the Weak or the No ERR conditions. Pairwise comparisons showed the Weak and no ERR conditions did not vary. Symbolic

Racism was a significant covariate in all analyses, $F(1, 177) = 23.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .121$. These results show that strong ERR had a significant effect on the participants' ratings of the African American models. Counter to our hypothesis, we did not find a significant interaction between ERR and clothing type. These results support the hypothesis that stereotypical clothing, racial rhetoric, and Symbolic Racism Score affect participants' perceptions of African Americans.

Supplemental Analyses

Our study explicitly focused on African Americans, and unlike past research always using European American models as a comparison, we wanted to focus on African Americans in their own right. Consequently, we did not include race as a within-subjects repeated factor. We did test for differences in the rating of the non-African American models to the extent that would strengthen our findings. Clothing also had a significant main effect on participants' perceptions of the non-African American model, $F(1, 177) = 150.16, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .47$, showing the importance of clothing. There was no main effect of videos or an interaction showing the race specific nature of our design and findings. We also conducted an ANCOVA on our main variable using gender as a covariate. Gender was not a statistically significant covariate.

Discussion

The racial oppression faced by African Americans and numerous other races of people is a damaging

TABLE 1

Mean Values of the Dependent Variables Separated by Condition

Variable	Strong ERR				Weak ERR				No ERR			
	Stereotype Congruent		Stereotype Incongruent		Stereotype Congruent		Stereotype Incongruent		Stereotype Congruent		Stereotype Incongruent	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Hard-working	3.82	0.15	5.08	0.17	3.64	0.15	4.70	0.12	3.41	0.15	4.84	0.14
Trustworthy	3.40	0.15	4.82	0.18	3.09	0.15	4.50	0.13	3.20	0.15	4.64	0.15
Intelligent	3.67	0.14	4.91	0.16	3.64	0.14	4.74	0.12	3.51	0.14	4.70	0.13
Lazy	2.69	0.13	1.88	0.15	2.96	0.13	2.11	0.11	3.17	0.13	2.30	0.12
Warm	3.24	0.15	4.28	0.17	3.12	0.15	3.98	0.12	2.93	0.15	3.88	0.14
Aggressive	3.03	0.17	2.11	0.19	3.29	0.17	2.76	0.16	3.45	0.17	2.51	0.14
Prejudice	30.71	0.81	39.09	0.94	28.01	0.81	35.94	0.77	28.61	0.80	36.72	0.68

Note. Prejudice = sum of six traits shown. ERR = Exposure to racial rhetoric, videos, $p < .001$. ANCOVAs only conducted on the composite measure.

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matter that needs to be more thoroughly understood and eliminated. The results of this study provide statistically significant supporting evidence that clothing, racial rhetoric, and one's own racial attitudes affect perceptions of African American men.

The clothing the models wore significantly impacted participants' ratings of the models. African Americans wearing stereotype incongruent (formal) clothing were rated significantly higher than African Americans wearing stereotype congruent clothing on the composite measure of prejudice (four positive characteristic traits and two negative). These findings support previous research (Kwon & Johnson-Hillery, 1998), showing how stereotypical clothing negatively influences participants' perceptions of African American individuals (Kahn & Davies, 2017). Our findings demonstrated that participants seeing stereotype incongruent clothing were less prejudiced toward the African American models. Participants rated models in stereotypical clothing more prejudicially.

A novel contribution of our study is that we found evidence for the priming powers of racial rhetoric. The videos presented to participants significantly affected the way they perceived the African American models. Participants rated African American models more positively after watching the Strong ERR video (compilation of President Trump explicitly referring to African Americans in a negative way). Racial oratory and political figures are known to influence people's perceptions (English, Sweetser, & Ancu, 2011). The exact influence of blatant racial stereotyping needs to be further examined. Although we found a strong main effect of the ERR videos, we cannot be certain as to the underlying processes at work. The Strong ERR video might have either caused participants to suppress their racial biases or to be overly positive given it was clear the videos were related to race. It is possible that participants rated the African American models as lower on negative traits and higher on positive traits as a form of cognitive dissonance reduction, although the nature of the dissonance could also have many sources (Aronson, Wilson, Akert, & Sommers, 2016). Research has shown that people hold stereotypes but still outwardly express unbiased beliefs (i.e., modern racism, Aronson et al., 2016), a process that may be at play, although our design does not allow an assessment of this possibility. Racial rhetoric showing a powerful individual such as President Trump could significantly alter one's perception

of African American individuals by activating the suppression of racial biases.

Symbolic Racism Scores had a significant influence on how participants rated the models. Participants (who are primarily European American) with high Symbolic Racism Scores rated African American models significantly lower on positive characteristics, and previous research has supported that scores on the Symbolic Racism Scale significantly interact with participants' perceptions of race (Ash & Schmierbach, 2013). Individual's Symbolic Racism significantly influenced their stereotypical beliefs of the African American models in this study.

Our primary limitations relate to an inability to measure nonconscious processes and the composition of our sample (mostly European American women in college), although there were a number of areas future research can build on. Similar to previous research, the generalizability of our study is limited due to the sample's mostly European, mostly white, and mostly educated participants (Turner, Willman, & Wright, 2016). We only included male African Americans as models, so these results cannot be generalized to how African American women are perceived or how people of other ethnic groups are perceived. The racial rhetoric presented to participants contained content of only one political figure, and we cannot generate findings to all politicians and other influential persons.

There is also the possibility that watching President Trump exclusively address African Americans (i.e., the Strong ERR video) alerted participants to the nature of the study, automatically reducing their prejudice ratings. In essence, participants might have been able to infer the nature of the study. The overt nature of the video might have raised awareness of racism and reduced prejudice ratings as participants tried to compensate or were made more conscious of what may be a somewhat nonconscious process. If participants did infer the nature of the study, social desirability or demand characteristics could explain the differences in responses after the Strong ERR. Although our open-ended exploration at the end of the study did not reveal any such recognition of our intent, future work needs to better build in measures to assess demand characteristics. The real question in need of further exploration is if the reduction in prejudice was long-term or genuine. Furthermore, although we found statistical significance, it is not clear if our findings

have practical significance.

The results suggest other factors could also play a role. For example, one video was of a clip in which President Trump makes a consistent speech for 1:36 min and the other is a compilation of comments lasting 2:24 min. This disparity might produce a potential confound in the design. We know the videos varied in how they were rated, and the affective variance may be confounding the ratings of prejudice, although we did not find any significant results in post-hoc explorations using video ratings valence as a confound in the main ANOVA.

This study provided further evidence that prejudice toward African Americans exists, wearing stereotype incongruent clothing can reduce prejudice against African Americans, and exposure to strong racial rhetoric can suppress these racial biases at a statistically significant level. It is tempting to advise individuals on how to dress to avoid prejudice, but this avoids addressing the issue of those perceivers who are being prejudicial. In fact, directing non-European American individuals to change what they wear places the burden of mitigating stereotypes and associated prejudices on the wearer, rather than on those who hold and use such stereotypes in harmful ways. Furthermore, although dressing in stereotype incongruent clothing might help an individual avoid negative impacts of stereotypes in a single instance, it is certainly not likely to eliminate stereotypes or prejudices more broadly. Similar to recommendations to women to dress less provocatively to avoid assault, addressing the wearer might actually perpetuate a racist system by encouraging African Americans to fit into that system or be penalized.

Similar to a vast literature on the effects of clothing, dressing in stereotype incongruent clothing is associated with positive perceptions. Our study takes this general finding further by showing how stereotype incongruent clothing can attenuate prejudice at a statistically significant level. It also expands priming research into the effects of racial rhetoric. Now, more research is needed on addressing the perceivers. Future research of how clothing-style and viewership of political figures affect perceptions of African Americans should also seek to investigate similar racism deterring mechanisms to further the pursuit of ending prejudice against all people.

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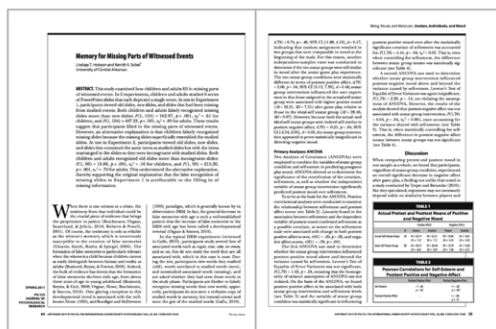
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