



Perspective-taking and Guilt during Interpersonal Confrontation against Prejudice

Background

- ❖ Many people who want to confront prejudice fear that they will lose their relationship with the offender, especially since confronters are usually negatively evaluated after confrontation¹
- ❖ However, interpersonal confrontation can reduce prejudiced attitudes and behaviors in the offender¹ so it may be a valuable way to combat prejudice
- ❖ Guilt can serve as a solution to interpersonal conflicts² because it motivates a person to apologize and make amends with the other individual³
- ❖ Successful perspective-taking encourages people to engage in prosocial behavior to alleviate guilt⁴
- ❖ The purpose of this study is to understand whether guilt mediates the relationship between perspective-taking and prosocial behavior (i.e. cooperation) and person evaluation after an individual is confronted about prejudice

Hypotheses

- ❖ **Hypothesis 1:** Participants who take their confronter's perspective will be more likely to engage in prosocial behavior (i.e. cooperate) with the confronter, as mediated by guilt
- ❖ **Hypothesis 2:** Participants who take their confronter's perspective will be more likely to view the confronter positively, as mediated by guilt

Methods

Study Design

- ❖ One-way between subjects experiment with 2 conditions (perspective-taking vs. control)

Participants

- ❖ Total of 80 participants:
- ❖ Male participants= 42 Female participants= 38

Procedure

- ❖ A cover story was used during participant recruitment to reduce socially desirable responding or demand effects
- ❖ Participants were introduced to the confederate "partner" who had a distinctively Black name to prime perceptions of race and then were randomly assigned to the perspective-taking task or the control condition
- ❖ While working with their partner on a Picture-word association task, participants were probed to say something racist about an out-group member
- ❖ Then, partners exchanged e-mail feedback about the task, at which point the participant received the behavior-focused confrontation
- ❖ Afterwards, the participant completed surveys about perceptions of their partner and their own feelings of guilt
- ❖ The final task was a Prisoner's dilemma game to assess prosocial behavior (cooperation) before participants were debriefed

Study Variables

- ❖ Cooperation: Measured by examining how many coins the participant gave to their partner in a single-trial Prisoner's dilemma game⁵
- ❖ Feelings towards oneself: Guilt was assessed by averaging responses on the "guilty," "regretful," and "blameworthy" 5-point Likert items of the PANAS scale ($\alpha = 0.91$)⁶
- ❖ Partner evaluations: We asked participants about perceptions of partner warmth, competence, and the desire to work with one's partner again on 5-point Likert items

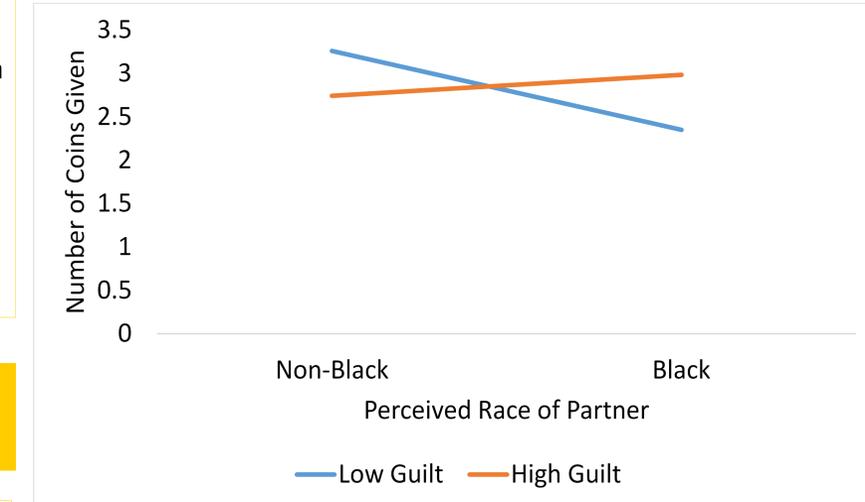
Results and Conclusions

- ❖ Primary hypotheses were not substantiated, but guilt was positively related to perceptions of partner competence and a desire to work with one's partner again
- ❖ Limitation: approximately half of the participants failed the manipulation check (i.e. they did not perceive that their partner was Black)
- ❖ Exploratory analyses: perceived race of the confronter influenced prosocial behavior when the participants felt low levels of guilt. Specifically, participants who did not feel guilty about making a prejudiced comment cooperated less with a Black confronter compared to a non-Black confronter, but participants who felt high levels of guilt cooperated equally with confronters, regardless of perceived race
- ❖ Guilt may serve as a buffer against negative consequences when Black individuals confront prejudice

Figure 1: All variables of interest

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Condition	---					
2. Number of Coins Given	-0.137	---				
3. Desire to work with partner again	0.073	0.193	---			
4. Manipulation check of race	0.004	-0.148	-0.126	---		
5. Guilt	0.010	0.086	0.359**	0.039	---	
6. Partner Warmth	0.122	0.087	0.421**	-0.306**	0.131	---
7. Partner Competence	0.055	0.142	0.346**	-0.257*	0.256*	0.772**

Figure 2: Interaction of perceived race and guilt on cooperation



References

1. Czopp, A. M., Monteith, M. J., & Mark, A. Y. (2006). Standing up for a change: reducing bias through interpersonal confrontation. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 90(5), 784.
2. Tangney, J. P., Miller, R. S., Flicker, L., & Barlow, D. H. (1996). Are shame, guilt, and embarrassment distinct emotions?. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 70(6), 1256.
3. Estrada-I-Iollenbeck, M., & Heatherton, T. F. (1997). Avoiding and alleviating guilt through prosocial behavior. *Guilt and children*, 215.
4. Tangney, J. P., & Dearing, R. L. (2002). *Shame and guilt*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
5. Van Lange, P. A. (1999). The pursuit of joint outcomes and equality in outcomes: An integrative model of social value orientation. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 77(2), 337.
6. Watson, D., Clark, L. A., & Tellegen, A. (1988). Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54(6), 1063-1070.