



Detecting Prejudice from Egalitarianism: Why Black Americans Don't Trust White Egalitarians' Claims

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EGALITARIANISM

Open Practices.

All data and materials have been made publicly available via the Open Science Framework and can be accessed at https://osf.io/hdq7a/?view_only=762addec0de748e8ad2e1382d963a4dc. All experiments were preregistered and copies of the preregistration for Preliminary Study https://osf.io/rmhw6/?view_only=c830513cb7ab4a48b67561fd5f002f37, Experiment 1A https://osf.io/bv5g4/?view_only=53ae8c9d9554411fa29d6ddd29c1ff3a, Experiment 1B https://osf.io/jtm8n/?view_only=59e47cd16d3a4905909dfd6d5e69ba03, Experiment 2 https://osf.io/nzeq8/?view_only=4ee407890ef048b9b99b1f5860d11fa2, and Experiment 3 https://osf.io/gprq3/?view_only=acc1c1f92fa74e6fbdf298ed3b4f834 can be found at each respective link.

For Review Only

Abstract

Although White Americans increasingly express egalitarian views, how they express egalitarianism may reveal inegalitarian tendencies and sow mistrust with Black Americans ($N=1335$). Black perceivers accurately inferred underlying racial attitudes and motivations, likeability, and trustworthiness from Whites' written declarations that they are nonprejudiced and egalitarian (Experiments 1-2). White writers believed their egalitarianism seemed more inoffensive and indicative of allyship than was perceived by Black Americans (Experiment 1A). Linguistic analysis revealed that Black perceivers accurately attended to language emphasizing humanization, support for equal opportunity, personal responsibility, and that equality already exists (Experiment 1B). We found causal evidence that these linguistic cues inform Black people's perceptions and trust of White egalitarians (Experiment 2). Suggesting potential societal costs of these perceptions, White egalitarians' underlying racial beliefs negatively predicted Black participants actual trust and cooperation in an economic game (Experiment 3). White Americans' insistence that they are egalitarian itself perpetuates mistrust with Black Americans.

Keywords: Intergroup relations, minority groups, prejudice, social perception

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Statement of Relevance

The current research reveals how inconsistencies in White Americans' racial attitudes may produce interracial tension when decoded by Black Americans. Beyond the field of intergroup dynamics, our findings have important implications for the interpersonal perceptions literature. We demonstrated a novel manner shaping interpersonal perceptions: Blacks' detection of Whites' underlying racial attitudes embedded within Whites' written declarations of egalitarian values impacted interpersonal liking and trust. Additionally, we apply contemporary behavioral economics methodology to intergroup dynamic research questions, bringing two of the most prominent literatures in psychology into conversation. The present work offers insights into why interracial interactions can be fraught and why merely stating one's belief in egalitarian values is not enough to produce meaningful interracial trust. As the U.S. increasingly becomes a majority-minority nation, the need for better interracial interactions and understanding will only grow, and we believe that our research can aid in that development.

RUNNING HEAD: BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE

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EGALITARIANISM

Americans increasingly present themselves as egalitarian (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a; 2005b). However, White and Black Americans have starkly divergent views of how egalitarian America is: While 50% of White Americans say race-relations have improved since the 1960s, only 32% of Black Americans agree (Frankovic, 2019). This discrepancy may be due, in part, to how Black people perceive Whites' egalitarianism (Major et al., 2013). In particular, the manner in which White people express egalitarianism may belie inegalitarian attitudes and motivations, undercutting Black peoples' willingness to trust them.

Contemporary forms of prejudice persist despite egalitarian intentions and motivations (e.g., Agerström & Rooth, 2011; Dovidio et al., 2002). Research on aversive racism shows that, although White individuals often wish to appear unbigoted, prejudiced behavior nevertheless "leaks out" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000; Penner et al., 2010). White people are often sensitive to norms against expressing prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Crandall et al., 2013; Zitek & Hebl, 2007), but exhibit discriminatory behavior in ambiguous situations (Blanken et al., 2015). These signs of prejudice are often subtly expressed. For example, White Americans with higher prejudice often exhibit minute, negative nonverbal behaviors towards Black people (e.g., less eye contact, fewer smiles, greater physical distance; Goff et al., 2008; Word et al., 1974). Prejudice is also subtly expressed via linguistic channels. For example, White liberals—who are ideologically motivated to present as nonprejudiced—nonetheless choose language indicating lower competence when speaking to Black, compared to White, audiences (Dupree & Fiske, 2019). Thus, White individuals who believe themselves to be egalitarian may signal prejudice in ways that are less direct than one might first expect.

Racial minorities are particularly attentive to these subtle cues. They infer White individuals' level of prejudice (Shelton et al., 2005) and motivation to be nonprejudiced

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(LaCrosse et al., 2015) through both direct and observed interracial interaction. Such inferences have ramifications for the quality and likelihood of future interracial encounters. In particular, Black Americans are known to be less trusting and more avoidant of White individuals with greater prejudice and lower motivation to be nonprejudiced (Kunstman et al., 2016; LaCrosse et al., 2015; Major et al., 2016; Plant, 2004). The present work tests the boundary of such effects by examining whether White peoples' overt claims of nonprejudice signal their underlying racial attitudes and motivations to Black people, thereby affecting interracial trust and cooperation.

We first assessed White Americans' lay beliefs about whether Black Americans might infer inequality from their claims of being egalitarian (Preliminary Study). We then tested our central hypothesis that Black perceivers accurately discern White Americans' inequality attitudes and motivations using only their written egalitarian claims (Experiments 1A and 1B). We simultaneously examined whether White and Black people agree about how offensive and indicative of allyship behaviors White writers' egalitarian language seems (Experiment 1A) and which linguistic cues Black perceivers utilized to infer White egalitarians' racial attitudes and motivations (Experiment 1B). Next, we experimentally manipulated these linguistic cues to identify their causal influence on Black peoples' perceptions of White egalitarians' underlying beliefs, likeability, and trustworthiness (Experiment 2). Finally, we tested whether White egalitarians' underlying inequality negatively predicted Black participants' trust behavior in an economic game (Experiment 3). Materials, data, and preregistrations for all studies are available at https://osf.io/hdq7a/?view_only=762addec0de748e8ad2e1382d963a4dc. All measures collected, including those unreported in the manuscript, are detailed in full in our preregistrations and SOM.

Preliminary Study: White Americans Lay Beliefs About Their Egalitarian Claims

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We first explored whether self-avowed White egalitarians anticipated our hypothesis that Black people might be skeptical of their expressed egalitarianism. We predicted that White egalitarians primarily believe that Black perceivers would trust their egalitarian statements.

Method

We preregistered this study on OSF (https://osf.io/rmhw6/?view_only=c830513cb7ab4a48b67561fd5f002f37).

Participants. We preregistered recruiting 100 White Americans, which G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) analysis determined would provide 95% power to detecting a small-to-medium effect size ($d=0.36$) using a one-sample two-tailed t -test. In total, 103 participants (65 men; $M_{age}=43.95$, $SD=11.15$) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) completed the study for \$0.40.

Procedure & Measures. Participants indicated their agreement (“Yes”/“No”) to two randomly-ordered questions: 1) “Do you believe that all people are equal and should have equality of opportunity?” and 2) “Are you prejudiced towards Black people?” We modeled the first question—the egalitarianism prompt—on the definition of egalitarianism (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.).¹ We created the second question—the prejudice prompt—to be a face-valid solicitation of anti-Black attitudes. We identified self-avowed egalitarians based on participants responses to both questions, thereby making our findings more conservative.

We then asked participants: “If you explained that you are not prejudiced, would a Black person trust you less than they would trust the average nonprejudiced White person?” (“Yes, they would trust me less”/“No, they would not trust me less”).

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<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/us/definition/english/egalitarianism#:~:text=%5Buncountable%5D,the%20same%20rights%20and%20opportunities>

Results

Ninety-three (90%) participants agreed with the definition of egalitarianism *and* stated they were not prejudiced towards Black people. Of these, only 28.0% ($n=26$) indicated that a Black person would trust them less than the average nonprejudiced White person if they explained their egalitarian values. A binomial test revealed this percentage was significantly less than chance, $N = 93$, $K = 72$, $p < .001$.² This result aligns with the “better-than-average” effect (Alicke & Govorun, 2005; Alicke et al., 1995; Vazire & Carlson, 2010), which shows that evaluating oneself on a highly socially desirable dimension increases motivation to self-enhance (Brown, 2012; Pedregon et al., 2012). This tendency is prevalent in interracial contexts, such that people often see themselves as egalitarian and nonprejudiced even when they act contrary to this self-image (Augoustinos et al., 2005; Monin & Miller, 2001; Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). We expect that Black people’s actual inferences will both contradict White participants’ lay beliefs and will determine interracial trust.

Experiment 1A: Detecting Racial Attitudes and Motivations from Egalitarian Statements

We tested our main hypothesis that Black perceivers infer White writers’ racial attitudes and motivations from writers’ claims of egalitarianism, and that these inferences predict interracial trust. Furthermore, we explored whether White writers overestimate the degree to which Black perceivers find their egalitarian statements inoffensive and characteristic of allyship behavior.

Method

² We report this analysis at the request of reviewers. As preregistered, one-sample t -test revealed that the percentage of participants holding this belief was less than chance (test-value=50%), $t(92)=4.71$, $p<.001$, $d=.98$

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We preregistered the stimulus data collection (https://osf.io/zj9g5/?view_only=ccbab04e7ad844eb9bfd0497a5b73e07) and the subsequent experiment on OSF (https://osf.io/jtm8n/?view_only=59e47cd16d3a4905909dfd6d5e69ba03).

Participants. The study involved two preregistered stages. In the first stage, 131 White Americans wrote whether they were egalitarian and nonprejudiced. Three independent coders (all women; White, East Asian, Middle Eastern), blind to hypotheses, excluded writers based on preregistered criteria: writers who provided unintelligible answers or copied and pasted from a website ($n=14$) and those who explicitly stated that they were prejudiced against Black people or did not believe in equality of opportunity ($n=12$). This produced a final stimulus set of 105 writers (50 men, $M_{age}=34.63$, $SD=10.33$) self-avowed as both egalitarian and nonprejudiced.

In the second stage, we preregistered recruiting 420 Black American perceivers to read the statements, giving us an average of four Black perceivers for each White writer in the stimulus set. In total, 427 Black Americans from MTurk (212 men; $M_{age}=32.89$, $SD=8.67$) completed the study for \$0.70, which G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) analysis determined would provide 80% power to detect a two-tailed bivariate correlation of $r=\pm .14$ and $d=.27$.

Procedure. In the first stage, White participants wrote open-ended responses to the same two prompts used in our Preliminary Study: “Do you believe that all people are equal and should have equality of opportunity? Why or why not?” and “Are you prejudiced towards Black people? Why or why not?” Both prompts enabled us to elicit naturalistic expressions of egalitarian and nonprejudice ideals. In particular, the egalitarian prompt allowed participants free rein in which aspects of egalitarianism they did or did not emphasize. For example, writers choose the degree to which they emphasized whether people are inherently equal, whether society should have equality of opportunity, or both. We expected that such linguistic choices would shape Black

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3 perceivers' judgments. In allowing this breadth of expression, we intended a greater degree of
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5 ecological validity with our White writer stimulus set, such that our findings would accurately
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7 reflect the important real-world phenomena in which we are interested.
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10 After answering each prompt, White writers indicated their racial attitudes and
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12 motivations. White writers also estimated how offensive and allyship-oriented Black Americans
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14 would perceive their statements. We edited each White writers' egalitarian statements for
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16 spelling and grammatical errors to remove writing mistakes as a possible signal of underlying
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18 attitudes and motivations.
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21 In the second stage, Black perceivers were randomly assigned to read one White writers'
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23 response to both open-ended prompts. Using these written claims as their only information,
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25 Black perceivers then estimated the writer's racial attitudes and motivations, and evaluated the
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27 writers' trustworthiness, offensiveness, and allyship.
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30 **Measures.**

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33 ***Racial attitudes and motivations.*** Modern Racism (MRS; McConahay, 1986; 6 items)
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35 and Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice (IMS; Plant & Devine, 1998; 5 items)³
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37 were presented to both White writers (Stage 1) and Black perceivers (Stage 2), but with different
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39 instructions. White writers were asked to indicate their own agreement with all items ($\alpha_{MRS}=.88$;
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41 $\alpha_{IMS}=.85$). Black perceivers were asked to guess how writers responded to all items in each
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43 measure ($\alpha_{MRS}=.88$; $\alpha_{IMS}=.79$). All items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1=*strongly*
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45 *disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate greater racial prejudice (MRS) and greater
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47 internal motivation to be nonprejudiced (IMS).
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55 ³ External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice (EMS; Plant & Devine, 1998) findings are included in the
56 SOM. EMS results generally follow the same pattern as MRS.
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3 These measures enabled us to capture two important facets of White writers' interracial
4 orientations—their underlying racial animus towards Black people and their internal motivations
5 to act in an egalitarian fashion. Both measures have been internally and externally validated,
6 widely employed throughout the intergroup literature, and connected to important interracial
7 outcomes, such as trust, intergroup anxiety, desire for intergroup contact, and interpersonal
8 distancing (e.g., Devine et al., 2002; Goff et al., 2008; Stanley et al., 2011).
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17 **Trust.** Black perceivers indicated their agreement with the item, “I would trust this
18 person,” (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*).
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Offensiveness. White writers answered, “How offensive would a Black American find
the responses you wrote?” Black perceivers answered, “How offensive did you find the
responses you read?” (1=*very inoffensive*, 4=*neither offensive nor inoffensive*, 7=*very offensive*).

Perceived allyship. We created a 7-item measure of allyship behaviors deemed
meaningful by Black Americans (see SOM for details). The items were: “Educate yourself on
matters of racial injustice,” “Encourage elected officials to support racial justice policies,” “See
Black hires as qualified rather than Affirmative Action recipients,” “Do not call the police on
Black people unless necessary,” “Show Black people that you care about their wellbeing,”
“Respect Black people as equals,” and “Believe Black people when they talk about racial
discrimination.”

White writers answered, “Based on your previous answers, how likely would a Black
American think you are to do each of the following?” ($\alpha=.94$). Black perceivers answered, “How
likely do you think it is that the person who wrote the statements you just read does each of the
following?” (1=*very unlikely*, 7=*very likely*; $\alpha=.76$).

Results

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Racial attitudes and motivations. Bivariate correlations revealed that Black perceivers' guess of White writers' MRS was marginally significantly correlated with writers' actual MRS ($r=.080, p=.100$), and Black perceivers' guess of White writers' IMS was significantly correlated with writers' actual IMS ($r=.106, p=.029$; See Table 1).⁴ Thus, Black participants were able to detect White egalitarians' underlying racial attitudes and motivations using only their written statements claiming to be egalitarian.

Trust. Bivariate correlations revealed that White writers' underlying attitudes and motivations predicted Black perceivers' trust, such that Black perceivers trusted White egalitarians with higher MRS ($r=-.599, p<.001$) and lower IMS ($r=.635, p<.001$; see Table 1) significantly less.

Table 1

Experiment 1A Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. White writers' MRS	–					
2. White writers' IMS	-.69***	–				
3. Black perceivers' MRS Guess	.08†	-.08	–			
4. Black perceivers' IMS Guess	-.09†	.11*	-.52***	–		
5. Black perceivers' trust	-.60***	.64***	-.09†	.11*	–	
6. Black perceivers' offensiveness	.10†	-.06	.66***	-.39***	-.12*	–
7. Black perceivers' perceived allyship	-.10*	.10*	-.31***	.60***	.11*	-.24***

Note. White writers' MRS and IMS signify White participants' actual racial attitudes and motivations. Black perceivers' MRS Guess and Blacks' IMS Guess signify Black participants' perceptions of White writers. Black perceivers' Trust, Offensiveness, and Perceived Allyship signify Black perceivers' ratings of the White writer. † $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (all 2-tailed).

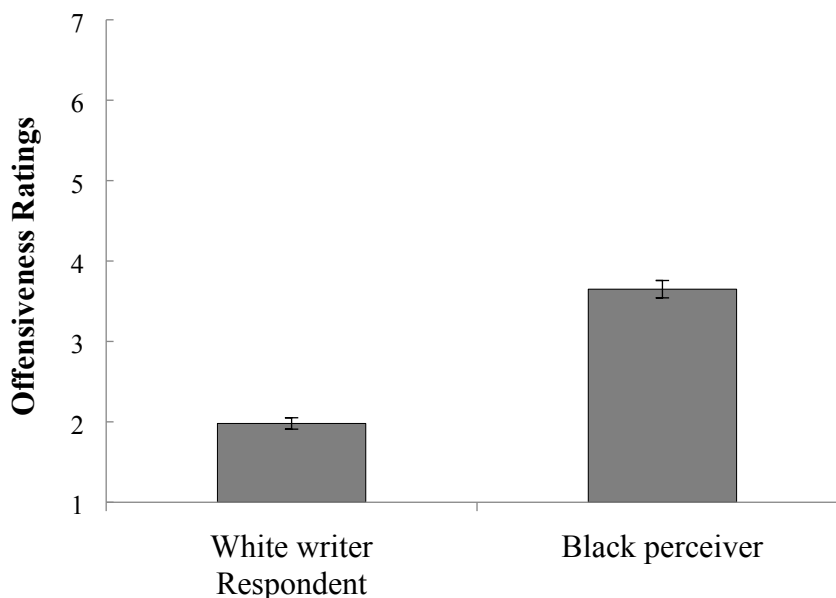
⁴ We report correlations for clarity of presentation; the preregistered regressions are the same.

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Offensiveness. While White writers rated their statements as being very inoffensive ($M=1.98$, $SD=1.46$), a paired samples t -test revealed that Black perceivers rated the statements as significantly higher in offensiveness ($M=3.65$, $SD=2.24$), $t(426)=-13.67$, $p<.001$, $d=0.88$ (see Figure 1). Bivariate correlations revealed that White writers' MRS scores were marginally significantly correlated with Black perceivers' offensiveness ratings ($r=.095$, $p=.051$), such that Black perceivers rated statements from writers higher in MRS as being more offensive. White writers' IMS scores were not significantly correlated with Black perceivers' offensiveness ratings ($r=-.061$, $p=.210$; see Table 1).

Figure 1
Experiment 1A Perceived Egalitarian Statement Offensiveness



Note. Error bars are 95% CI.

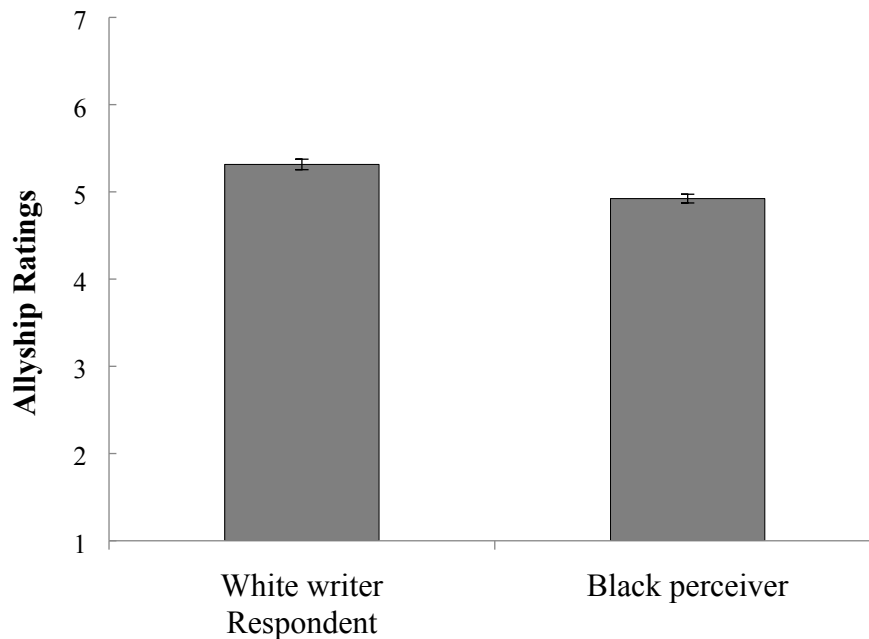
Perceived allyship. A paired samples t -test revealed that Black perceivers rated White writers as less likely to enact allyship behaviors ($M=4.95$, $SD=1.03$) than White writers believed

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Black perceivers would rate them to be ($M=5.43$, $SD=1.32$), $t(426)=6.05$, $p<.001$, $d=0.59$. (See Figure 2.) Bivariate correlations revealed that Black perceivers rated White writers with lower MRS ($r=-.100$, $p=.039$), and higher IMS ($r=.098$, $p=.044$) as more likely to enact allyship behaviors (see Table 1).

Figure 2
Experiment 1A Perceived Allyship Behavior of White Writer



Note. Error bars are 95% CI.

Experiment 1B: Linguistic Cues of White Egalitarians' Underlying Attitudes & Motivations

We sought to replicate our findings that Black perceivers infer White egalitarians' racial attitudes and motivations, and that these inferences affect Black perceivers' trust and liking of them. We also explored which linguistic cues Black perceivers attend to when determining White egalitarians' underlying attitudes and motivations.

BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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Method

We preregistered this experiment on OSF (https://osf.io/bv5g4/?view_only=53ae8c9d9554411fa29d6ddd29c1ff3a).

Participants. As in Experiment 1A, this experiment involved two preregistered stages. In the first stage, 107 White Americans answered whether they were egalitarian and nonprejudiced using the same two prompts from Experiment 1A. The same three independent coders excluded writers based on preregistered criteria: writers who provided unintelligible answers or copied and pasted from a website ($n=14$) and those who explicitly stated being prejudiced against Black people or not believing in equality of opportunity ($n=16$). This produced a final stimulus set of 77 writers (38 men, $M_{age}=36.30$, $SD=13.98$) self-avowed as both egalitarian and nonprejudiced.

In the second stage, we preregistered recruiting 300 Black American perceivers to read both statements from one White writer, providing an average of four Black perceivers for each White writer in the stimulus set. In total, 302 Black Americans from MTurk (101 men; $M_{age}=36.20$, $SD=10.91$) completed the study for \$1.25, which G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) analysis determined would provide 80% power to detect a two-tailed bivariate correlation of $r=\pm .16$.

Procedure. As in Experiment 1A, in Stage 1, White writers wrote open-ended responses to the same two prompts and then completed measures of racial attitudes and motivations. We again edited each writers' statements for spelling and grammatical errors. In Stage 2, Black perceivers were then randomly assigned to read one White writers' statements, estimate the writer's racial attitudes and motivations, and indicate their trust and liking of the writer.

Measures.

BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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3 **Racial attitudes and motivations.** As in Experiment 1A, we assessed White writers'
4 racial attitudes and motivations with MRS ($\alpha_{MRS}=.91$) and IMS ($\alpha_{IMS}=.79$) and asked Black
5 perceivers to estimate writers' racial attitudes and motivations ($\alpha_{MRS}=.89$; $\alpha_{IMS}=.86$).
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9 **Interracial trust.** Black perceivers indicated interracial trust using eight items
10 (1=*strongly disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*; $\alpha=.92$): "I would trust this person to help me if I was
11 being discriminated against," "I would confide in this person about a time I was discriminated
12 against," "I would feel comfortable talking about race-related issues with this person," "This
13 person cares about matters of racial justice," "This person feels uncomfortable around Black
14 people" (reverse-scored), "I would feel authentically myself around this person," "This person
15 would confront another White person's racism," "This person would acknowledge systemic
16 racism."
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19 **Liking.** Black perceivers indicated liking of the White writer using two items (1=*strongly*
20 *disagree*, 7=*strongly agree*; $\alpha=.88$): "I would want to become friends with this person," "I would
21 get along with this person."
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24 **Independent coder rating.** We developed separate sets of content codes for the two open-
25 ended prompts to explore which linguistic cues signaled writers' MRS and IMS. Three
26 independent coders (two women; 1 White, 1 East Asian, 1 Hispanic), blind to hypotheses and
27 writers' racial attitudes and motivations, evaluated the content of each statement. Table 2
28 provides definitions and scale anchors of each code.
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31 We included codes for the prejudice prompt based on existing literatures linking
32 prejudice expression to dehumanization ($\alpha=.82$; Haslam, 2006; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014),
33 intergroup contact ($\alpha=.96$; Pettigrew, 1998), learning mindsets ($\alpha=.90$; Dweck, 2008; Sassenberg
34 & Moskowitz, 2005), moral obligation ($\alpha=.90$; Monteith & Walters, 1998), and colorblindness
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($\alpha=.78$; Apfelbaum et al., 2012). These factors are consequential to intergroup relations. Both colorblindness and dehumanization predict increased stereotyping and decreased intentions to initiate intergroup contact (Lewis et al., 2000; Tynes & Markoe, 2010; Vezzali et al., 2012). Increased intergroup contact increases positive feelings towards outgroups and advocacy for policies that benefit outgroup members (Enos, 2014; Dovidio et al., 2003). Greater feelings of moral obligation to reduce prejudice predict holding higher personal standards for interracial behavior (Monteith & Walters, 1998). Similarly, learning mindsets predict more positive perceptions of intergroup relations (Rattan & Dweck, 2018). As such, higher ratings of colorblind and dehumanizing language might correlate with higher MRS scores and lower IMS scores, while higher ratings of moral obligation and learning mindset language might correlate with lower MRS scores and higher IMS scores. We mused that greater usage of intergroup contact language might ironically correlate with higher MRS scores and lower IMS scores, as previous research has found groups accused of prejudice to invoke their outgroup contact as a means of denying prejudicial beliefs (Conley et al., 2002; Winslow, 2004). Lastly, we included codes of authenticity ($\alpha=.76$) and defensiveness ($\alpha=.90$) as a priori dimensions of interest. Although we did not have strong predictions for these codes, we suspected that statements rated as more authentic or less defensive might correlate with lower MRS scores and higher IMS scores.

We developed all codes for the egalitarian prompt using a grounded coding approach. Blind to targets' underlying racial attitudes and motivations, we reviewed a test set of ten randomly selected prompt responses and identified the most prominent dimensions of variance. These egalitarian prompt codes ultimately enabled us to capture nuanced differentiations between writers' statements. Namely, we distinguished between writers stating that equality already exists versus that equal opportunity already exists (i.e., *Inequality Exists*, $\alpha=.84$; *Equal*

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3 *Opportunity Exists*, $\alpha=.80$), those who express support for the principle of equality versus equal
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5 opportunity (i.e., *Equality Support*, $\alpha=.86$; *Equal Opportunity Support*, $\alpha=.87$), as well as the
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7 writers' emphasis on equity over equality (i.e., *Equity Focus*, $\alpha=.72$). Furthermore, we identified
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9 writers who expressed believing that one's life outcomes are influenced by one's personal
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11 choices rather than one's surrounding societal context (i.e., *Personal Responsibility*, $\alpha=.84$).
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15 These linguistic codes thus enabled us to identify how writers with different underlying
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17 racial attitudes would emphasize different aspects of egalitarianism and nonprejudice, and the
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19 extent to which Black perceivers would identify these cues.
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Table 2
Definitions of Independent Rater Codes

Code Label	Definition	Scale anchors
1. Authenticity	Did Writers' words seem to match what they really believe?	1 (<i>Inauthentic</i>) to 5 (<i>Authentic</i>)
2. Colorblindness	Did Writer express being colorblind (i.e., not paying attention to race)?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
3. Learning orientation	Did Writer express trying to learn to be less biased/more about Blacks?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
4. Outgroup contact	Did Writer mention their personal contact with Blacks?	0 (<i>Does not mention contact</i>) to 1 (<i>Mentions contact</i>)
5. Moral imperative	Did Writer express moral or injunctive rationales for non-prejudice?	1 (<i>Does not moralize</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly moralizes</i>)
6. Humanization	Did Writer humanize Blacks?	1 (<i>Least humanizing</i>) to 5 (<i>Most humanizing</i>)
7. Defensiveness	Did Writer exhibit defensiveness?	1 (<i>Not at all defensive</i>) to 5 (<i>Very defensive</i>)
8. Equality support	Did Writer express support that people are equal?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
9. Equal opportunity support	Did Writer express support for equality of opportunity?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
10. Inequality exists	Did Writer express that inequality exists?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
11. Equal opportunity exists	Did Writer express that equal opportunity already exists?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
12. Equity focus	Did Writer support equity of process more than equality of outcome?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)
13. Personal responsibility	Did Writer express that personal responsibility/choices individuals make matters in shaping their life outcomes?	1 (<i>Not at all</i>) to 5 (<i>Strongly</i>)

Note: Example responses and code frequencies can be found in the Supplement.

Results

Racial attitudes and motivations. Bivariate correlations revealed that Black perceivers' guess of White writers' MRS significantly correlated with writers' actual MRS ($r=.160, p=.005$). Black perceivers' guess of writers' IMS marginally significantly correlated with writers' actual IMS ($r=.099, p=.085$). See Table 3. Replicating Experiment 1A, Black perceivers discerned White writers' underlying racial attitudes and motivations using writers' egalitarian claims as their only information.

Trust and liking. Bivariate correlations revealed that Black perceivers trusted White writers with higher MRS significantly less ($r=-.163, p=.004$) and writers with lower IMS marginally significantly less ($r=.101, p=.080$). Black perceivers liked White writers with higher MRS ($r=-.175, p=.002$) and lower IMS ($r=.149, p=.009$) significantly less (see Table 3).

Table 3

Experiment 1B Correlations

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. White writers' MRS	–					
2. White writers' IMS	-.67***	–				
3. Black perceivers' MRS Guess	.16**	-.05	–			
4. Black perceivers' IMS Guess	-.18**	.10 [†]	-.72***	–		
5. Black perceivers' Liking	-.18**	.15**	-.57***	.59***	–	
6. Black perceivers' Trust	-.16**	.10 [†]	-.67***	.63***	-.90***	–

Note. White writers' MRS and IMS signify White participants' actual racial attitudes and motivations. Black perceivers' MRS Guess and IMS Guess signify Black participants' perceptions of White writers. Black perceivers' Liking and Trust signify Black participants' ratings of the White writer. [†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (all 2-tailed).

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3 **Linguistic cues utilized by Black perceivers.** We employed Brunswik's (1956) lens
4 model of human perception to identify which cues White writers displayed and which cues Black
5 perceivers utilized to infer writers' underlying beliefs (for examples see Hall et al., 2014;
6 Hartwig & Bond, 2011). A significant correlation between writers' actual MRS or IMS scores
7 and coder ratings indicates that writers' underlying racial attitudes or motivations predict the
8 display of that cue. A cue is utilized by Black perceivers if there is a significant correlation
9 between coder ratings and perceivers' estimation of writers' underlying racial attitudes and
10 motivations. See Figures 3 & 4 for MRS and IMS lens models, respectively.
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21 As indicated by correlations on the left-hand section of the lens models, White writers'
22 MRS and IMS predicted display of several of the same cues: Both high MRS writers and low
23 IMS writers were less likely to humanize Black people, to support equal opportunity, and to
24 indicate a learning orientation, and were more likely to emphasize that personal responsibility
25 determines life outcomes and that equal opportunity already exists. Additionally, high MRS
26 writers were less likely to be defensive or emphasize that inequality exists and were more likely
27 to emphasize the importance of equity compared to equality. Low IMS writers were less likely to
28 employ moral rationales for egalitarian values. Neither MRS nor IMS predicted support for the
29 idea that people are equal, suggesting this value was equally emphasized by those high and low
30 on those measures.
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44 As indicated by correlations on the right-hand section of the lens models, four cues, in
45 particular, accurately informed perceptions: Black perceivers inferred that humanizing language
46 and emphasis on support for equal opportunity indicated lower MRS and higher IMS and that
47 emphasis on personal responsibility and equal opportunity already existing indicated higher
48 MRS and lower IMS.
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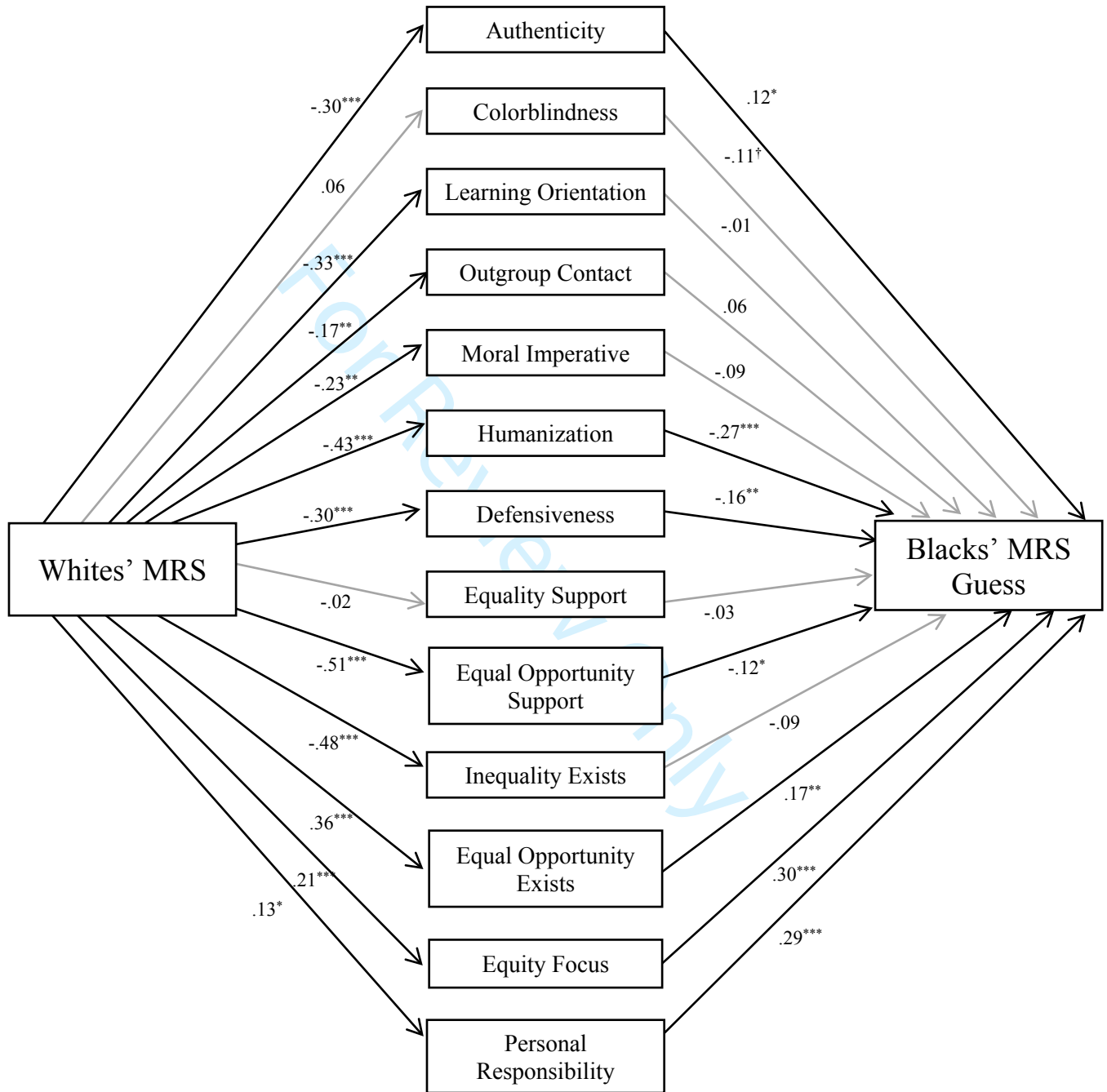
BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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3 Black perceivers failed to utilize Learning Orientation and Inequality Exists language as
4 indicators of writers' MRS or IMS. Ironically, perceivers *incorrectly* interpreted Authenticity
5 cues: Although lower MRS and higher IMS predicted more authentic language, perceivers
6 inferred that authentic language indicated more negative racial attitudes and motivations. This
7 result echoes prior findings that Black people perceive White individuals' attempts to appear
8 nonprejudiced as cold, ill-meaning, or ingenuine (Kervyn et al., 2012; Shelton et al., 2005; Zou
9 & Cheryan, 2015). Likewise, this finding suggests that Whites' earnestness may sometimes
10 backfire.
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21 These results also reveal that Black perceivers' accuracy is not merely due to how
22 ardently White writers avow their egalitarianism. Were this the case, one might expect Black
23 perceivers would primarily attend to writers' emphasis on overall support for equality, moralistic
24 rationales for avoiding prejudice, or how earnest they seemed. Instead, perceivers distinguished
25 between cues like writers' emphasis on inherent equality versus equal treatment. This suggests
26 that Black perceivers' inferences are driven by a nuanced reading of White writers' focus on
27 specific aspects of egalitarianism.
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Figure 3.
 Combined Brunswik lens model for MRS.



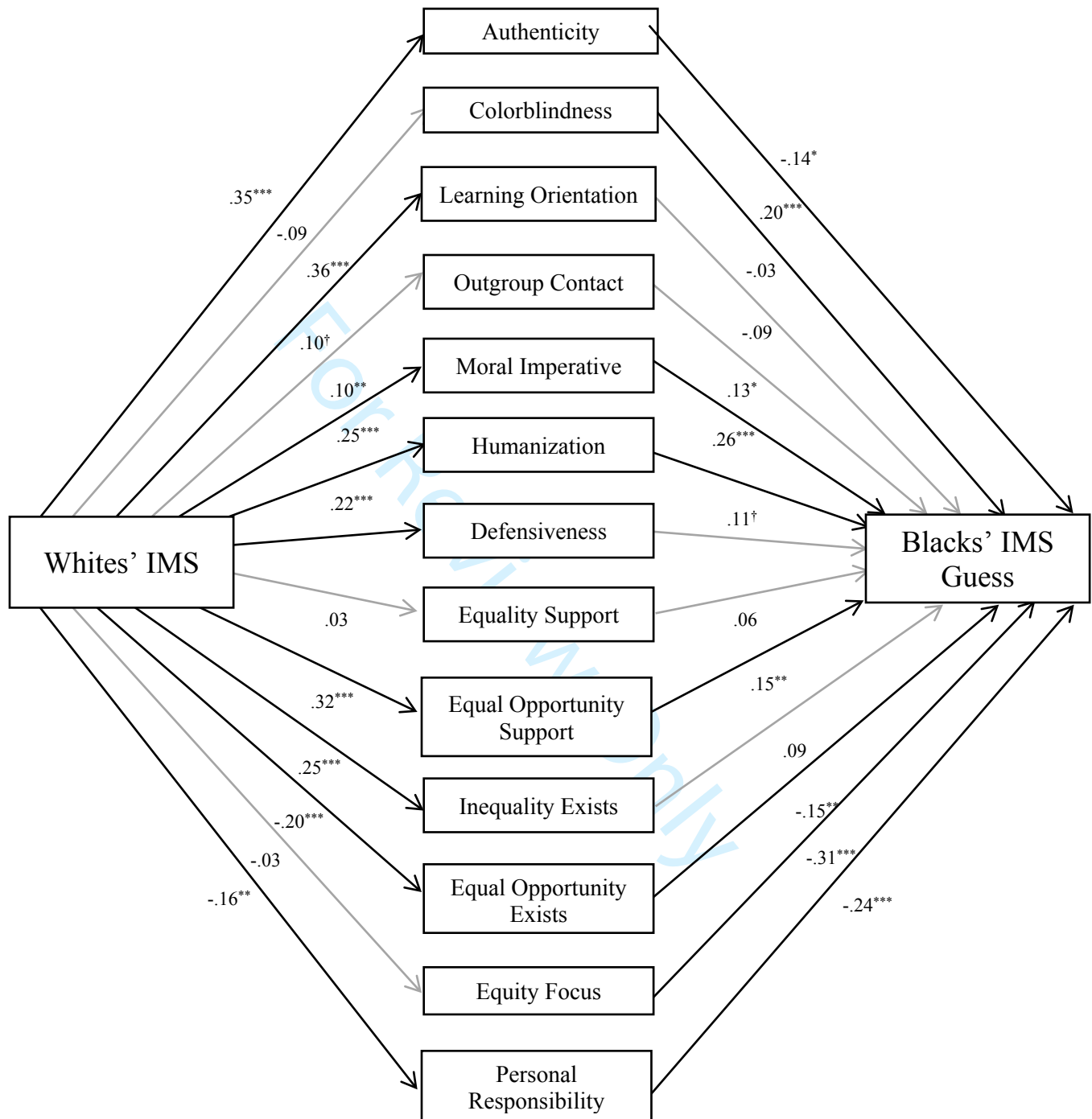
Note. Correlations between Coder Ratings and White writers' MRS (Left) and Black perceivers' MRS guesses (Right). Black lines indicate significant relationships (* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$); gray lines indicate nonsignificant relationships, $ps > 0.05$.

BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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Figure 4.

Combined Brunswik lens model for IMS.



Notes. Correlations between Coder Ratings and White writers' IMS (Left) and Black perceivers' IMS guesses (Right). Black lines indicate significant relationships ($*p < 0.05$; $**p < 0.01$; $***p < 0.001$); gray lines indicate nonsignificant relationships, $ps > 0.05$.

Experiment 2: Causal Evidence that Linguistic Cues Shape Perceptions

We tested the causal influence of the linguistic cues accurately utilized by perceivers in Experiment 1B (i.e., humanization, equal opportunity support, personal responsibility, and equal opportunity exists language) on Black perceivers' inferences of White writers' underlying racial attitudes and motivations, likeability, and trustworthiness.

Method

We preregistered our experiment on OSF (https://osf.io/nzeq8/?view_only=4ee407890ef048b9b99b1f5860d11fa2).

Participants. We preregistered collecting 200 Black perceivers. In total, 203 Prolific participants (85 men; $M_{age}=31.54$, $SD=9.98$) completed the study for \$1.90, which G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) analysis determined would provide 80% power to detect an effect size of $d=.20$ using a two-tailed paired-sample t -test.

Procedure. We utilized a 4 (linguistic cue: Humanization, Personal Responsibility, Equal Opportunity Exists, and Equal Opportunity Support) x 2 (emphasis: high vs low) within-subjects experimental design. We created two unique statements for each cue, providing eight different templates. We then manipulated each template to be more or less indicative of each linguistic cue. For example:

High [Low] *Equal Opportunity Exists*: “Yes, I absolutely believe that all people are equal. I [don't] think everyone has an equal amount of opportunity in our society. It is clear that people [don't] have an equal amount of opportunity under the law, regardless of race, gender, or national origin. We [don't] all start in the same place.”

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3 Pretesting confirmed that manipulations of all eight templates significantly affected
4 perceivers' perceptions of the cue in the intended direction.⁵ Each participant in the experiment
5 read and rated eight randomly selected statements, one high or one low emphasis version of each
6 cue, while ensuring no participant saw both the high and low version of any cue template.
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8 Participants were told that statements were written by past White participants. After reading each
9 statement, participants estimated the ostensible writers' racial attitudes and motivations and
10 indicated how much they would like and trust the writer.
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19 **Measures.**

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21 ***Racial attitudes and motivations.*** Perceivers again estimated writers' MRS and IMS. To
22 minimize experiment length, we shortened each scale by using the three items that loaded most
23 highly on each primary factor ($\alpha_{MRS}=.94$; $\alpha_{IMS}=.95$).
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28 ***Trust and liking.*** Participants answered, "How much would you trust the person who
29 wrote this response?" (1=*I would not trust them at all*, 7=*I would trust them very much*) and
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31 "How well would you get along with the person who wrote this response?" (1=*I would not get*
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along with them at all, 7=*I would get along with them very well*).

38 **Results**

40 We predicted that a higher degree of humanization or equal opportunity support language
41 and a lower degree of personal responsibility or equal opportunity exists language would lead
42 Black perceivers to rate the writers as lower in MRS, higher in IMS, more likable, and more
43 trustworthy. We conducted paired samples *t*-tests to determine the influence of the emphasis
44 manipulation on perceiver judgements. The manipulation of each code significantly affected all
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54 ⁵ All stimuli used in the experiment are provided in SOM. Each pretest participant ($N=183$ from Prolific, 83 men,
55 $M_{age}=31.76$, $SD=10.06$) rated eight randomly selected statements, one high and one low degree version of each code.
56 Participants rated how indicative each statement was of the linguistic code on a 7-point scale.
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BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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dependent variables ($ps < .001$; see Table 4). Black perceivers rated egalitarian statements with greater humanizing and equal opportunity support language as indicative of lower MRS and higher IMS, trustworthiness, and likeability (all $ps < .001$). Black perceivers rated greater personal responsibility and equal opportunity exists language as indicative of higher MRS and lower IMS, trustworthiness, and likeability ($ps < .001$; see Table 4). The results confirm that these linguistic cues causally predict Black perceivers' inferences of White writers.

Table 4

Experiment 2 Ratings of Writers for High vs. Low Versions of Each Linguistic Code

Writer Rating by Linguistic Code	High		Low		<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
MRS					
Humanization	2.82	1.56	3.84	1.46	-8.12***
Equal Opportunity Support	2.92	1.65	4.21	1.71	-9.28***
Equal Opportunity Exists	4.07	1.97	2.41	1.50	9.52***
Personal Responsibility	3.89	1.80	2.60	1.59	9.17***
IMS					
Humanization	5.67	1.40	4.41	1.69	8.95***
Equal Opportunity Support	5.41	1.55	4.10	1.49	10.49***
Equal Opportunity Exists	4.67	1.70	5.65	1.31	-6.92***
Personal Responsibility	4.75	1.59	5.47	1.46	-5.58***
Trust					
Humanization	4.86	1.55	3.60	1.85	8.75***
Equal Opportunity Support	4.83	1.55	3.38	1.71	11.34***
Equal Opportunity Exists	3.86	1.99	5.04	1.45	-7.36***
Personal Responsibility	3.96	1.89	4.92	1.54	-6.71***
Liking					
Humanization	5.01	1.58	3.78	1.90	8.33***
Equal Opportunity Support	5.01	1.60	3.48	1.72	11.54***
Equal Opportunity Exists	3.95	2.01	5.33	1.38	-8.56***
Personal Responsibility	4.12	1.86	5.03	1.62	-6.07***

Note: $N=203$, $df=201$ for all analyses. *** $p < .001$.

Experiment 3: White Egalitarians' Underlying Racial Attitudes & Motivations Impact

Black Perceivers' Trust Behavior

We tested the behavioral implications of the observed perceptual process by engaging Black participants in an economic trust game with White egalitarians. We hypothesized that Black perceivers would financially cooperate less with White egalitarians with greater underlying anti-Black attitudes and motivations.

Method

We preregistered this experiment on OSF (https://osf.io/gprq3/?view_only=acc1c1f92fa74e6fbdfef298ed3b4f834).

Participants. We preregistered collecting 300 participants, in line with previous research related to race and economic trust games (Jenkins et al., 2018). In total, 300 Black Americans (110 males; $M_{age}=35.74$, $SD=11.79$) from MTurk completed the study for \$1.00, plus incentives. A power analysis using a multilevel modeling effect-size calculator (Page-Gould, 2018) determined that we had 80% power to detect a correlation of $r=\pm .16$ and effect-size $d=.26$ in a two-level random factor multilevel modeling design.

Procedure. Participants first read the rules of an economic game used in previous research to capture trust and cooperation behaviors (Jenkins et al., 2018; Stanley et al., 2011). Participants were endowed with money (\$0.20) and then told they would see information about 20 different White people and decide how much money to share with each of them.⁶ Participants were told that the amount of money they shared would be tripled, and their counterpart would decide how much of this tripled amount to send back to the participant. Thus, it was most advantageous for Black participants to share larger amounts of money with White counterparts they trusted more and share smaller amounts of money with those they trusted less. Participants

⁶ Prior work with economic games has found no difference in results when large rewards (i.e., \$10) or smaller stakes (i.e., <\$1) are used (Amir & Rand, 2012; Engle-Warnick, & Slonim, 2004; Rand et al., 2013; 2015).

BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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3 completed a comprehension check after reading the instructions to ensure they understood the
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5 task.
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8 Participants then read egalitarian and nonprejudice statements from 20 randomly assigned
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10 White writers. This statement pool consisted of 55 stimuli used in Experiment 1B.⁷ Each writer
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12 was identified as being White to ensure partner race was salient. After reading each White
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14 writer's statements, participants indicated how much of their bonus they would share with each
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16 partner. After completing the study, we randomly selected one trial as the basis for payment and
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18 paid participants according to how much money they shared with the writer and how much
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20 money the writer indicated they would return to the participant.
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23 24 **Measures.**

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26 **Trust sharing.** Participants read the following (Stanley et al., 2011): "You decide how to
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28 split \$0.20 with the other person. The amount you give the other person will be tripled, and they
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30 will decide how much of that amount to split with you. How much of the \$0.20 would you give
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32 to this person?" Participants provided an amount between \$0.00 to \$0.20, with \$0.02 increments.
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35 36 **Results**

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38 As preregistered, we used the *lmerTest* R-package to analyze the data via multilevel
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40 modeling. We tested MRS and IMS as predictors of trust sharing in separate models, specifying
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42 participant and writer as random factors. All variables were mean-centered and standardized to
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44 range from 0 to 1. As predicted, Black perceivers exhibited less trust sharing with White
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46 egalitarians who scored higher on MRS ($b=-0.139$, $SE=0.040$, $t(53)=-3.46$, $p=.001$, 95% CI [-
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48 0.217, -0.060], partial $R^2=.18$; Figure 5) or lower on IMS ($b=0.123$, $SE=0.041$, $t(53)=3.01$,
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54 ⁷ We selected a subset of writers from Experiment 1B who had both MRS scores below the median and IMS scores
55 above the median (i.e., low-prejudice writers) or both MRS scores above and IMS scores below the median (i.e.,
56 high-prejudice writers).
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BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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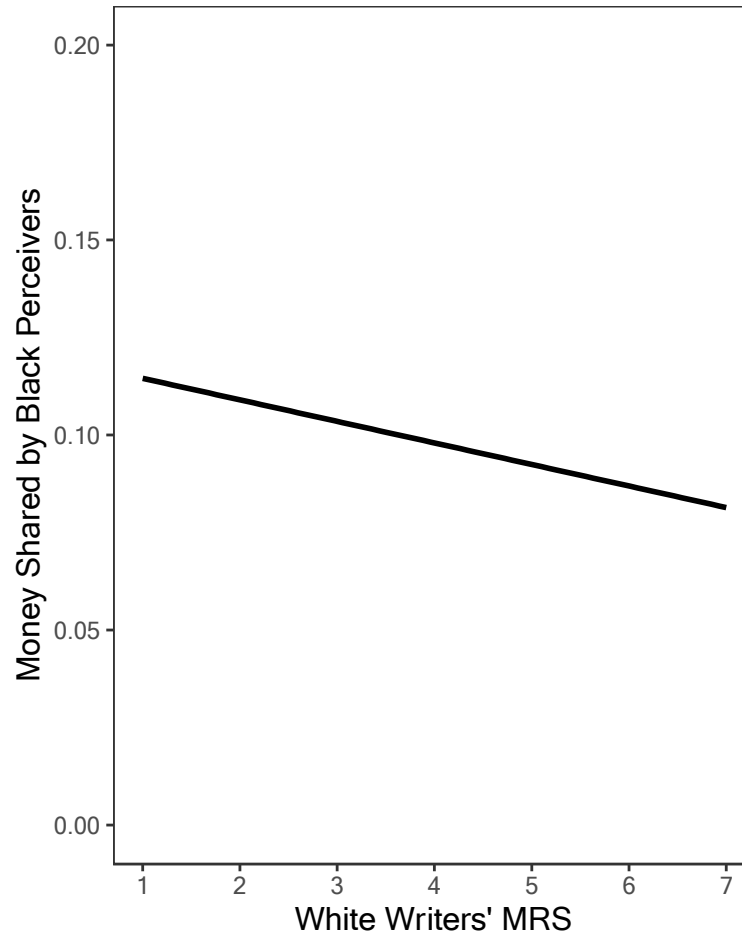
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3 $p=.004$, 95% CI [0.043, 0.203], partial $R^2=.15$; Figure 6).⁸ Whereas the previous studies
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5 identified that Black perceivers' inferences of racial bias shape their evaluations of White
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7 egalitarians, the current results indicate that these inferences translate directly into worse cross-
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9 race dynamics. Therefore, the perceptual process observed across our experiments may have
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11 important societal consequences.
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55 ⁸ These results are consistent with bivariate correlations. Black perceivers' trust was negatively correlated with
56 White writers' MRS scores ($r=-.138$, $p<.001$), and positively correlated with writers' IMS scores ($r=.123$, $p<.001$).
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BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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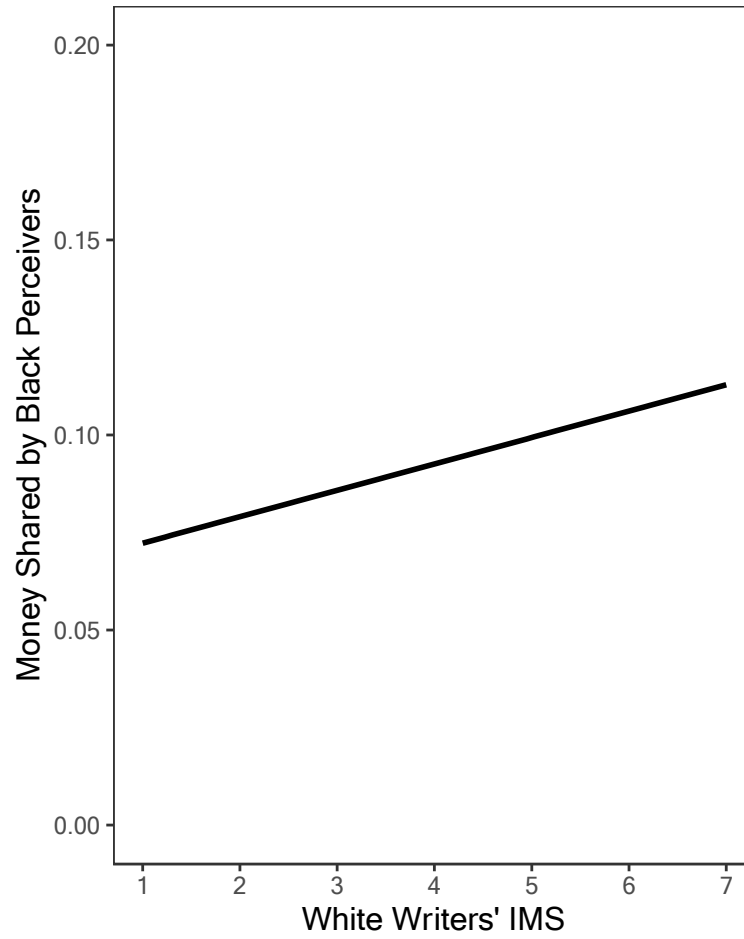
Figure 5
Experiment 3 Effect of White Writer MRS on Black Trust Sharing



Note. Shaded area around bar indicated 95% CIs.

BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

Figure 6
Experiment 3 Effect of White Writer IMS on Black Trust Sharing



Note. Shaded area around bar indicates 95% CIs.

General Discussion

Although White Americans increasingly claim to be egalitarian, the manner in which they do may speak volumes to Black Americans about their underlying beliefs. Three experiments demonstrated that Black perceivers detected underlying racial attitudes and motivations based solely on White writers' proclamations of their egalitarian beliefs (Experiments 1A, 1B, 2). Furthermore, Black perceivers evaluated White egalitarians whose underlying attitudes and motivations were more anti-Black as relatively more offensive, less likely an ally (Experiment 1A), and less likable and trustworthy (Experiments 1B, 2, 3).

We found that Black perceivers identified White egalitarians' underlying racial attitudes and motivations from particular linguistic cues (Experiment 1B and 2). Black perceivers accurately inferred that humanizing language and emphasizing support for equal opportunity indicated lower MRS and higher IMS, and that emphasizing personal responsibility and that equal opportunity already exists indicated higher MRS and lower IMS. These findings align with evidence that Black Americans interpret dehumanizing language as indicative of prejudice (Winslow et al., 2011) and that White Americans' beliefs about the causes of inequality are indicative of their underlying prejudice (Kluegel & Smith, 2017; Monteith & Spicer, 2000; Powell et al., 2005). Together, this research demonstrates that Black Americans closely attend to whether White egalitarians acknowledge them as fully human or acknowledge the societal obstacles that they face.

Our work elucidates how racial attitudes and motivations are communicated in intergroup settings. Research on implicit bias and aversive racism has argued that automatic or nondeliberative processes produce subtle expressions of racial bias (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004; Dovidio et al., 2000; Olson & Fazio, 2008). For example, implicit bias "leaks out" via subtle

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3 nonverbal behaviors (McConnell & Leibold, 2001). Our work identifies that even intentional,
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5 deliberative processes (i.e., writing egalitarian avowals) signal bias to outgroup members, and
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7 occurs even in the face of explicit egalitarian norms (Crandall et al., 2002) and social desirability
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9 concerns (Axt, 2017). Thus, even as White Americans deliberately cloak themselves in
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11 egalitarian language, racial bias persists and is readily perceived.
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15 This work suggests that one important source of interracial mistrust may be the disparate
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17 conceptions that racial groups hold of what constitutes egalitarianism. We found that White
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19 Americans' concept of what constitutes egalitarianism was perceived by Black people as being
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21 less indicative of allyship and less inoffensive than White Americans expected. These results
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23 suggest that while White Americans believe their prejudice is low or nonexistent, Black
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25 Americans believe it is simply repackaged. This effect may contribute to larger, persistent
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27 societal differences between White and Black Americans' perceptions of the health of interracial
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29 relations (Frankovic, 2019).
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34 The perceptual processes we identify have potentially profound implications despite
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36 relatively small effect sizes ($.10 < r_s < .18$). Phenomena that occur frequently or have important
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38 outcomes can have huge implications in aggregate (DiPrete & Eirich, 2006; Greenwald et al.,
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40 2015). For instance, implicit bias in hiring discrimination may have large aggregate economic
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42 costs and dramatically affect the lives of individuals affected by this discrimination, even despite
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44 small effect sizes ($.07 < r < .08$; Agerström & Rooth, 2011). The present work reveals that Black
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46 Americans' perceptions of egalitarianism translates into diminished interpersonal trust with real
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48 economic costs. Specifically, an increase in White egalitarians' underlying MRS or decrease in
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50 IMS by 1 SD led Black participants to share 8-9% less money with them (Experiment 3). This
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52 decrease resulted in a 9-10% drop in total financial benefit for both parties from sharing. As
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BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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3 egalitarian expressions become increasingly prevalent (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005a; 2005b),
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5 including 88% of White participants in our samples who claimed to be egalitarian, perceptions of
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7 egalitarianism by racial minorities may substantially determine both economic growth and race
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9 relations in America.
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12 Our experiments had some limitations. First, the list of linguistic codes we generated was
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14 neither exhaustive nor able to capture all possible nuances of the cues we did measure. For
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16 example, due to low usage, we were only able to code whether writers cited outgroup contact
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18 language rather than the nature or quality of outgroup contact. More focused investigations of
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20 particular facets of egalitarian language could provide further insight. Second, our attention on
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22 self-identified egalitarians leaves open the question of how willfully inegalitarian White people
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24 are perceived. Third, our use of non-Black coders of linguistic content may have influenced our
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26 findings. Given prior work showing that Black Americans attend more to prejudice than White
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28 Americans (Liao et al., 2016), the strength of our linguistic analyses may have been somewhat
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30 muted. Future work could directly compare Black and White Americans' interpretations of
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32 egalitarian expressions, and their ability to accurately perceive inegalitarianism.
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38 Finally, future researchers should explore how divergence between racial attitudes and
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40 motivations affect expressions of egalitarianism. For example, a prejudiced individual who is
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42 nonetheless motivated to be egalitarian might express themselves and be perceived differently
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44 than someone without such motivation. We were unable to address this nuanced question due to
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46 the high correlation between MRS and IMS across our studies ($-.67 < r_s < -.69$). However, our
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48 data suggest different linguistic cues are likely indicative of each construct. In terms of
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50 expression, we found that emphasizing outgroup contact and equity over equality predicted MRS
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52 but not IMS. In terms of perceptions, extant research demonstrates that Black participants
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BLACK AMERICANS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHITE EGALITARIANISM

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3 perceive more overt racist behavior from those low in IMS, but not necessarily those high in
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5 MRS. In contrast, they perceive people higher in MRS, but not IMS, as being more
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7 uncomfortable around Black people and more likely to deny racial inequities (Sommers &
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9 Norton, 2006). We find similar effects: Black participants perceived moralistic rationales as
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11 indicating greater IMS, but did not associate this language with MRS. Conversely, Black
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13 participants perceived defensiveness as indicating MRS, but not IMS. Future research might
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15 further investigate which linguistic cues correspond to which racial attitudes and motivations.
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19 In sum, our work supports the contention by Black Americans that declarations of
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21 egalitarianism belie inegalitarianism (Stevens, 2021). This suggests that cultivating more positive
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23 intergroup relations between White and Black Americans will not be achieved by individuals
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25 simply asserting nonprejudice. Instead, White Americans' very insistence that they are
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27 egalitarian perpetuates mistrust with Black Americans.
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