Asking White Americans about personal hardships increases willingness to engage in discussions of racial inequity

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White privilege is real, especially in the workplace

I’ve had to work for everything I have. Period.
#MyWhitePrivilege

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Goal: Understanding conversations about White privilege

Part 1: Reducing defensiveness for the privileged

Part 2: Downstream consequences for others
Part 1: Reducing Defensiveness in conversations about privilege
Talking about privilege is threatening to the **self** and to the **ingroup**

- Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006; Lowery, Chow, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2012; Knowles, Lowery, Chow, & Unzueta, 2014

Self-affirmation, not system affirmation, can reduce this threat

- Phillips & Lowery, 2015; 2019; Sherman & Cohen, 2002

Self-affirmations work by priming relationships and closeness


Self-disclosure increases liking and closeness

- Collins & Miller, 1994; Quaye, 2012

Asking the privileged to share their perspectives will **increase openness to discussions of privilege**
Study 1 & 2 Procedure
(Study 1 N=259; Study 2 N=150)
All White Participants

“Participate in an online discussion about social issues”

Experimental Manipulation

Read about Privilege

DVs
Predictions:

- Those who are asked any question will report greater liking of their partner via **self-disclosure**

- Being asked about personal hardships will increase recognition of privilege by **reducing threat to the self**
  - Branscombe, 1998; Craig & Richeson, 2014; Phillips & Lowery, 2015; 2019; Sherman & Cohen, 2002

- Being asked about discrimination will lead to **backlash** and decrease recognition of privilege by **increasing group image threat**
  - Craig & Richeson, 2014; 2016; Wilkins et al., 2017
Conditions

1. No Question

2. Control Question (Study 1 only): “What did you do so far today? What has your day been like?”

3. Discrimination Condition: “Have you ever been stereotyped or discriminated against in a way that prevented you from getting something you wanted?”

4. Hardship Condition: “Have you ever experienced a hardship that prevented you from getting something you wanted?”
Study 1 Results

Effect of Condition on Liking

Effect of Condition on Belief in Privilege

F(3, 255) = 3.19, p = .02

F(3, 255) = 2.93, p = .03
Study 2

r = .53, p < .001
Study 2 Results

Interaction between Condition and Political Ideology on Liking

Interaction between Condition and Political Ideology on Belief in Privilege

$F(5,130) = 12.94, p < .001$

$Liberals$ $Conservatives$

$Liberals$ $Conservatives$

$F(5,130) = 7.85, p < .001$
Part 2: Downstream Consequences for Others
Does it work?

Does hearing about a privileged person’s hardships decrease belief in privilege?
Participants: Mturker workers (N=120)

Procedure: Participants are shown an article about White Privilege and then shown a response from a previous participant

1. **Control Condition**: “I'm white, and I didn’t agree with the article. I just don’t think this is true.”

2. **Hardship Condition**: “I'm white, and I didn’t agree with the article. My parents got divorced when I was a child and I have been working since I was 16 to earn money for school. I just don’t think this is true.”
DV:
1. Liking
2. Belief in Privilege

Predictions:
- Those who hear someone deny privilege with hardships will report greater liking of the person by increasing perceptions of their harm
  - Lucas & Kteily, 2018
- However, it’s also possible that people who deny privilege with hardships will be perceived as “complainers”
  - Kaiser & Miller, 2001
- Greater liking will predict decreased belief in privilege
Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Perceived Harm</th>
<th>Liking</th>
<th>Belief in privilege</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b = 1.01, SE = .22***</td>
<td>b = .48, SE = .10***</td>
<td>b = -.77, SE = .08**</td>
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Indirect coefficient: b = 0.48, SE = .15, p = .002, 95% CI = [0.22, 0.79]

**p < .01, ***p < .001
• Interpersonal conversational dynamics can impact belief in privilege

• Personal hardships can be used to reduce or increase defensiveness in discussions about privilege

• Personal hardships can be used strategically
• No information about partner except attitudes
  • Does it matter who they are talking to?
• Other consequences for listeners
  • Would we find the same results in with non-White participants?
• All studies completed online
Thank you!
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