

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

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W24 / Work / At Work

White privilege is real, especially in the workplace

W24

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I've had to work for everything I have. Period.

#MyWhitePrivilege

9:08 PM - 30 Mar 2019

Goal: Understanding conversations about White privilege

Part 1: Reducing defensiveness for the privileged

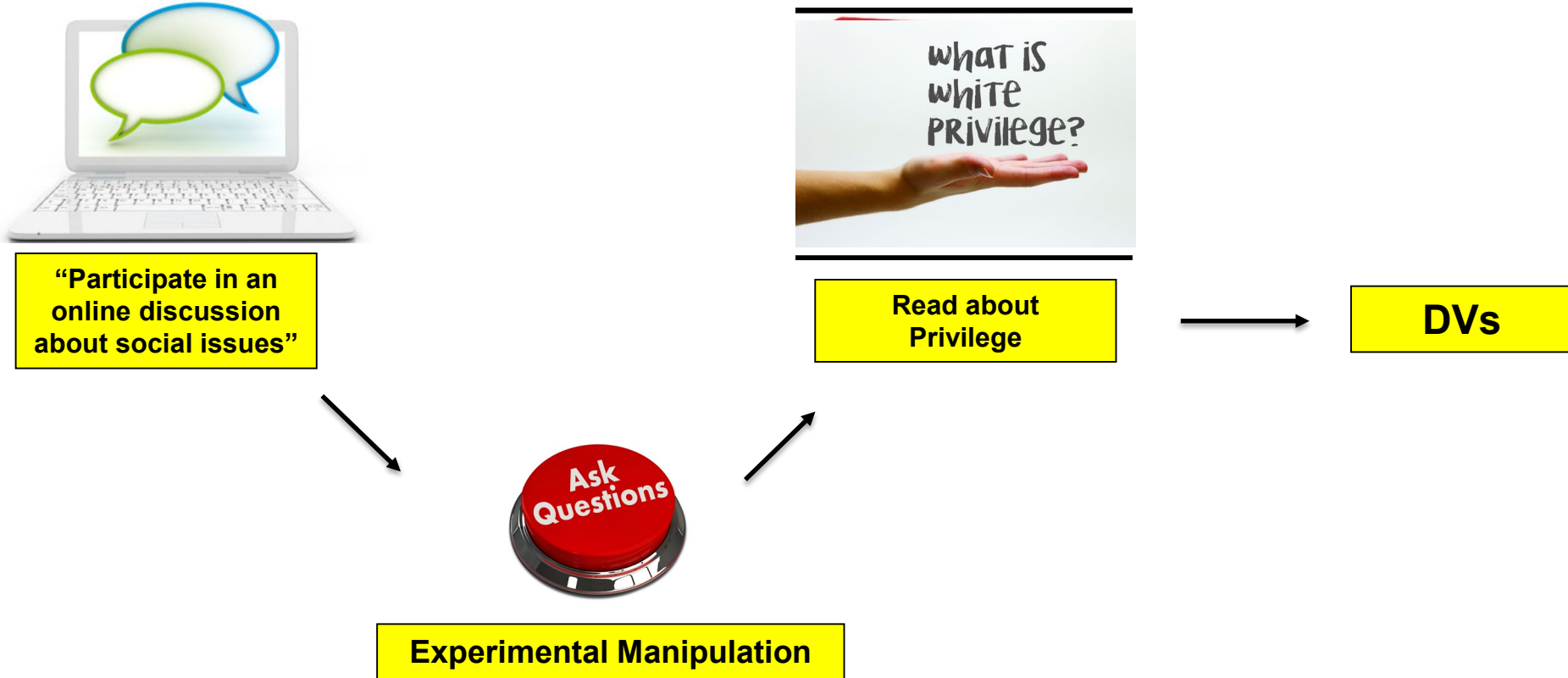
Part 2: Downstream consequences for others



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
 - Niiya, Mischkowski, 2008; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Shnabel, Purdie-Vaughns, Cook, Garcia, & Cohen, 2013
- 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



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

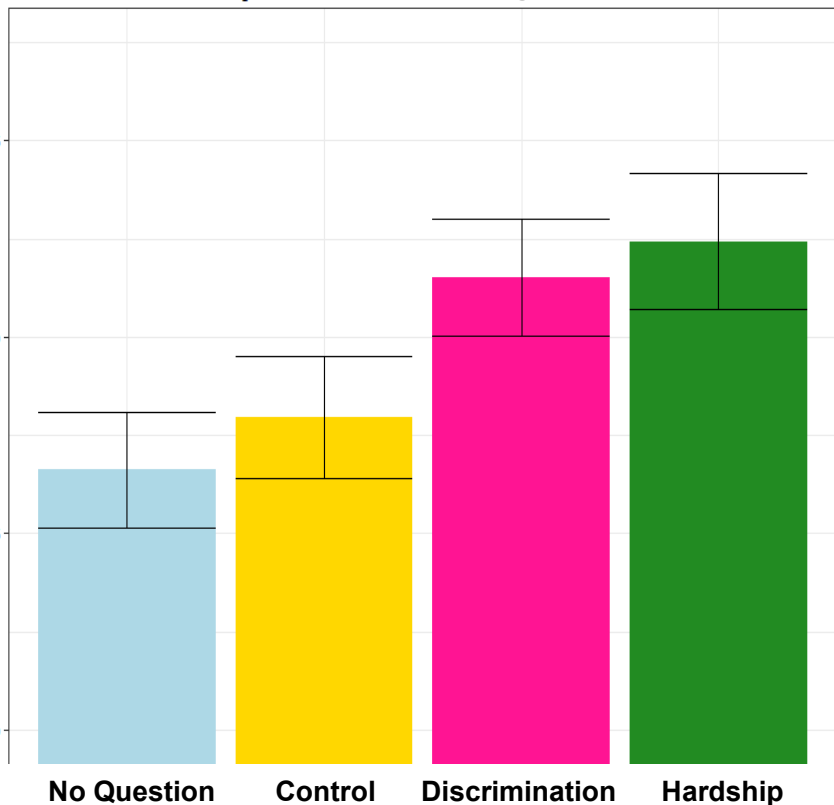
1. No Question

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?”

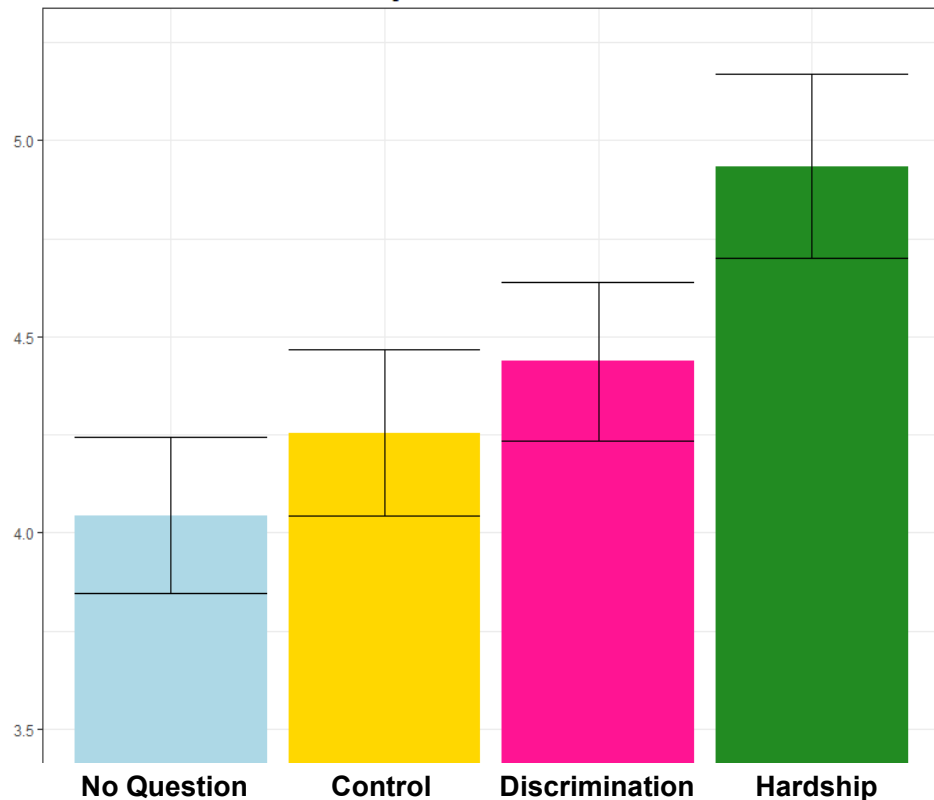
4. Hardship Condition: “Have you ever experienced a hardship that prevented you from getting something you wanted?”

Effect of Condition on Liking



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

Effect of Condition on Belief in Privilege



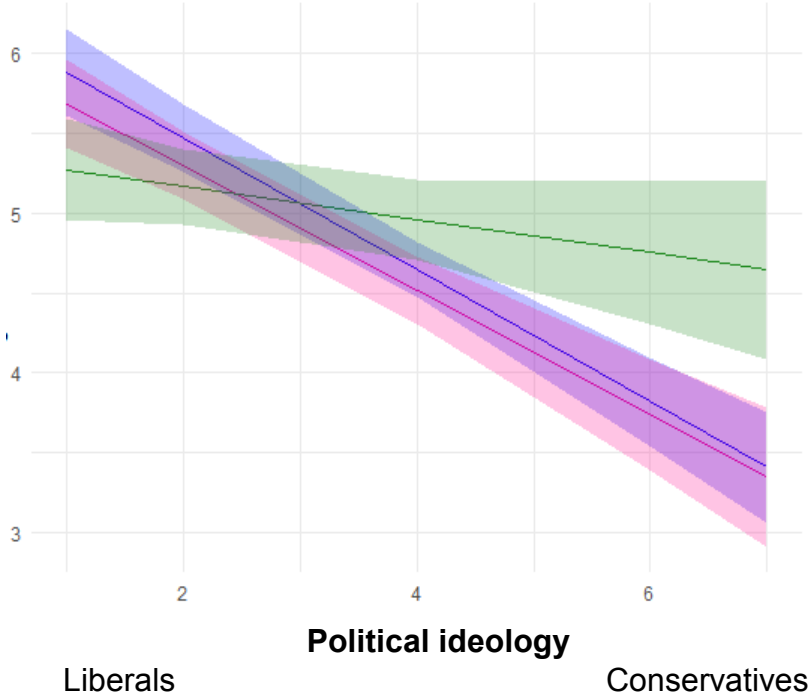
$F(3,255) = 2.93, p = .03$

Study 2



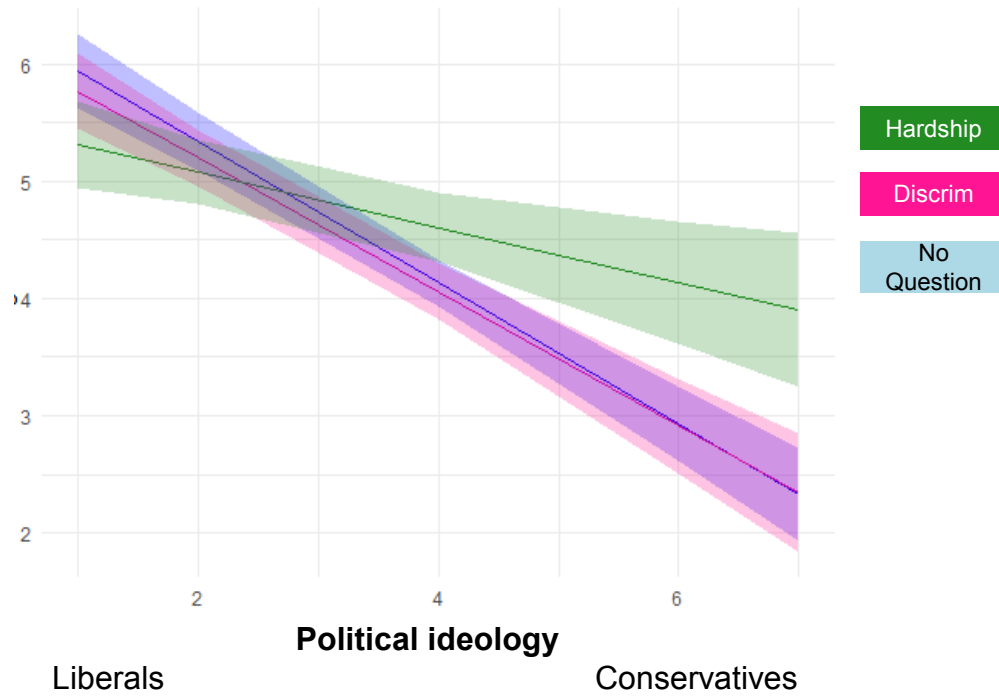
$r=.53,$
 $p<.001$

Interaction between Condition and Political Ideology on Liking



$F(5,130) = 7.85, p < .001$

Interaction between Condition and Political Ideology on Belief in Privilege



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

Part 2: Downstream Consequences for Others



THE STRAIGHT, ABLEBODIED, CIS, RICH, WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

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.”

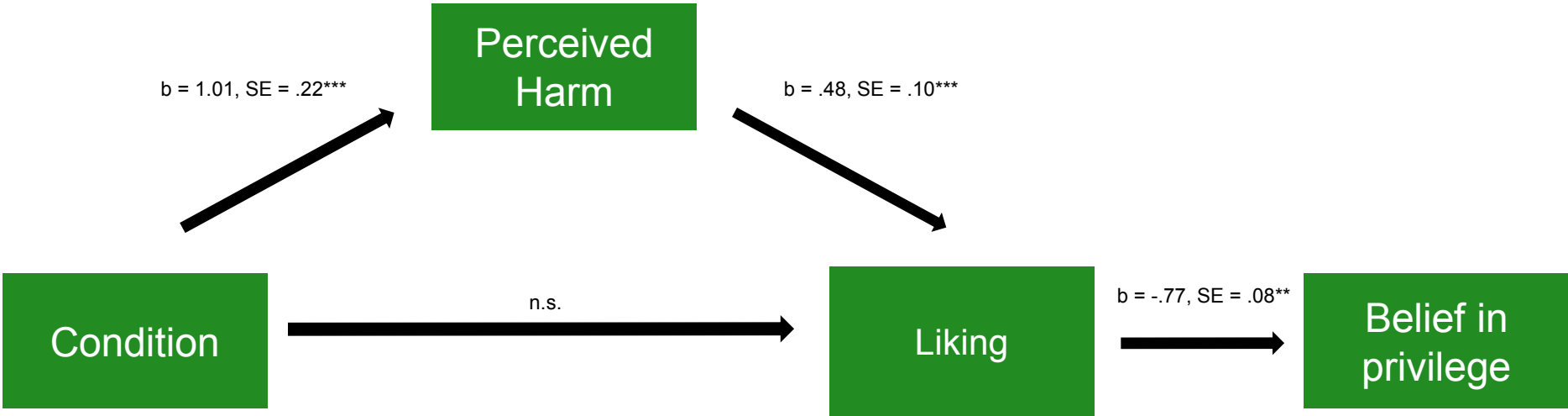
2. Hardship Condition: “I'm white, and I didn't agree with the article. My parents got divorced when I was a child and I have been working since I was 16 to earn money for school. I just don't think this is true.”

DVs:

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**



***p < .001, ** p < .01

Indirect coefficient: $b = 0.48, SE = .15, p = .002, 95\% CI = [0.22, 0.79]$

- 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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