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MISINFORMATION IN THE MEDIA AND ITS INFLUENCE ON RACISM

by

JARED CHAMPA

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Psychology  
in the College of Sciences  
and in the Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

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Thesis Chair: Chrysalis Wright, Ph.D.

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the current study was to examine how the media's positive and negative portrayals related to racism impact the viewer's attitudes regarding African Americans. Previous research has shown how misinformation in the media can implicitly affect one's level of racism. Previous research has also shown that gender and one's sociodemographic status can affect the way individuals perceive misinformation. This study aimed to address the relationship between misinformation depicting racist views directed toward African Americans and consumer's attitudes toward African Americans. It was hypothesized that exposure to misinformation will have a significant impact on participants' level of racism. A Series of linear regression analyses were conducted to determine how race, sex, social class, right-wing authoritarianism, religious involvement, political preference, and exposure to real and fake news combined predict the pro-black and anti-black views of participants. Results indicated that exposure to fake news did have a significant negative impact on a pro-black viewpoint. However, the results of the study indicated that real or fake news did not significantly impact anti-black views.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The fact that many African Americans continuously suffer from the effects of discrimination is no secret. Racism today in the United States of America is still a prominent issue in our society. From implicit bias news reporters may have toward young black men to the racist views that are promulgated by social media pages. Misinformation is out there, whether or not it is intentionally set out to discriminate against African Americans, it is a prominent issue that needs to be addressed. The purpose of this study will be to examine how the media's positive and negative portrayals related to racism impact the viewer's attitudes regarding African Americans. It is hypothesized that exposure to misinformation will have a significant impact on participants' level of racism. Participants that are exposed to misinformation are hypothesized to report higher levels of racism compared to participants that are not exposed to misinformation.

### Theoretical Perspective

The theory of racism is a concept that was introduced during the civil rights act in the 1960s. This concept is based on three distinct levels, cultural, institutional, and individual. At the cultural level, racism is spread like a disease, by following the negative stereotypes and beliefs held about African Americans through many generations (Bowser, 2017). It is a fact the United States has treated African Americans with cultural oppression dating back to slavery and the Jim Crow era. The institutional level is described as places where racism and discrimination were acceptable. Parks, schools, shopping centers, and even hospitals were segregated (Bowser, 2017). Racial segregation allowed for control over the "racial hierarchy" and still plays a role in some aspects today. At an individual's level, racism is still intentional and not an innate characteristic we possess. Individuals that display racial prejudices typically come from a low socioeconomic

background and possess lower levels of education (Gattino & Tartaglia, 2015). According to Bowser (2017), working and/or living in an environment where you interact with underrepresented populations, such as African Americans, you are less likely to develop prejudice.

Each level in the theory of racism essentially acts like a chain reaction cycle. Cultural racism influences white dominance, which then passes down to institutional racism which feeds the creation and further builds on the racial hierarchy. Lastly, it trickles down to the individual level perpetuating the situation and starting the cycle over again.

#### Systematic Racism Is A Continuous Problem

Systematic racism within our governmental and political system in the United States is something that always tends to be ignored. The theory of systematic racism entails a system of racist practices where inequality is present and the favoring of White political power is put on top (Simmons, 2013). Today many young Black men and women are racially discriminated against in our criminal justice system. Police officers are more likely to use excessive force on Black individuals than Whites (Kovera, 2019). In 2017 alone, African Americans were 8 times more likely to be arrested for marijuana in New York City (Gross et al., 2017). According to Gross and colleagues (2017), the racial disparities do not stop there. African Americans are 3.5 times more likely to be convicted of a crime they are innocent of than white people. A study conducted by Rachlinski and colleagues (2007) looked at whether or not white judges had an implicit bias. Results from the implicit association test showed that White judges had an implicit bias toward African Americans. The same study primed judges with words associated with

African Americans and found they were more likely to give harsher sentences toward African Americans in the testing simulation.

### Mental and Physical Effects of Racism

The effects of racial discrimination take a mental and physical toll on those that are victims. Previous research has shown that young individuals who are exposed to racial discrimination are more likely to have drug and alcohol-related problems (Gibbons et al., 2012). Young individuals are also more likely to experience increased signs of anger later in life (Gibbons et al., 2012). Recent studies have found that high levels of racial discrimination at an early age (10-15) have been associated with signs of depression later in life (20-29) (Carter et al., 2019). According to the same article, racial discrimination can affect a young individual so negatively that it can influence a biological risk on their overall health through adulthood. Racial discrimination can have such a long-lasting effect on some individuals, which in turn can create poor health overall.

If we look at the situation more closely, we also see that depression is not the only effect of racial discrimination. Increased signs of anger have shown to be an effect of racial discrimination. Those with low levels of self-control are more likely to act out in anger and to be involved in risky situations (Bolin, 2004). Evidence shows that using anger to cope with racial discrimination can affect an individual's mental health in some circumstances. Further research illustrates that active anger in individuals affected by racial discrimination has some negative psychological effects on their mind and body.



A lack of proper coping mechanisms can cause individuals to experience more negative effects on their well-being (Pittman, 2011). Passive coping is the result many African Americans are faced with due to oppression. Passive coping is when the source of stress or trauma is not directly addressed at the source and instead avoided altogether. Research has shown that there are negative health effects when using passive coping techniques, such as lower self-esteem (Covic et al., 2000).

### Media Influence on Framing Stereotypes

Previous research conducted by Ramasubramanian & Martinez, 2016 examined the effects of framing individuals with an article that contained misinformation. The article containing misinformation purpose was to invoke a negative portrayal of former President Obama. The misinformation was purposely designed and framed to make President Obama look as if he was struggling to maintain his popularity by going on TV shows. Their results found that participants that viewed negative stereotypes about President Obama were more likely to present racist beliefs.

Research conducted by Sonnett and colleagues (2015) highlighted how news stations used implicit racist cues while reporting the disaster of Hurricane Katrina. Their results indicated that several news networks exaggerated stories of black residents causing “violence.” Many news stations geared their attention toward reporting a crime that involved the black residents affected by the disaster and not those in need of serious help. According to Bogle, 2001, the media portrays African Americans as “criminals” and “unmotivated” everywhere in our culture. Today people of color who are in positions of power are still scrutinized by the media and subject to levels of tokenism (Ramasubramanian & Martinez, 2016).

### Media Influence on Priming Stereotypes

Priming, similar to framing, is when an individual becomes exposed to a stimulus which then influences how they respond to a related stimulus (Valentino, 1999). For this study, the “stimulus” are stereotypes about African Americans. Previous research has shown how the media's priming effect impacts an individual's perceptions of African Americans. Dixon & Maddox, 2005 study examined how different skin tones of a possible criminal can influence participant's judgments later on. They hypothesized that racial stereotypes would likely be more present since the media already portrays African Americans as criminals. Their results highlighted that participants were more likely to feel discomfort if the crime was related to a darker skin tone than a lighter one. Their results also found that even if participants were not exposed to the news, they found dark skin tone Black males to be easily more memorable.

### Misinformation

We hear the term “fake news” a lot in the media, but what exactly is “fake news”? Lazer et al., 2018, defines misinformation or “fake news” to be information that is altered and reflects the original source, but contains information that is made up. Misinformation outlets typically have the goal in mind to either misinform an individual on a situation or to outright dope them into believing their narrative. The use of misinformation has seen a spike in the last several years. With the ever-connected universe, society lives in today, social media companies face the issue of controlling misinformation. Facebook has seen a large influx of misinformation outlets on its site in the last several years, most notably in the 2016 presidential election. With the goal of trying to sway American voter's political opinions with misinformation.

### Who Believes Misinformation?

When looking at data from a socio-demographic standpoint, research has shown us that race, education, and socioeconomic status all play a role in susceptibility (Berg, 2009). Those that are older tend to be more prejudiced toward minorities (Gonsalkorale et al., 2009). Typically White males exhibit more racially prejudicial views toward minorities than females (Knoll et al., 2010). Previous research conducted by Gattino & Tartaglia, 2015 has indicated that individuals with low socioeconomic status are more susceptible to priming effects and more likely to exhibit racial prejudices. Interestingly enough, previous research conducted by Knoll and colleagues, 2011 found that college students can be more susceptible to misinformation since their knowledge of political and world views is less established versus someone older in age.

### Why Do Individuals Believe Misinformation?

The use of misinformation in the media can drastically affect the attitudes and beliefs of an individual. With the use of social media, misinformation spreads faster than factual sources (Vosoughi et al., 2018 as cited in Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). Individuals who are exposed to social media posts or news stories are less likely to change their ideal mental model (Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). The longer misinformation is taken in and digested by an individual, the more developed it becomes in the brain which creates a difficult task to change (Ecker et al., 2013). Individuals have preexisting beliefs that often dictate whether they choose to process information as real or misguided information.

According to Ecker and colleagues (2013), research shows motivation also plays a role in how an individual reacts to misinformation. If the misinformation already matches an individual's preconceived beliefs, then it allows for that information to be more easily believed.

The way misinformation is viewed can be described in fluency; how accessible it is to an audience. Misinformation is considered successful if there are visual elements that make it easy to comprehend. An abundance of repetition helps further strengthen the particular piece of misinformation presented (Ecker et al., 2013).

### Solutions to Solving Misinformation

Today many journalists and news stations are fighting back trying to correct misinformation on the internet and social media platforms. However, there are many issues with just simply denying its authenticity, since it does not help the viewer to change their mind (Walter & Tukachinsky, 2019). To effectively apply a correction, one should provide an alternative approach by explaining why that misinformation is incorrect to begin with. Research has shown that the time it takes to correct misinformation is a crucial part of fighting misinformation altogether (Barbetta et al., 1994).

### The Current Study

This study aims to address the relationship between misinformation depicting racist views directed toward African Americans and consumers attitudes toward African Americans. It is hypothesized that exposure to misinformation will have a significant impact on participants' level of racism. Participants that are exposed to misinformation are hypothesized to report higher levels of racism compared to participants that are not exposed to misinformation. This study aims to take a look at how many different demographic aspects of consumers can affect their attitudes towards African Americans.

## CHAPTER 2: METHOD

### Participants and Procedures

Data for the current study was collected in Qualtrics, after receiving IRB approval. The current study is part of a larger study examining the impact of misinformation on consumers' views and attitudes regarding underrepresented groups in the United States. The subset examined in the current study focuses on consumer attitudes regarding African Americans and racism. Participants in the current study included 116 male and female college students from the University of Central Florida who were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions. The mean age of participants was 20.64 years. Fifty-one participants (44%) were male, and 65 participants were female (56%). The majority of participants ( $n = 68$ , 58.6%) identified as White. Participants who indicated that they were African American were removed from analyses considering the purpose of the current study.

Participants in condition one were exposed to a series of brief real news clips containing news involving African Americans. The first clip is from ABC News and discusses how three men from Baltimore are released after 36 years of imprisonment (02:11 minutes), the second clip is from ABC News and covers an incident where an employee was fired over a racially-insensitive incident (0:54 minutes), the third clip is from CBS Evening News and discusses the rate of HIV among African American communities in the South (02:18 minutes), the fourth clip is from CBS Evening News and covers a racist incident at GM's Toledo plant (01:48 minutes), and the last clip is from TODAY and covers the story of two African American men who were arrested at Starbucks (03:00 minutes).

Participants in condition two are being exposed to a series of clips from Prager U containing misinformation involving or related to African Americans. The first clip discusses what they call the myth of voter suppression (05:22 minutes). The second clip discusses the violence in Chicago (01:18 minutes). The last clip discusses how liberals aim to maintain racism in the United States (05:00 minutes). Participants in the third condition were not exposed to any news media involving African Americans.

After participants viewed the news clips, if applicable, to their experimental condition, participants then completed an online questionnaire. Participants answered questions related to symbolic and ambivalent racism, followed by demographic questions, right-wing authoritarianism, religious involvement, and social desirability. It is estimated that it will take participants 45-minutes to complete the online study.

### Measures

#### *Symbolic Racism*

Participants answered eight questions regarding symbolic racism, derived from Henry and Sears (2002) and Sears and Henry (2005). Example items include “It’s really a matter of people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites” and “Some say that black leaders have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven’t pushed fast enough. What do you think?” Five items were reverse coded. Alpha reliability for the current study was .37, indicating that the reliability was too low for the scale to be included in analysis. The complete list of items can be found in Appendix A.

### *Ambivalent Racism*

Participants answered 20 questions to assess their level of ambivalent racism (Katz & Hass, 1988). Ten items represented pro-black attitudes while another ten items represented anti-black attitudes. An example of a pro-black item is “Black people do not have the same employment opportunities that Whites do.” An example of an anti-black item is “On the whole, Black people don’t stress education and training.” All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*. Alpha reliability for the pro-black scale was .87. Alpha reliability for the anti-black scale was .83. Both scales were averaged to derive at total scores that were used in analyses. The scale can be found in Appendix B.

### *Demographics*

Participants answered a total of 17 questions regarding their age, racial background, biological sex, social class, and political preference. For analysis purposes, race was dichotomously coded as 1 *white* and 0 *non-white*. The questions used to assess social class had an alpha reliability of .78. Items for social class were transformed to z scores and then averaged to derive at a social class variable that was used in analyses. The complete list of items can be found in Appendix C.

### *Right-Wing Authoritarianism*

Participants answered a total of 10 items, derived from Rattazzi and colleagues (2007), to assess their level of right-wing authoritarianism. Example items include “What our country needs most is disciplined citizens, following national leaders in unity” and “What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil and take us back to our true path.” All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being

*strongly agree*. Alpha reliability for the current study was .92. Items were averaged to derive a total score that was used in analyses. The scale can be found in Appendix D.

#### *Religious Involvement*

Participants answered a total of 5 questions, derived from Koeing and Bussing (2010), to determine participants level of religious involvement. Example items include “How often do you attend church or other religious meetings” and “In my life, I experience the presence of the Divine.” Alpha reliability for the current study was .90. Items were averaged to derive a total score that was used in analyses. The complete list of items can be found in Appendix E.

#### *Social Desirability*

Participants completed the 33-item Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982). Example items include “Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates” and “I was always careful about my manner of dress.” All items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being *strongly disagree* and 5 being *strongly agree*. Alpha reliability for the current study was .53, indicating that the reliability was too low for the scale to be included in analyses. The scale can be found in Appendix F.

#### Analysis Plan

Preliminary analyses to assess the reliability of scales, distributional characteristics, and the extent of missing data were conducted first. Analyses relevant to the hypotheses of the study included: (1) correlational analysis of all study variables, (2) an analysis of variance to determine if there are differences in level of racism based on experimental condition, and (3) a linear regression analysis to determine how sociodemographic items, RWA, and religious involvement relate to participants level of racism and the impact of priming on participants reported racism.



### CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

A Series of linear regression analyses were conducted to determine how race, sex, social class, right-wing authoritarianism, religious involvement, political preference, and exposure to real and fake news combined predict the pro-black and anti-black views of participants. The regression model for pro-black views was significant for sex,  $F(9,105) = 4.45, p < .00, R^2 = .32$ , and exposure to fake news  $F(9,105) = -2.69, p < .01, R^2 = .32$ .

Results were not significant, however, for social class  $F(9, 105) = -1.08, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ , political preference  $F(9, 105) = .46, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ , right-wing authoritarianism  $F(9, 105) = -1.95, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ , religious involvement  $F(9, 105) = -1.25, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ , age  $F(9, 105) = -1.08, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ , race  $F(9, 105) = -1.88, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ , and exposure to real news  $F(9, 105) = -.69, p > .05, R^2 = .32$ .

The regression model for anti-black views was significant for right-wing authoritarianism  $F(9, 105) = 5.42, p < .00, R^2 = .40$ , and sex  $F(9, 105) = -2.97, p < .00, R^2 = .40$ . Results were not significant, however, for social class  $F(9, 105) = -1.35, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ , political preference  $F(9, 105) = -1.11, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ , religious involvement  $F(9, 105) = .94, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ , age  $F(9, 105) = 1.71, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ , race  $F(9, 105) = 1.74, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ , exposure to fake news  $F(9, 105) = 1.36, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ , and exposure to real news  $F(9, 105) = -.24, p > .05, R^2 = .40$ . Regression coefficients for anti-black can be found in table 1 and pro-black in table 2.

Data was analyzed using a series of analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there is a difference between groups for pro-black attitudes. Results for pro-black attitudes were statistically significant between all groups  $F(2, 113) = 3.65, p = .03$ . Descriptive statistics for pro-black can be found in table 3.

A second ANOVA was conducted to determine if there is a difference between groups for anti-black attitudes. Results for anti-black attitudes were not significant between all groups  $F(2, 113) = .991, p = .37$ . Descriptive statistics for anti-black can be found in table 4.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how the media's positive and negative portrayals related to racism impact the viewer's attitudes regarding African Americans. It was hypothesized that exposure to misinformation would have a significant impact on participants' level of racism. It was also hypothesized that participants exposed to misinformation would be more likely to report higher levels of racism compared to participants that were not exposed to misinformation. Results from this study partially supported the hypothesis.

### Exposure to Misinformation

The results of this study indicated that there was a significant negative association between pro-black views and exposure to fake news. This indicates that exposure to real news did not make a difference in pro-black views. This is similar to previous research indicating that the higher level of exposure to a fake news source is what impacts a viewpoint (Knoll et al., 2010). The three clips representing fake news to participants may have been enough to negatively affect an already existing pro-black viewpoint. These results are also similar to previous research indicating that college students can be more susceptible to misinformation due to their knowledge of politics and world view is not as developed compared to someone older in age (Knoll et al., 2010).

Results of the study indicated that real or fake news did not significantly impact anti-black views. These results indicate the opposite with previous research indicating that the level of exposure and visual elements to a fake news source is what impacts an already prejudiced viewpoint (Knoll et al., 2010). In essence, the three short clips representing fake news to participants may not have been significant enough to impact an anti-black viewpoint. These

results might be explained by previous research indicating that motivation plays a role in consuming misinformation (Ecker et al., 2013). Perhaps the videos containing misinformation was not enough to further strengthen an anti-black viewpoint.

In addition, results showed that biological sex was significantly associated with both pro-black and anti-black views. These results are similar to previous research indicating that biological sex can have an impact on prejudiced beliefs toward minorities (Gonsalkorale et al., 2009).

Results also indicated that right-wing authoritarianism was positively significant with anti-black views. These results seem to suggest that participants who scored high on right-wing authoritarianism were more likely to exhibit anti-black views. This supports the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Theory (Altemeyer, 1998), which looks to identify three key areas, authoritarian aggression, submission, and strict political viewpoint as critical factors that contribute to prejudice beliefs against minorities and racism. Therefore, it is not surprising that this study found a significant association with participants who scored high in right-wing authoritarianism and anti-black views.

### Limitations

There were certain limitations to this study, for instance, the study only used a sample size from a 4-year university made of only psychology majors. The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-25 years old. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire online wherever they were, so they were not properly monitored. Since the videos were online, there was no way to validate if they watched the video through its entirety or at all. Participants may not have answered all questions truthfully. Some of the videos shown in the study may have

already been seen by participants prior to the study. The videos also could have been analyzed too critically before participants completed the questionnaire. This may have skewed some results when regarding the real and fake news groups of participants.

Another limitation of the study was the number and the duration of videos shown for fake and real news. Allowing more misinformation and real news to be seen and processed by the participant could have further helped prime the participants more effectively in this study. There are several scales that were used in this study that were developed over fifteen years ago. With the ever-increasing strides to become more proactive in equality especially during the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, this could lead to some of the scales being outdated. This could explain why some scales from the study were not found to be statistically significant and were left out of the study. The Symbolic Racism and the Social Desirability scale were excluded due to their Alpha reliability.

### Future Research

During the duration of this study, many real-world events have taken place, in particular the Black Lives Matter movement. Future research should examine the misinformation that portrays the BLM movement negatively. The fake news clips shown as mentioned may not have been enough to prime participants. Future research should look at expanding the number of videos shown and also include social media posts from Twitter and Instagram. Future research should also look at expanding the demographic pool of participants to an older and more economically diverse audience. Another area that future research should examine is a more detailed questionnaire for participants. A video recording of participants answering questions

verbally after watching or reading social media posts could act as an effective way to record information instead of completing an online questionnaire.

**APPENDIX A: SYMBOLIC RACISM SCALE**

## Symbolic Racism Scale

Source:

Henry, P. J., & Sears, D. O. (2002). The symbolic racism 2000 scale. *Political Psychology*, 23, 253-283.

Sears, D. O., & Henry, P. J. (2005). Over thirty years later: A contemporary look at symbolic racism and its critics. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. 37, 95-150.

1. It's really a matter of people not trying hard enough; if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites.
  - a. strongly disagree
  - b. somewhat disagree
  - c. somewhat agree
  - d. strongly agree
  
2. Irish, Italian, Jewish, and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same.
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Somewhat disagree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Strongly agree
  
3. Some say that black leaders have been trying to push too fast. Others feel that they haven't pushed fast enough. What do you think?
  - a. Try to push too fast
  - b. Going too slowly
  - c. Moving at about the right speed
  
4. How much of the racial tension that exists in the United States today do you think blacks are responsible for creating?
  - a. All of it
  - b. Most
  - c. Some
  - d. None of it
  
5. How much discrimination against blacks do you feel there is in the United States today, limiting their chances of getting ahead?
  - a. A lot
  - b. Some
  - c. Just a little
  - d. None at all



6. Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class?
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Somewhat disagree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Strongly agree
  
7. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Somewhat disagree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Strongly agree
  
8. Over the past few years, blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.
  - a. Strongly disagree
  - b. Somewhat disagree
  - c. Somewhat agree
  - d. Strongly agree

The following is the standard procedure for combining the items into a scale: After collecting the data, items 1, 2, 4, and 8 need to be recoded so that a 1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, and 4 = 1. Item 3 needs to be recoded so that 1 = 3, 2 = 1, and 3 = 2. For combining the items into a scale, there are several options, ranging from the simplest to the most precise: (1) One could simply add the raw scores together for each item, so that each individual has a score that could range from 8 to 31. (2) To compensate for any missing data, one could average the raw scores. (3) To compensate for the differences in the number of response alternatives, one could recode each of the items on a 0 to 1 scale, so for item #3, a 1 = 1, 2 = 0, and 3 = .50, and for the other items the high response is a 1, the next a .66, the next a .33, and the low response is a 0. (This third technique is the one used in Henry & Sears, 2002.) (4) To equate the variability across items, one could create standardized (z) scores for each of the items in the scale, then average the responses.

**APPENDIX B: AMBIVALENT RACISM SCALE**

## Ambivalent Racism

Source: Katz, I., & Hass, R. G. (1988). Racial ambivalence and American value conflict: Correlational and priming studies of dual cognitive structures. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 55, 893-905.

\*indicates reverse coding

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements using the following scale:

- a) strongly disagree
- b) somewhat disagree
- c) somewhat agree
- d) strongly agree

### Pro-Black

1. Black people do not have the same employment opportunities that Whites do.
2. It's surprising that Black people do as well as they do, considering all the obstacles they face.
3. Too many Blacks still lose out on jobs and promotions because of their skin color.
4. Most big corporations in America are really interested in treating their Black and White employees equally.\*
5. Most Blacks are no longer discriminated against.\*
6. Blacks have more to offer than they have been allowed to show.
7. The typical urban ghetto public school is not as good as it should be to provide equal opportunities for Blacks.
8. This country would be better off if it were more willing to assimilate the good things in Black culture.
9. Sometimes Black job seekers should be given special consideration in hiring.
10. Many Whites show a real lack of understanding of the problems that Blacks face.

### Anti-Black

1. The root cause of most of the social and economic ills of Blacks is the weakness and instability of the Black family.
2. Although there are exceptions, Black urban neighborhoods don't seem to have strong community organization or leadership.
3. On the whole, Black people don't stress education and training.
4. Many Black teenagers don't respect themselves or anyone else.
5. Blacks don't seem to use opportunities to own and operate little shops and businesses.
6. Very few Black people are just looking for a free ride.\*
7. Black children would do better in school if their parents had better attitudes about learning.
8. Blacks should take the jobs that are available and then work their way up to better jobs.
9. One of the biggest problems for a lot of Blacks is their lack of self-respect.
10. Most Blacks have the drive and determination to get ahead.\*

## **APPENDIX C: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Demographic Questionnaire

- 1) What is your current age?
- 2) Which of the following best describes your racial background?
  - a. Black or African-American
  - b. White
  - c. American Indian or Alaska Native
  - d. Asian or Pacific Islander
  - e. Hispanic
  - f. Other
- 3) What is your biological sex?
  - a. male
  - b. female
- 4) What year are you in college?
  - a. first-year
  - b. second-year
  - c. third-year
  - d. fourth-year
  - e. postgraduate
- 5) What is your current grade point average?
- 6) What is your biological parents' current marital status?
  - a. married to each other
  - b. divorced
  - c. divorced and one or both parents have remarried
  - d. never married
  - e. I do not know
- 7) What is your current relationship status?
  - a. not dating
  - b. casually dating
  - c. seriously dating
  - d. engaged
  - e. living with partner
  - f. married
- 8) The highest education level achieved by my father was/is:
  - No formal schooling
  - Primary school (Kindergarten to Year 6)
  - Secondary or high school (Years 7 to 10)
  - Senior secondary school (Years 11 & 12)

- Technical and Further Education (TAFE)
- University - undergraduate degree (Bachelor degree)
- University - postgraduate degree (Masters or PhD)
- Don't know

9) The highest education level achieved by my mother was/is:

- No formal schooling
- Primary school (Kindergarten to Year 6)
- Secondary or high school (Years 7 to 10)
- Senior secondary school (Years 11 & 12)
- Technical and Further Education (TAFE)
- University - undergraduate degree (Bachelor degree)
- University - postgraduate degree (Masters or PhD)
- Don't know

10) Please indicate how you think most people would rate your mother's main occupation in terms of its prestige and status.

- Extremely low status and prestige
- Very low
- Low
- Moderately below average
- Slightly below average
- Average
- Slightly above average
- Moderately above average
- High
- Very high
- Extremely high status and prestige
- Don't know

11) Please indicate how you think most people would rate your father's main occupation in terms of its prestige and status.

- Extremely low status and prestige
- Very low
- Low
- Moderately below average
- Slightly below average
- Average
- Slightly above average
- Moderately above average
- High
- Very high
- Extremely high status and prestige

- Don't know

12) My family income when I was a child was:

- Well below average
- Slightly below average
- Average
- Slightly above average
- Well above average
- Don't know

13) The number of bedrooms in the house that I lived in when I was 15 years old was:

- One
- Two
- Three
- Four
- Five
- Six
- Seven or more

14) My mother's social class was/is:

- Working-class
- Lower middle-class
- Middle-class
- Upper Middle-class
- Upper-class
- Don't know

15) My father's social class was/is:

- Working class
- Lower middle-class
- Middle-class
- Upper middle-class
- Upper class
- Don't know

16) My social class is:

- Working class
- Lower middle-class
- Middle-class
- Upper middle-class
- Upper class
- Don't know

17) What is your political preference?

- a) Republican
- b) Democrat
- c) Undecided



**APPENDIX D: RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM SCALE**

### **Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale**

Source: Rattazzi, A., Bobbio, A., & Canova, L. (2007). A short version of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 43*, 1223-1234.

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements using the following scale:

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. neither agree nor disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

- 1.) Our country desperately needs a mighty leader who will do what has to be done to destroy the radical new ways and sinfulness that are ruining us.
- 2.) The majority of those who criticize proper authorities in government and religion only create useless doubts in people's mind.
- 3.) The situation in our country is getting so serious, the strongest method would be justified if they eliminated the troublemakers and got us back to our true path.
- 4.) What our country really needs instead of more "civil rights" is a good stiff dose of law and order.
- 5.) Obedience and respect for authority are the most important values children should learn.
- 6.) The fact on crime, sexual immorality and the recent public disorders all show we have to crack down harder on deviant groups and troublemakers, if we are going to save our moral standards and preserve law and order.
- 7.) What our country needs most is disciplined citizens, following national leaders in unity.
- 8.) The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leader in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas.
- 9.) Once our government leaders give us the "go ahead", it will be the duty of every patriotic citizen to help stomp out the rot that is poisoning our country from within.
- 10.) What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path.

**APPENDIX E: RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

## Religious Involvement

Source: Koeing, H. G., & Bussing, A. (2010). The Duke University Religion Index (DUREL): A five-item measure for use in epidemiological studies. *Religions*, 1, 78-85. Doi: 10.3390/re/1010078

1. How often do you attend church or other religious meetings?
  - a) Never
  - b) Once a year or less
  - c) A few times a year
  - d) A few times a month
  - e) Once a week
  - f) More than once a week
2. How often do you spend time in private religious activities, such as prayer, meditation or Bible study?
  - a) Rarely or never
  - b) A few times a month
  - c) Once a week
  - d) Two or more times a week
  - e) Daily
  - f) More than once a day
3. In my life, I experience the presence of the Divine (i.e., God)
  - a) Definitely not true
  - b) Tends not to be true
  - c) Unsure
  - d) Tends to be true
  - e) Definitely true of me
4. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.
  - a) Definitely not true
  - b) Tends not to be true
  - c) Unsure
  - d) Tends to be true
  - e) Definitely true of me
5. I try hard to marry my religion over into all other dealings in life.
  - a) Definitely not true
  - b) Tends not to be true
  - c) Unsure
  - d) Tends to be true
  - e) Definitely true of me

**APPENDIX F: SOCIAL DESIRABILITY SCALE**

## Social Desirability Scale

Source: Reynolds, W. (1982). Development of reliable and valid short forms of the Marlow-Crowne social desirability scale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 38, 119-125.

Please rate how much you agree with the following statements using the following scale:

- a. Strongly disagree
- b. Somewhat disagree
- c. neither agree nor disagree
- d. Somewhat agree
- e. Strongly agree

- 1.) Before voting I thoroughly investigate the qualifications of all the candidates.
- 2.) I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
- 3.) It is sometimes hard for me to go on with my work if I am not encouraged.
- 4.) I have never intensely disliked anyone.
- 5.) On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.
- 6.) I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
- 7.) I am always careful about my manner of dress.
- 8.) My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
- 9.) If I could get into a movie without paying and be sure I was not seen I would probably do it.
- 10.) On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
- 11.) I like to gossip at times.
- 12.) There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.
- 13.) No matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener.
- 14.) I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.
- 15.) There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.
- 16.) I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake.
- 17.) I always try to practice what I preach.
- 18.) I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people.
- 19.) I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget.
- 20.) When I don't know something, I don't mind at all mind admitting it.
- 21.) I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.
- 22.) At time I have really insisted on having things my own way.
- 23.) There have been occasions when I felt like smashing things.
- 24.) I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrong-doings.
- 25.) I never resent being asked to return a favor.
- 26.) I have never been irked when people expressed ideas very different from my own.
- 27.) I never make a long trip without checking the safety of my car.
- 28.) There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.
- 29.) I have almost never felt the urge to tell someone off.

- 30.) I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.
- 31.) I have never felt that I was punished without cause.
- 32.) I sometimes think when people have a misfortune, they only got what they deserved.
- 33.) I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings.

## **APPENDIX G: FIGURES & TABLES**



Table 1. *Regression Coefficients for Anti-Black Attitudes*

	Beta	Sig.
SC. Total	-.11	.18
Political Preference	-.06	.27
RWA Total	.26	.00*
Religious Total	.04	.35
Age	.02	.09
Sex	-.26	.00*
White	.16	.08
Fake News	.14	.18
Real News	-.03	.81

\*p<.05

Note: Standardized Beta Coefficients reported

Note: SC. Total = Social Class, RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Table 2. *Regression Coefficients for Pro-Black Attitudes*

	Beta	Sig.
SC. Total	-.09	.28
Political Preference	.04	.64
RWA Total	-.17	.05
Religious Total	-.11	.21
Age	-.09	.28
Sex	.38	.00*
White	-.16	.06
Fake News	-.25	.01*
Real News	-.07	.49

\*p<.05

Note: Standardized Beta Coefficients reported

Note: SC. Total = Social Class, RWA = Right-Wing Authoritarianism

Table 3. *Descriptives for Pro-Black Attitudes*

	N	M	SD
2	39	2.74	.57
1	35	2.86	.56
3	42	3.08	.59
Total	116	2.90	.57

Note: Group 2 = Fake News, Group 1 = Real News, and Group 3 = No Exposure

Table 4. *Descriptives for Anti-Black Attitudes*

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	N	M	SD
2	39	2.11	.61
1	35	2.07	.53
3	42	1.94	.51
Total	116	2.04	.55

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Note: Group 2 = Fake News, Group 1 = Real News, and Group 3 = No Exposure

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