

The effect of racial prejudice on perceptions of Black slurs used by Black individuals toward  
White individuals

by

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## **Abstract**

The current research examined whether participants' levels of racial prejudice impact their perceptions of a Black racial slur ("nigga") used by a Black individual toward a White individual. The "racism justification hypothesis" predicts racial prejudice will be negatively related to perceptions of offensiveness due to motivations to trivialize racial slurs which allows for increased use of the slur by individuals higher in prejudice. The "hierarchy defense hypothesis" predicts racial prejudice will be positively related to more negative perceptions of the slur due to White individuals seeking to resist affiliation with Black individuals and perceiving affiliative attempts as threatening. Consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, the results showed racial prejudice predicted greater offensive and negatively expressive perceptions, and lower positively expressive perceptions following "nigga" being used by a Black individual toward a White individual (Study 1). In Study 2, the current research examined whether motivations to trivialize racial slurs (i.e., racism justification) versus participants' experiences of threat (i.e., hierarchy defense) mediated the relationships between racial prejudice and perceptions of "nigga" used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, racial prejudice, through status hierarchy threat, predicted greater offensive and negatively expressive perceptions, and lower positively expressive perceptions. The racism justification hypothesis was also supported. Participants' levels of racial prejudice, through racism trivialization, were generally related to lower perceptions of the slur as offensive and greater perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. The current research then examined participants' perceptions of "nigga" reciprocated by the White individual toward the Black individual. Interestingly, racial prejudice, through status hierarchy threat, predicted greater offensive and negatively expressive perceptions and lower positively expressive perceptions.

Racial prejudice, through racism trivialization, predicted generally lower offensive perceptions and greater positively expressive perceptions. Thus, participants may have used their experiences of threat as justification for explicit prejudice toward the Black individual (i.e., perceiving the slur as more offensive and negative), while individuals who experienced trivialization motivations attempted to decrease their experiences of suppression factors by perceiving the slur as less offensive, allowing for increased use of the slur. Implications for these findings are discussed.

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## Chapter 1 - Introduction

“When I was a kid, I lived in a country where people didn’t accept a Black quarterback. Now think about that. A Black man was thought by his mere color not good enough to lead a football team. And now, to live in your time, Mr. President, when a Black man can lead the entire free world ... You did it, my nigga, you did it.”

Larry Wilmore to President Barack Obama at the May  
2016 White House Correspondents’ dinner

The statement, “racial slurs are bad” is met with little argument in most professional settings. However, in the above quote, a Black comedian, Larry Wilmore, at a professional dinner, referred to President Obama as “nigga”. In the context of the full speech given by Wilmore, we see that Wilmore is not derogating President Obama. Instead, it is clear that he admires the President, intending the slur to be a sign of affiliation rather than derogation. This affiliative use of racial slurs among the groups they were once meant to target has been discussed in recent literature as slur reappropriation (Bianchi, 2014; Galinsky, Wang, Whitson, Anicich, Hugenberg, & Bodenhausen, 2013; Rahman, 2012). Specifically, literature on slur reappropriation states that groups may adopt these terms to inoculate themselves from prejudice by using the terms affiliatively among their ingroup rather than derogatively (Rappoport, 2005). Further, recent research has begun examining whether this affiliative use of racial slurs has the potential to transcend racial boundaries by examining how White individuals perceive Black racial slurs (e.g., “nigga”) when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. This affiliative transcendence was demonstrated in two previous studies conducted examining perceptions of racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. The results of

these two studies showed that Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals were perceived as generally less offensive and more respectful than a White racial slur (e.g., “cracker”) and a non-racial insult (e.g., “asshole”); O’Dea & Saucier, in preparation). The goal of the current project is to extend this research on the possible affiliative perceptions of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals by examining factors that affect whether reappropriated terms are perceived as affiliative versus derogative by White individuals. Specifically, the current studies examined the influence of White individuals’ levels of racial prejudice on their perceptions of the offensiveness of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. The current studies tested two hypotheses about the nature of this influence, both of which are grounded in previous research. The first hypothesis (i.e., the “racism justification hypothesis”; see Saucier, Hockett, O’Dea, & Miller, 2017) is that racially prejudiced individuals are motivated to trivialize racial slur use generally. Motivations to trivialize racial slurs (i.e., to diminish their power and severity, and to perceive them as insignificant and as something that can be dismissed) are a result of individuals’ motivations to minimize the importance of the issue of racial prejudice (e.g., McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981; Miller & Saucier, 2017). By perceiving slurs as lower in offensiveness, individuals experience lower levels of suppression, allowing for their own use of racial slurs (e.g., O’Dea, Miller, Andres, Ray, Till, & Saucier, 2015). Therefore, the first hypothesis was that higher levels of racial prejudice in White individuals would be associated with their greater perceptions that racial slurs should be trivialized, leading to lower levels of perceived offensiveness from the use of a Black racial slur (e.g., “nigga”) used by a Black individual toward a White individual.

However, prejudiced individuals are also motivated to distance themselves from racial minorities (Miller, Zielaskowski, Maner, & Plant, 2012). Prejudiced White individuals are likely

to hold a motivation that their position and values in society are challenged by the upward progression of outgroups in society (Altemeyer, 1981; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). Therefore, White individuals higher in racial prejudice may be motivated to perceive attempts by Black individuals to affiliate with them as threatening to the status hierarchy. By resisting these affiliative attempts, White individuals higher in racial prejudice may be attempting to maintain their position atop the social hierarchy. Therefore, the second hypothesis (i.e., the “hierarchy defense hypothesis”) was that higher levels of racial prejudice in White individuals would be associated with their greater perceptions of threat when being targeted by Black racial slurs, leading to greater perceptions that Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals are offensive.

In the following pages, historical forms of overt prejudice are briefly discussed. The focus of the paper then shifts specifically to racial language. The progression of racial slurs is described from unidimensional derogatory terms into multidimensional terms with the potential to both reinforce as well as challenge existing status hierarchies. Specifically, recent research has shown that Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals may be intended and perceived as affiliative rather than as derogatory (O’Dea & Saucier, in preparation). Following, in two studies, the two aforementioned hypotheses were tested by examining whether, and how, racial prejudice moderates perceptions of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. Further, perceptions of threat versus motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs were tested to explain the relationships between racial prejudice and perceptions of a Black racial slur used by a Black individual toward a White individual as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive.

## **Racial Prejudice Reinforcing Status Hierarchies**

Throughout history, overt forms of racial prejudice have targeted the members of many different racial groups (for a summary, see Saucier, Miller, Martens, & O’Dea, 2017). Overt prejudice is described as “traditional” and “old fashioned” prejudice, and as explicit, obvious, or blatant (Anderson, 2010; Saucier et al., 2017). Saucier and colleagues (2017) discuss how various forms of overt prejudice may manifest as large scale events, such as slavery and genocide; group-based attitudes and behaviors such as forming and participating in hate groups and/or perpetrating hate crimes; as well as smaller scale expressions of overt prejudice, including use of racial slurs, racist humor, hate-based graffiti, or racist memes on social media. These overt forms of prejudice can have extreme negative impacts on how outgroup members are perceived (e.g., negative perceptions by third party observers of the slur use; Goodman, Schell, Alexander, & Eidelman, 2008; Kirkland, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1987) and treated (e.g., hindered career advancement; Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Kteily, Bruneau, Waytza, & Cotterill, 2015).

Encouragingly, researchers in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries noted a decrease in overt expressions of racial prejudice in both numbers of its occurrences as well as in perceptions of its social acceptability (e.g., Anderson, 2010; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000, Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hodson, 2002; McConahay et al., 1981; Murrell, Dietz-Uhler, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Drout, 1994; Nail, Harton, & Decker, 2003; Sritharan & Gawronski, 2010; Sydell & Nelson, 2000). Due to societal norms vilifying the use of racial prejudice, typical expressions of racism during this time shifted from primarily overt expressions of prejudice to more covert expressions of prejudice (see Blanchard, Lilly, & Vaughn, 1991; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998). That is not to imply that overt forms of discrimination are

not still an issue (Saucier et al., 2017). Racial prejudice continues to be exhibited, especially in situations in which people perceive their expressions of prejudice to be justified (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002; Saucier, Miller, & Doucet, 2005). Alarming, there were still 784 active hate groups in 2014 (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014), leading researchers to question why prejudice continues to be exhibited. Individuals are more likely to perceive that their prejudice is justified when they have animosity toward the group (Saucier et al., 2017; Craig, 2002), when they seek to exhibit dominance (Glaser, Dixit, & Green, 2002), or when they perceive they can *get away with it* (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Though it is important to remember and examine causal reasons for why overt expressions of racial prejudice have plagued our past, the current research is less focused on historical forms of overt prejudice. Instead, the current research is more focused on the continued manifestation of racial prejudice in modern society. Therefore, in the following sections, the traditional derogatory functions, the recent vilification leading to decreases in expression, and the continued multidimensional manifestation of racial slurs will be discussed.

### **Disparagement in Language**

Racial slurs are terms that have historically been used to disparage, derogate, and disempower individuals belonging to different racial groups (i.e., expressive function; Anderson & Lepore, 2013; Camp, 2013; Croom, 2011, 2013a, 2013b). Racial slurs and racial humor were created as a way for majority group members at the time (e.g., slave owners) to reinforce status hierarchies by putting down outgroup members (e.g., Black slaves) who attempted to subvert or resist the status hierarchy (Rappoport, 2005). It is in this way that racial slurs may function as a “sword”, meant to reinforce status hierarchies and cut down any attempt to subvert them (Rappoport, 2005). Indeed, this function of racial slurs expresses contempt toward the target, alleging that

he/she is despicable solely based on his/her race (Herek, 1989; Levin & McDevitt, 2002; Saucier et al., 2017). As a result, being the target of a racial slur causes individuals to experience not only anger at the perpetrator but continued stress due to the fear of being repeatedly victimized (Herek, 1989). Thus, prejudice may have negative effects (e. g., devaluation) on the target of the slur as well as the target group of the slur (Barnes & Ephross, 1994; D'Augelli & Grossman, 2001; Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997; Lyons, 2006; Noelle, 2002).

Being targeted by a racial slur can also affect third party perceptions of the targeted individual (e.g., Gabriel, 1998; Greenberg & Pyszczynski). This can have negative effects in situations such as the workplace. Black individuals earn compensations for their work that are approximately 75% of what White individuals earn for their work per hour (PEW research center, 2016). This statistic is likely not entirely due to the use of racial slurs in the workplace affecting perceptions of Black targets. However, research has shown that White individuals who have overheard a derogatory slur used toward a Black target have significantly lower perceptions of the target's competence and abilities (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985). Specifically, third party observers are more likely to make fundamental attribution errors, for instance by attributing failures by a Black individual as due more to the Black individual's disposition (i.e., competence) than to situational factors (i.e., stress at being targeted by a slur, see Mullen, 2001), following an overheard racial slur (Greenberg & Pyszczynski, 1985).

Indeed, racial slurs may have extreme consequences for the target, but may also affect groups as a whole, functioning to keep lower status groups *in their place*. Specifically, racial slurs identify the racial group membership of the targets in the attempt to maintain not only personal hierarchies by disparaging individuals, but to also reinforce group-based hierarchies (Herek, 1989; Levin & McDevitt, 2002). It is in this way that racial slurs not only imply that the

target is despicable, but in doing so, identify group membership (i.e., descriptive function) and imply that the entire group is despicable (Herek, 1989; Levin & McDevitt, 2002). For example, “nigger” has historically been used as a slur to refer to Black individuals. Thus, pragmatically, “nigger”, as discussed previously implies extreme negative emotions meant to disparage the target. However, semantically, “nigger” and “Black” both function to describe someone’s ethnicity as Black, functioning to maintain status hierarchies by not only implying negative connotations toward the target, but the group as a whole.

Taken together, it is clear that racial slurs may serve at least two possible functions: to disparage targets (expressive function) and to indicate group membership (descriptive function; Anderson & Lepore, 2013; Croom, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Hedger, 2012; 2013; Henderson, 2003; Hom, 2008; Jeshion, 2013). However, the vilification of overt forms of racial prejudice has largely affected the way that racial slurs are perceived in contemporary society (e.g., Hedger, 2012; 2013). Due to the progression of attitudes toward racial prejudice, some linguistic researchers have begun to question whether racial slurs maintain descriptive functions in modern society or if they have evolved to the point that they lack any descriptive qualities and should, therefore, be inhibited in all circumstances (Hedger, 2012; 2013). As discussed by O’Dea and Saucier (2016), there are three possible perspectives in this debate. The first possible perspective, the descriptive perspective, is that racial slurs in contemporary use are only used to describe the target’s ethnicity. In other words, the term “nigger” is no different from the term “Black”. Both are used to describe someone’s ethnicity. To my knowledge, no authors have argued exclusively in favor of this perspective due to the long history of racial slurs being used to disparage individuals belonging to different racial groups.

That said, Hedger (2012; 2013) questioned whether racial slurs are now solely intended and perceived as expressing negative emotions toward the target (i.e., have lost all descriptive abilities). This second possible perspective, the expressivist perspective, is rooted in the non-controversial idea that racial slurs do more than describe the target's ethnicity (i.e., they are also used to disparage). Using the above example, "nigger" and "Black" are both semantic descriptors of a Black individual's ethnicity. However, "nigger" is pragmatically different from "Black" due to its history of being used to disparage Black individuals (Hedger, 2012; 2013). In other words, referring to an individual as a "nigger" not only describes his or her race, it expresses that the target is despicable. Interestingly, the negative connotations have become so strong, and the use of the term "nigger" to describe someone's race has become so vilified in modern society, that Hedger (2012; 2013) asserted that racial slurs no longer have the ability to function as descriptors. Rather, Hedger (2012; 2013) argued that racial slurs are solely used to derogate individuals belonging to different racial groups, and thus function, in essence, as explicatives (i.e., words that only express contempt toward the target; e.g., asshole).

Extending this discussion, Adam Croom and others have argued for a simpler explanation due to the complexities (i.e., to both describe and express negative emotion toward targets; see Mullen, 2004; Leader, Mullen, & Rice, 2009) of racial slurs (Croom, 2011, 2014, 2015; Hom, 2008, 2010). Croom labeled this third possible perspective as a "compromise" between the two sides of the argument (Croom, 2011, 2014, 2015). Specifically, authors note that, without argument, slurs are primarily used to derogate individuals belonging to various social groups (Croom, 2014; Hom, 2008). However, slurs still maintain descriptive functions. For example, calling someone a "nigger" implies extreme derogation beyond calling that same person "Black". However, calling someone a "nigger" is also semantically different from calling that same person



an “asshole”. Both imply negative emotions toward the target. However, Croom argues that calling someone a “nigger” still functions to describe their ethnicity. He labels this as a *conceptual anchor*, stating that the descriptive functions cannot be removed from the slur, even if the use of slurs to describe ethnicities is socially unacceptable (Croom, 2015).

The expressive function of racial slurs discussed in the previous sections is most often used to put down, and to hold down, individuals belonging to different social groups (Anderson & Lepore, 2013; Camp, 2013; Croom, 2011, 2013a, 2013b, 2014; Hom, 2010). Due to the complexity of racial slurs not just being used to disparage, but also to indicate group membership (i.e., the compromise perspective), the derogatory use of racial slurs toward individuals does not simply indicate that the target(s) themselves are despicable. Rather, the use of racial slurs toward individuals indicates that targets are despicable not because of something that they did, but solely because of an uncontrollable trait, their race. It is in this way that racial slurs may function as a sword, being antisocial in nature, functioning to marginalize racial minority groups and reinforce status hierarchies (Rappoport, 2005). As noted previously, expressions of racial prejudice used in this form decreased near the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the use of racial slurs toward members of different outgroups continues today (Anderson & Lepore, 2013; Merskin, 2010). For example, in 2016 a Snapchat image posted by Paige Shoemaker of Kansas State University went viral when it showed two college age women wearing black facial masks and making gang signs with their hands with the caption, “feels good to finally be a nigga.” A Google search (e.g., “student racism”, “fired for racism”) will return many similar accounts of individuals being fired from jobs or ridiculed for their overt expressions of prejudice. This has led researchers in recent decades to question, why do individuals continue to use these overt expressions of prejudice despite social norms that would seemingly inhibit them?

## **Antecedents of Racial Prejudice**

In conducting research on why individuals express racial prejudice, researchers over the last three decades began to assert the importance of individual differences in predicting one's likelihood to exhibit prejudice to better understand why individuals choose to exhibit overt expressions of prejudice (e.g., Altemeyer, 1988; 1998; Duckitt & Fisher, 2003; Pratto et al., 1994). During this time, two major individual difference factors contributing to expressions of racial prejudice emerged, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981) and social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994).

These first of these two individual differences, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), includes symbolic fears (i.e., the fear of the unknown and challenges to safety) leading individuals to resist change and exhibit prejudice toward those who attempt to effect it (e.g., Duckitt & Sibley, 2010a, 2010b; Sibley & Duckitt, 2009). Right-wing authoritarianism is an individual difference variable described as the extent to which individuals perceive that the traditional way of living (e.g., values, beliefs, leaders) is best and should not be changed (Altemeyer, 1981). Any threat to these traditional values and beliefs is described as a symbolic threat comprised of perceptions of danger from the cultural influences of other groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). As such, individuals higher in RWA are motivated to perceive that existing social hierarchies are in place for a reason; that existing values, languages, religions, etc., are important; and that any change to these would be detrimental for, or threatening to, society (Altemeyer, 1981). These effects have been shown empirically with higher levels of RWA being associated with more negative attitudes toward "dangerous groups", such as terrorists and drug dealers (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007). Thus, individuals higher in RWA are more likely to perceive challenges to the existing status quo posed by groups such as terrorists and drug dealers as

dangerous and threatening to the existing order, laws, and values which keep individuals safe. These challenges to the status quo are often perceived in the creation or implementation of programs such as diversity initiatives due to their resistance to multicultural attitudes that increasing diversity entails (Kauff, Asbrock, Thorner, & Wagner, 2013; Miller, Sonnentag, O’Dea, & Saucier, in preparation). Thus, it is likely that individuals higher in RWA are motivated to oppose immigration because they perceive immigrants to be a threat to existing values. And in the case that foreign nationals do enter the United States, individuals higher in RWA are more likely to believe the immigrants should fully assimilate into American society (Duckitt, 2006), because any change to American society would be perceived as threatening (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011). These tendencies and perceptions protect and preserve the existing values of American society, and the status hierarchy maintains its privilege for those at the top while keeping those at the bottom in their place.

The second of these two individual differences, social dominance orientation (SDO), is comprised of perceived realistic fears (i.e., fears that other groups will usurp one’s position in society) leading individuals to try to keep other groups in their place (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010a). Social dominance orientation is “a general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be equal versus hierarchical” (Pratto et al., 1994, p. 742). Thus, individuals high in SDO are likely to perceive the world as a *competitive jungle* and stress the importance of maintaining existing status hierarchies and promote group-based dominance via the creation and instilment of ideas that promote group-based inequality (i.e., legitimizing myths; Pratto et al., 1994). SDO is also associated with the belief that people at the top of the social status hierarchy achieved their status due to their own abilities, whereas the people at the bottom of the status hierarchy are there because they are weak and incapable

(Duckitt, 2006). This motivation is manifest in one's perceptions of both social group dominance (e.g., racism) as well as individual dominance (e.g., striving to be at the top of the corporate ladder; Pratto et al., 1994). Any threat to their position in the social hierarchy is described as a *realistic threat* with the idea that this threat poses real social consequences in the form of lost resources for groups higher on the social ladder as lower status groups move up (Pratto et al., 1994). This leads individuals higher in SDO to resist these threats in an effort to keep these groups *in their place* (e.g., Federico & Sidanius, 2002).

In summarizing the impacts of RWA and SDO, Duckitt (2001) identified what he labeled as the “dual process model of prejudice” in which he asserted that RWA and SDO are important but distinct factors predicting prejudice toward outgroups (see also Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010a, 2010b; Duckitt, Wagner, du Plessis, & Birum, 2002). Research supports the idea that these two individual differences are distinct (i.e., are relatively uncorrelated; Altemeyer, 1998). However, each contributes to the prediction of attitudes toward outgroup members together explaining approximately “50% of variance in generalized prejudice” (Altemeyer, 1998; McFarland, 2002; McFarland & Adelson, 1996; as cited in Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005, p. 1425), with RWA predicting resistance to minorities perceived to be symbolically threatening while SDO predicts resistance to individuals perceived to be realistically threatening (Duckitt, 2001). These dual motivations function to explain why individuals are motivated to hold prejudice against outgroups. However, societal norms are still in place to inhibit the expression of racial prejudice. Thus, additional information on why individuals continue to exhibit racial prejudice is necessary.

## **Justification-Suppression Model of Prejudice**

One of the most parsimonious yet comprehensive discussions of why individuals exhibit prejudice in modern society is the justification-suppression model of prejudice (JSM; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Crandall and Eshleman state that all individuals have some form of underlying genuine prejudice toward or against different groups, ideas, etc. However, prejudice does not necessarily take the form of expressed discrimination in all situations (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Prior to prejudice manifesting in the form of discrimination, it interacts with various suppression and justification factors that decrease and increase the likelihood of expressing the prejudice, respectively (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). For example, as discussed above, in recent decades, prejudice toward racial minorities has become increasingly vilified due to societal norms that inhibit the use of prejudice. Generally, these norms affect people in similar ways. For example, when individuals are exposed to anti-racism attitudes, their racial prejudice will generally decrease (i.e., societal norms surrounding the acceptability of prejudice tighten). Conversely, when individuals are exposed to anti-egalitarian attitudes, their own racial prejudice will generally increase (i.e., societal norms surrounding the acceptability of prejudice loosen; e.g., Blanchard et al., 1991; Ford & Ferguson, 2004). This loosening and tightening of societal norms was labeled by Ford and Ferguson (2004) as prejudiced norm theory. Using the example of Paige Shoemaker, people across the United States ridiculed her for the post which appeared to be a clear expression of racial prejudice. Exposure to this public ridicule is an example of publicized exposure to anti-racism attitudes. Therefore, it is likely that many individuals experienced suppression of their own racial attitudes following hearing or reading about this event or similar events due to the tightening of societal norms consistent with prejudiced norm theory (Blanchard et al., 1991; Ford & Ferguson, 2004).

Indeed, individuals are generally aware that they should not be prejudiced toward outgroup members (Plant & Devine, 1998). Thus, their level of genuine prejudice may be suppressed by factors that individuals perceive as dictating non-prejudiced responding. However, for suppression factors to inhibit racial prejudice, individuals must experience the suppression. In the above example, there are many reasons to speculate that Paige Shoemaker may have not experienced suppression. Following the public ridicule that she received, Paige issued an apology on social media saying, “Ask anyone who knows us, we are the most accepting and least racist people.” These types of phrases (e.g., “I’m not racist but...”) are described by Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) as a type of qualifier. Such a qualifier allows individuals to bypass normal barriers that would suppress the racial prejudice. Further, Snapchat is generally used between friends and Paige may have believed that her post was a joke between friends (she stated in her apology on social media that “we had only meant it to be taken in a funny” and “the signs that were thrown also is an inside joke between our friends”). Alarming, racial disparagement humor continues to be used toward outgroup members with low levels of suppression (Apte, 1987; Billig, 2001; Maio, Olson, & Bush, 1997; Saucier, O’Dea & Strain, 2016; Weaver, 2010). One possible reason for the continued use of racial disparagement humor could be that, because of the levity surrounding the use of racial humor, the joke-teller has the ability to tell the joke, wait to judge how the audience is going to respond, and if the audience does not like the prejudice, the joke teller has the ability to say, *I was just kidding* (Saucier et al., 2016). Thus, the levity accompanying racial humor may provide the cover for one to avoid suppression factors, thus increasing the likelihood that one will exhibit the prejudice (e.g., Saucier et al., 2016). Thus, Paige may have experienced lower levels of suppression due to perceived levity surrounding her use of the slur. Further, Paige and her friend were both wearing

facial masks that may have served to partially conceal their identities. Anonymity has been shown to increase the likelihood that one will exhibit prejudice due to the lack of identifying features which reduces the level of suppression they experience (e. g., Moore, Nakano, Enomoto, & Suda, 2012; Nogami & Takai, 2008).

Further, to experience suppression, individuals must be given the time to properly analyze the situation. Otherwise, Crandall and Eshleman (2003) state that they will not experience suppression and will exhibit their underlying prejudice in the form of an automatic response. This form of automatic prejudice has been labeled implicit prejudice (Devine, 1989; Rudman, Greenwald, Mellott, & Schwartz, 1999). If given the time to analyze the situation and their potential behavior, people would *hopefully* not act in prejudicial ways (e.g., treating individuals in outgroups differently than they treat individuals in their ingroup). However, individuals are often placed into situations that require quick responding (i.e., they are not given time to think, but just to act) which increases the likelihood that they will exhibit racial prejudice due to automatically activated stereotypes (Devine, 1989). Taken together, this literature, along with the examples provided, indicate that if individuals perceive that their expressions of racial prejudice are more acceptable, they will experience less suppression, and the likelihood that they will express the prejudice will increase (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; Devine, 1989).

Individuals may also experience justification factors prior to the decision to inhibit or express their racial prejudice. Justification factors are those which function to increase the likelihood that individuals will express racial prejudice due to the perceptions that their expressions are in some way justified (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Crandall and Eshleman (2003) describe these justification factors as “beliefs, ideologies, and attributions that can liberate prejudice, leading to public communication and private acceptance of prejudices” (p. 417).

Further, the authors note that individuals seek to express their own racial prejudices, and when they perceive that their own racial prejudices are justified, they will experience relief at the opportunity to express their true underlying feelings (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). An example of a justification factor that may loosen the norms discussed above surrounding the acceptability of racial prejudice includes the endorsement of prejudice by individuals in authority positions (Blanchard et al., 1991; Pettigrew, 1961; Weigel & Howes, 1985). Although admittedly the connection to the JSM is speculation due to there being no literature empirically examining these effects, this has been demonstrated during and following the 2016 Presidential campaigns (“the Trump Effect”; see Korostelina, 2017; Crandall & White, 2016). In the weeks after the election of Donald Trump there were reports of increased violence and expressions of prejudicial statements (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016), which many on social media blame on the perception that Trump endorses this type of behavior. In 2015 there were approximately 5,818 hate crimes committed. This equates to almost 16 per day. Across a 10-day span, these numbers equate to approximately 160 hate crimes in an average span of 10 days. In the first 10 days following the election of Donald Trump, there were 867 “bias-related incidents” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). These effects are further illustrated by a rise from 892 hate groups in 2015 to 917 in 2016 during Trump’s campaign (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016).

The effects of the justification-suppression model of racial prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003) have important implications following the outcome of the current studies, regardless of which hypothesis is supported. Specifically, if the hierarchy defense hypothesis is supported, racial prejudice will be positively associated with perceptions of racial slurs as offensive. This is hypothesized to be due to White individuals perceiving threat due to the perception that any use of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals



is an attempt to subvert or challenge the status hierarchy by affiliation. Thus, if this hypothesis is supported, White individuals higher in racial prejudice may experience justification for their prejudice due to the threat they are experiencing. Consistent with Crandall and Eshleman (2003)'s discussion of the JSM and Duckitt's dual process model, this should polarize individuals, leading to increased prejudice toward outgroup members.

Conversely, if the racism justification hypothesis is supported, racial prejudice will be negatively correlated with perceptions of the racial slur as offensive. This is hypothesized to be due to White individuals higher in racial prejudice being motivated to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally which is consistent with previous research by O'Dea and colleagues (2015). Interestingly, much like the implications described in the previous paragraph, this will also theoretically lead to increased acceptance of racial slur use by White individuals toward Black individuals due to lower levels of perceived suppression surrounding the use of racial slurs. Specifically, if individuals perceive their use of racial slurs to be more allowable, they will experience less suppression and be more likely to express prejudice and use racial slurs in the future (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003).

Taken together, the previous research discussed above on disparaging expressions of racial prejudice generally show that prejudiced individuals are motivated to maintain their positions of power and existing values and perceive outgroup members as threatening. In the defense of their values and social position, individuals seek to reinforce the status hierarchy using discrimination such as racial language, targeting individuals belonging to various social groups in an attempt to stop their advancement in society and their challenging of the status hierarchy. Though overt forms of discrimination persist, societal norms have shifted, vilifying overt expressions of prejudice. This has led to an intriguing progression of many types of overt

racial prejudices (such as the use of racial slurs to target individuals belonging to other racial groups) shifting from blatant expressions of racial discrimination toward outgroups into a tool used by individuals in the outgroups to affiliate, thus serving a function that may challenge and may function to subvert status hierarchies. These possible functions will be discussed in the following sections.

## **Challenging Status Hierarchies**

### **Affiliation**

Building on recent empirical evidence, the current research asserts that racial slurs may have the potential to be intended and perceived to not only reinforce status hierarchies, but also to subvert status hierarchies, foster group cohesion/affiliation, and potentially function to increase positive intergroup relations. It is in this way that racial slurs may be wielded as a “shield” to combat prejudice and status hierarchies rather than reinforcing them by way of the sword (Rappoport, 2005). Unsurprisingly, much of the existing research on racial slurs has largely focused on the disparaging function of racial slurs. However, as discussed previously, not all racial slurs and situations in which they are used are perceived or intended with the same level of offensive intensity (Anderson & Lepore, 2013; Henry, Butler, & Brandt, 2014; Jeshion, 2013; O’Dea et al., 2015). One possible reason that racial slurs continue to be expressed is due to these differing perceptions of the offensiveness of racial slurs. O’Dea and colleagues (2015, 2016) showed that racial slurs used between friends are perceived to be significantly less offensive than racial slurs used between strangers. Further, the racial slur that is used also affects perceptions of the offensiveness of the slur, for example, with “nigger” being perceived as significantly more offensive than “nigga” (O’Dea et al., 2015). These differences may be due to differing intentions and, perhaps more importantly, perceptions of the intentions for the use of

racial slurs (e.g., as affiliative versus derogative). In other words, racial slurs may be intended and perceived to have a variety of functions, to reinforce versus subvert social hierarchies.

One possible function that has yet to be fully explored is the use of racial slurs as affiliative rather than derogative. This function of racial slurs to be used affiliatively is what the current studies will investigate by examining processes involved in explaining why these seemingly overt forms of prejudice continue to be used, and why they may be perceived and intended as socially appropriate. Racial slurs are often adopted and used by the group they were once meant to target as a means of affiliation and group bonding (Bianchi, 2014; Galinsky et al., 2013; Rahman, 2012). This affiliative racial slur use is labeled as slur reappropriation. Literature on slur reappropriation has shown that, in using racial slurs affiliatively, minority group members feel more in control of the slurs and experience less negative effects from the slurs (Galinsky et al., 2013). Rappoport (2005) describes these effects and the motivations behind ingroup use of racial slurs as a way that groups may inoculate themselves from prejudice. Specifically, lower level of exposure to racial slurs by ingroup members reduces the *sting* of these terms when used by outgroup members, such as when White individuals target Black individuals with the use of racial slurs. This inoculation further enhances common ingroup identities and promotes more positive ingroup perceptions (Gaertner, & Dovidio, 2012). It is in this way that racial slurs may be used to promote affiliation rather than to perpetuate degradation.

Gaertner and Dovidio (2012) also describe how this common ingroup identity can extend to other groups as well, promoting not only ingroup cohesion, but intergroup affiliation as well. Applying this concept of slur reappropriation, O’Dea and Saucier (in preparation) conducted two studies examining whether this affiliative function of racial slurs may have the potential to improve relations not simply within groups, but between different racial groups as well.

Specifically, O’Dea and Saucier examined participants’ perceptions of Black racial slurs (e. g., “nigger”, “nigga”) versus a White racial slur (“cracker”) and a non-racial insult (“asshole”) used by a Black perpetrator toward a White target. Generally, their results showed that Black racial slurs used by a Black individual toward a White individual were perceived as less negative, more positive, and more showing of respect than the White racial slur and non-racial insult (O’Dea & Saucier, in preparation). To my knowledge, these results are the first to indicate directly that racial slurs may have the potential to be intended and perceived as positive, being used to build affiliation between groups.

Indeed, the context in which racial slurs are used impacts evaluations of the perceived offensiveness of racial slurs (O’Dea et al., 2015; O’Dea & Saucier, 2016; O’Dea & Saucier, in preparation). The purpose of the current studies was to extend previous research on perceptions and functions of racial slurs by examining whether participants’ own levels of racial prejudice affect perceptions of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals to target White individuals. There were two hypotheses in the current studies which originated from research on the justification-suppression model of prejudice, slur reappropriation, and common ingroup identity. The racism justification hypothesis was that higher levels of racial prejudice would be associated with lower levels of perceptions that the use of a Black racial slur used by a Black perpetrator toward a White target was offensive due to White individuals’ motivations to trivialize the offensiveness of racial slurs generally. Alternatively, the hierarchy defense hypothesis was that racial prejudice would be positively correlated with participants’ levels of perceived offensiveness due to participants’ perceptions that this affiliative intent was attempting to subvert the status hierarchy. In the current studies, these hypotheses were tested to examine the relationship between racial prejudice and perceptions of a Black racial slur used by a Black

individual toward a White individual. Further, the current studies examined whether perceptions of use of the Black racial slur as a status hierarchy threat versus trivial differentially mediated the relationships between racial prejudice and perceptions of the slur as offensive and whether these perceptions led to increased acceptance of racial slurs used by White individuals toward Black individuals.

### **Overview of Current Studies**

Previous research has shown that racial prejudice is significantly negatively correlated with perceptions of offensiveness of racial slurs used by White individuals toward Black individuals (O’Dea et al., 2015). These results indicate that higher levels of racial prejudice are associated with greater trivialization (i.e., perceiving slurs as lower in offensiveness to reduce the need for them to be suppressed) of the negative impacts of racial slurs (i.e., racism justification). This is consistent with the justification-suppression model of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). By trivializing the offensiveness of racial slurs, individuals higher in prejudice may experience lower levels of prejudice suppression, thus providing perceived legitimacy for their own future expressions of prejudice. More recent research has begun to examine racial slurs used in non-prototypical situations (i.e., Black perpetrators using racial slurs toward White targets; see O’Dea & Saucier, in preparation). O’Dea and Saucier compared the use of Black racial slurs (e.g., “nigger”, “nigga”) to the use of White racial slurs (e.g., “cracker”) by Black perpetrators toward White targets. Interestingly, even though “nigger” has been described as the most vile, despicable word in the English language (see Kennedy, 2002), O’Dea and Saucier (in preparation) showed that the Black racial slurs used by Black perpetrators toward White targets were generally perceived as significantly less offensive and more showing of respect to the White targets than were the White racial slurs. Relating their studies to research on common

ingroup identity and slur reappropriation, O'Dea and Saucier (in preparation) theorized that these results are attributable to White individuals perceiving Black individuals' use of Black racial slurs toward White individuals as a display of respect, essentially granting White individuals honorary status as part of the Black ingroup. Extending previous research, in two studies I examined the influence of racial prejudice on White individuals' perceptions of the offensiveness of a Black racial slur ("nigga") used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Further, I examined whether these relationships were differentially mediated by individuals' perceptions of the slur use as a status hierarchy threat versus trivial.

## Chapter 2 - Study 1

Study 1 examined whether racial prejudice predicted participants' perceptions of the offensiveness of a Black racial slur, "nigga" (O'Dea & Saucier, in preparation), when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Interestingly, there were two hypotheses in the current studies which predicted different patterns of effects, but were not mutually exclusive. The first hypothesis, the racism justification hypothesis, was that participants' levels of racial prejudice would be negatively related to the perceived offensiveness of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003; O'Dea et al., 2015). O'Dea and colleagues (2015) showed that racial prejudice is negatively related to participants' perceived offensiveness of racial slurs used by White individuals toward Black individuals. Theoretically, these findings are the result of motivations to loosen the norms associated with expressions of prejudice (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). This functions to lower the suppression factors inhibiting prejudice allowing individuals the opportunity to express their own prejudices more freely (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). In contrast, the second hypothesis, the hierarchy defense hypothesis, was that participants' levels of racial prejudice would be positively related to the perceived offensive of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. This hypothesis builds on previous research on slur reappropriation and common ingroup identity which states that Black individuals' use of racial Black racial slurs is intended to foster ingroup cohesion and affiliation (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012). As such, consistent with these theories, it was predicted that Black individuals' use of Black racial slurs toward White individuals may be intended and perceived to be intended positively and to express affiliation. Due to racial prejudice being associated with interracial distancing and the desire for group-based dominance (e.g., Miller et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994), higher levels of racial prejudice in

White individuals may be associated with greater perceptions of Black individuals' use of Black racial slurs toward White individuals as threatening to subvert, rather than reinforce the status hierarchies that prejudiced White individuals seek to maintain. It is important to note that these hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Instead, some individuals may experience one motivation and other individuals may experience the other motivation. Similarly, some individuals may experience both status hierarchy threat and motivations to trivialize racial slurs. Therefore, in the current study, participants' levels of racial prejudice were measured and then participants were presented with a vignette in which a Black individual used a Black racial slur ("nigga") toward a White individual with ambiguous intentions. Then the current study examined whether the participants' levels of racial prejudice predicted their perceptions of the slur as offensive, being used to express negative emotion, or being used to express positive emotion toward the target.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

I conducted an a priori power analysis (gPower) with an  $\alpha = .05$  and power of .95 to determine the approximate sample size needed to conduct the study with adequate power. Further, the correlation coefficient which was entered into gPower was taken from O'Dea and colleagues (2015) manuscript which showed correlations of under .20. However, these correlations were largely affected by slur and relationship conditions. Upon examination of just the "nigga" and friend conditions which were used in the current study, the correlations ranged from .08 to .57 between the perceived offensiveness of the slur and each of the measures of racial prejudice. Taking each of these into consideration, the  $p$  value was set at .20 in the power analysis. This analysis yielded an approximate sample size of 266 participants necessary to achieve the boundaries discussed. Three hundred ninety-three participants for the current study



were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk software. Participants were given \$0.25 for their participation. The intended number of participants was not successfully achieved once non-White participants and participants who did not provide data were removed from analyses. Specifically, 80 participants chose not to advance the survey past the informed consent. Further, 87 participants self-identified as a race other than White individuals. A total of 226 participants who self-identified as White chose to take part in the study. This study only utilized participants who self-identified as White at the beginning of the survey because of its focus on White individuals' perceptions of a Black racial slur used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Participants who identified as a race other than White participated in a separate, but similar study for which my laboratory group needed only non-White participants. There were 17 participants who chose not to complete any measures beyond the demographic survey and were excluded from analysis. One additional participant chose not to complete the RWA and SDO scales but was retained for analyses involving other scales. Fourteen participants did not complete any of the measures that assessed perceptions of the slur, but did respond to the RWA, SDO, and ATB measures and were included in analyses for which they had available data points. Of the 209 participants who did complete at least some of the study, there were 76 who self-identified as male, 132 who self-identified as female, and 1 who self-identified as "other". The average age of participants was 35.95 ( $SD = 13.50$ ). The number of participants desired was not achieved. However, a power analysis given the above parameters was conducted and the achieved sample size less the participants who did not complete all portions of the survey (i.e., a total of 194 participants). This power analysis yielded an approximate power of .88. Therefore, it was decided to continue with data analysis because this was a minimal drop in desired power.

## **Vignette**

I used a vignette similar to that used by O’Dea and colleagues (2016, in preparation). Specifically, the vignette depicted an interaction between a White and Black individual at the entrance of a restaurant. In their studies, O’Dea and colleagues (2016) manipulated the relationship between the perpetrator and target of the slur as being friends versus strangers as well as the racial slur that was used by the perpetrator toward the target as “nigger” versus “nigga”. The purpose of the current study was to examine whether racial prejudice was related to perceptions of racial slurs intended to be affiliative. Previous research has shown that White individuals higher in racial prejudice are motivated to distance themselves from Black individuals and resist attempts at affiliation (Miller et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994). For this reason, the friends/“nigga” condition was used due to this condition being shown by O’Dea and Saucier (in preparation) to be the most affiliative out of any of the combinations tested by O’Dea and Saucier (in preparation). The perpetrator and target race were indicated by an image of either a Black or White individual. To aid in the identification and to ensure that participants did not assume prototypical use of the slur (White perpetrator toward Black target), stereotypical Black and White names were used. The full vignette is as follows:

Mason and DeShawn are friends who plan to meet up at a restaurant to eat dinner with their other friends. Mason drives to the restaurant excited to see his friends. After Mason parks his car he walks over to the door of the restaurant. He then sees DeShawn come from around the corner close by. He holds the door open for DeShawn. DeShawn walks through the door and says, "thanks, nigga" to Mason.

## Materials

**Criterion variables.** Each of the following measures was chosen to represent a specific facet of perceptions of racial slurs that has been discussed in previous literature as a possible perception of the slur. Specifically, items were included assessing the extent to which participants perceived the use of the slur as offensive, expressing contempt toward the target, and expressing affiliation toward the target. Each of these measures is described below, and the scales are included in Appendices A through C.

***Perceived offensiveness of the racial slur.*** To examine the extent to which participants perceived the use of the term “nigga” used by a Black individual toward a White individual as offensive, a perceived offensiveness of the racial slur measure employed by O’Dea and colleagues (2015) was used. This scale consisted of 10 items measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. It included items such as *This type of language is offensive*. A composite score for the perceived offensiveness of the slur was calculated by reverse scoring antithetical items and calculating an average score with higher scores indicating greater levels of perceived offensiveness of the racial slur.

***Expressive natures of the racial slur.*** To examine the extent to which participants perceived the slur as being used to express negative emotions and positive emotions toward the target by the perpetrator, the two measures used by O’Dea and Saucier (2016) to assess the negatively expressive and positively expressive natures of the racial slur were used. These measures each consisted of four items measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale, including items such as *This term was meant to insult Mason* (negatively expressive) and, *DeShawn used this term in a friendly way toward Mason* (positively expressive). Similar to the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur measure, a composite score for the negatively

expressive and positively expressive natures of the racial slur measures was then calculated such that greater scores indicated greater perceptions that the slur was being used to express negative and positive emotions toward the White target, respectively.

**Predictor variables.** Each of the following measures was chosen to represent a specific facet of intergroup attitudes. Specifically, the current study examined whether the endorsement of social hierarchies, protection of values and norms, and explicit racial prejudice predicted perceptions of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. The items for each of these measures are presented in Appendices D through F in the order in which they are presented below.

***Endorsement of social hierarchies.*** To examine the extent to which participants perceived a need for status hierarchies between groups, the Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) was used. This scale is a widely-used correlate of racially discriminative behaviors. Participants responded 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. This scale included eight regularly scored items such as *Some groups are simply inferior to other groups*, and eight reverse-scored items such as *All groups should be given an equal chance in life*. A composite SDO score was then calculated by reverse-scoring antithetical items and then calculating an average score for each participant. Higher scores indicated greater endorsement of status hierarchies between groups.

***Protection of existing values and norms.*** To measure the extent to which participants believed that everyone should adhere to existing values and norms and that anyone who does not is a threat to safety, the of the Right -Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981) scale was used. This scale is a widely-used measure of authoritarian attitudes and consisted of 12 items on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. The RWA scale includes items such as, *What*

*our country really needs instead of more “civil rights” is a good stiff dose of law and order.* A composite score for RWA was calculated by reverse scoring antithetical items and then averaging the items such that higher scores indicated greater beliefs that existing values and norms are best and any threat to these norms is dangerous.

***Explicit prejudice toward Blacks.*** To measure participants’ level of explicit racial prejudice toward Black individuals, the Attitudes Toward Blacks (ATB; Brigham, 1993) scale was used. This scale was designed to measure participants’ blatant racist attitudes toward Black individuals. The scale includes 20 items measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. It includes items such as *I would rather not have Blacks live in the same apartment building I live in.* A composite score for ATB was then calculated by reverse-scoring antithetical items and calculating an average score for each participant with higher scores indicating greater levels of blatant anti-Black prejudice.

## **Procedure**

The current study was conducted online using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk software. Once participants signed up, they followed a link to the study on Qualtrics. Following the provision of informed consent, participants completed a short demographics questionnaire (e.g., sex, race, age). Participants then completed the SDO, RWA, and ATB scales. In order to attenuate carryover effects from participants completing racial prejudice measures right before they were exposed to the vignette, a filler survey in which participants were asked to report their favorite movies in a variety of categories was used. Participants then read the vignette and reported their perceptions of the racial slur used by DeShawn toward Mason as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. Finally, participants were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

## Results and Discussion

I first examined the bivariate correlations among the predictor variables. Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations among these variables are presented in Table 1. Building on previous research, it was hypothesized that RWA and SDO would be weakly or uncorrelated (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998). However, some recent research by our laboratory has indicated that these may be more correlated than was previously thought (e.g., Miller, Sonnentag, O’Dea, & Saucier, in preparation). In general, these measures were predicted to be, at a minimum, marginally positively correlated. As can be seen in Table 1, RWA, SDO, and ATB were all significantly and fairly strongly ( $r_s > .35$ ) positively correlated with one another. However, these correlations are not central to the main hypotheses of the current studies and will not be discussed further.

I then examined the bivariate correlations among the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur, perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur, and perceived positively expressive nature of the racial slur. Building on O’Dea and Saucier (2016, in preparation), it was predicted there would be a strong positive correlation between the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur and the perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur, a strong negative correlation between the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur and the perceived positively expressive nature of the racial slur, and a strong negative relationship between the perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur and perceived positively expressive nature of the racial slur. As can be seen in Table 1, these hypotheses were supported with correlations ranging from an absolute value of .37 to .61.

I then tested whether racial prejudice correlated with perceptions of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. Recall, there are two hypotheses founded

on previous research in racial prejudice. The racism justification hypothesis is that participants' levels of racial prejudice will be negatively related to the perceived offensiveness of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals as a result of White individuals' motivations to loosen the norms associated with expressions of prejudice and to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally. In contrast, the hierarchy defense hypothesis is that participants' levels of racial prejudice will be positively related to the perceived offensive of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals due to racial prejudice being associated with interracial distancing and the desire for group-based dominance which is threatened by the perception that Black individuals are using these racial slurs affiliatively.

To test these hypotheses, the correlations between each of the racial prejudice predictors (i.e., SDO, RWA, and ATB) and the perceptions of the slur criterion variables (i.e., perceived offensiveness of the racial slur, negatively expressive nature of the racial slur, and positively expressive nature of the racial slur) were examined. As can be seen in Table 1, SDO was not correlated with the perceived offensiveness of the slur. However, RWA and ATB were both significantly positively correlated with the perceived offensiveness of the slur. Further, RWA, SDO, and ATB were positively correlated with participants' perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur, and negatively correlated with participants' perceived positively expressive nature of the racial slur. These findings are generally consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis. Specifically, White individuals higher in racial prejudice reported greater perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive and reported lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive.

These results have important implications for research on racial slurs. Specifically, previous research on the reclamation of racial slurs (e.g., Bianchi, 2014; Galinsky et al., 2013;

Rahman, 2012) indicates that Black individuals may be using Black racial slurs toward White individuals to affiliate, essentially creating an intergroup ingroup (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012). However, higher prejudiced White individuals may perceive this use of Black racial slurs by Black individuals toward White individuals to subvert the status hierarchy and, thus, take offense to the slur as a way to resist this affiliation. Thus, the findings of Study 1, supporting the hierarchy defense hypothesis, may be due to prejudiced White individuals experiencing status hierarchy threat due to their perceptions that Black individuals are using these slurs to subvert the status hierarchy.

To begin to test this hypothesis, social dominance orientation and right wing authoritarian attitudes were tested as mediators of the relationships between participants' scores on the Attitudes Toward Blacks scale and their perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. It could be argued that racial prejudice (i.e., ATB) could result in motivated cognition (i.e., Right-Wing Authoritarian and Socially Dominant attitudes) affecting the way that individuals perceive interracial interactions. Specifically, individuals may hold explicit prejudice (i.e., ATB) toward outgroup members. This explicit prejudice may impact their endorsement of authoritarian and socially dominant attitudes, which may impact individuals' perceptions of "nigga" when used by a Black individual toward a White individual as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. These mediation results are shown in Tables 2 and 3. As can be seen, RWA and SDO were generally not shown to mediate the relationships between ATB and participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. The only significant indirect relationship was ATB through RWA predicting greater perceptions of the slur as offensive. These results indicate that, while RWA, SDO, and ATB are related to participants' perceptions of "nigga" used by a Black



individual toward a White individual as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive, ATB generally does not affect participants' perceptions of "nigga" through RWA and SDO. These results are not central to the current study hypotheses and will not be discussed further.

In summary, the results of the current study provided initial correlational support for the status hierarchy defense hypothesis: RWA, SDO, and ATB were generally shown to predict perceptions of "nigga" when used by a Black individual toward a White individual as more offensive and negatively expressive, and less positively expressive. To extend the results of the current study, a second study was conducted to investigate whether status hierarchy threat and motivations to trivialize racial slurs mediate the relationships between participants' levels of racial prejudice and their perceptions of "nigga" when used by a Black individual as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive.

## Chapter 3 - Study 2

Study 2 examined to what extent perceptions of the Black racial slur as a status hierarchy threat versus perceptions of the slur as trivial mediated the relationship between racial prejudice measures (RWA, SDO, ATB) and the perceived offensiveness, perceived negatively expressive, and perceived positively expressive natures of the Black racial slur. It is important to note that while Study 1 generally supported the status hierarchy defense hypothesis, participants may still be experiencing racism trivialization motivations because these two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Specifically, previous research suggests that White individuals higher in racial prejudice have both motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs (i.e., racism justification hypothesis), but are also motivated to resist affiliation from Black individuals (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis). Therefore, it was expected that both status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization motivations would mediate the relationship between racial prejudice and perceptions of “nigga” as less offensive and negatively expressive, and as more positively expressive when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. However, these hypotheses predict perceptions of “nigga” when used by a Black individual toward a White individual in different directions. Specifically, racial prejudice through status hierarchy threat should result in greater perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (hierarchy defense hypothesis). Alternatively, racial prejudice, through racism trivialization motivations, should predict lower perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and greater perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (racism justification hypothesis).

Further, the findings of Study 1 were extended by examining participants’ perceptions of the offensiveness of the White individual reciprocating the Black racial slur “nigga” back toward

the Black individual. Building on previous research (O’Dea et al., 2015; O’Dea & Saucier, 2016), it was predicted that racial prejudice would be negatively correlated to the perceived offensiveness of the Black racial slur “nigga” used by the White individual toward the Black individual. Further, it was predicted that each of the mediators, hierarchy threat and racism trivialization, would be negatively correlated with the perceived offensiveness and negative expressiveness, and positively correlated with the positive expressiveness, of the Black racial slur subsequently used by the White individual toward the Black individual, with each of the mediators allowing for greater reciprocal use of racial slurs by White individuals toward Black individuals.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

As in Study 1, participants in Study 2 were recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk software and given a small monetary compensation for their participation.<sup>1</sup> An approximate sample size was chosen based on recommendations by Fritz and MacKinnon (2007). In their examination of adequate power (.80) across a large number of mediational studies, researchers found that the median sample size for mediation analyses involving at least one predictor and one mediator was 187 while the upper quartile of studies had 352 participants. There were 549 participants who entered the survey on Qualtrics. There were 44 participants who did not take part in the survey past the informed consent. 138 additional participants self-identified as non-White leaving 367 participants who chose to take part in the study that self-identified as White. This study only used participants who self-identified as White at the beginning of the survey because the topic is White individuals’ perceptions of the use a Black racial slur by a Black individual toward a White individual, and their perceptions of the

use of that same Black racial slur reciprocally toward the Black individual. Participants who identified as a race other than White participated in a separate, but similar study for which the researcher needed only non-White participants. There were 14 participants who chose not to complete any measures beyond the demographic survey and were excluded from analysis. Five additional participants chose not to complete any of the measures indicating their perceptions of the slur, but did respond to the RWA, SDO, and ATB measures, and were included in analyses for which they had all available data points. One additional participant did not read or respond to the secondary vignette but was included in the analyses prior to the secondary vignette. Of the 353 participants who did complete at least some of the study, there were 146 who self-identified as male, 206 who self-identified as female, and 1 who self-identified as “other”. The average age of participants was 37.75 ( $SD = 13.63$ ).

## **Materials**

Study 2 used the same vignette that was used in Study 1. Following reading the vignette and completing items related to their perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive, participants read a short additional vignette designed to examine perceptions of the appropriateness of Mason reciprocating the use of the Black racial slur “nigga” toward DeShawn. This vignette is as follows:

After they are done eating, Mason stands up to leave. As he exits, he turns to DeShawn and says, “later, nigga.”

I used each of the measures in Study 1 that measured constructs associated with racial prejudice (i.e., RWA, SDO, ATB) in Study 2. In Study 2 the three criterion variables measuring participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive were also used. In Study 2, two additional measures of the predicted mediators, status hierarchy

threat and racism trivialization were used. These measures are described below and the full measures are presented in Appendices G and H.

**Status hierarchy threat.** To examine participants' perceptions of the Black racial slur when initially used by the Black individual toward the White individual as threatening to the existing status hierarchy, a hierarchy defense measure based on scales used by Stephan, Ybarra, and Bachman (1999) to examine realistic and symbolic threats was created. This scale included five items such as, *Racial slurs used in this way are a threat to traditional American values*. This measure was assessed on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of threat to the existing status hierarchy. Items were averaged to create a composite score for each participant. Higher scores indicated greater perceptions of the use of the Black racial slur by the Black individual toward the White individual as a status hierarchy threat.

**Racism trivialization.** To measure participants' level of belief that racial slurs are *not a big deal* and should be trivialized generally, a modified version of Hodson, Rush, and MacInnis (2010)'s Cavalier Humor Beliefs Scale to be a cavalier racial slur beliefs measure was used. This measure included five items measured on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale with items such as *Sometimes people need to relax and realize that a racial slur is just a word*. Similar to the threat measures, a composite score was calculated for each participant for their cavalier racial slur beliefs by averaging their scores for each item. Higher scores represented greater perceptions that racial slurs are trivial terms.

## **Procedure**

The current study was conducted online using Amazon's Mechanical Turk software. Once participants signed up, they followed a link to the study on Qualtrics. Following the

provision of informed consent, participants completed a short demographics questionnaire (e.g., sex, race, age). Participants then completed the SDO, RWA, and ATB scales. In order to attenuate carryover effects from participants completing racial prejudice measures right before they were exposed to the vignette, a filler survey in which participants were asked to report their favorite movies in a variety of categories was used. Participants then read the vignette and reported their perceptions of the Black racial slur “nigga” used by the Black individual “DeShawn” toward the White individual “Mason” as a status hierarchy threat, trivial, offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. Next, participants read the second vignette in which the White individual “Mason” reciprocated the use of the Black racial slur “nigga” toward the Black individual “DeShawn” and then reported their perceptions of the offensiveness of this slur use. Participants were then debriefed and thanked for their participation.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Perceptions of the Use of the Black Racial Slur by the Black Individual Toward the White Individual**

I began by examining the bivariate correlations among RWA, SDO, ATB, status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization, and perceptions of the slur “nigga” when used by a Black individual toward a White individual as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. As in Study 1, RWA, SDO, and ATB were all positively correlated with one another (Table 4). Interestingly, again RWA and SDO were highly correlated ( $r = .47$ ), contrary to previous theoretical foundations (Duckitt, 2001; Duckitt, 2006; Duckitt & Sibley, 2010a, 2010b; Duckitt et al., 2002). However, this is consistent with Study 1 and recent research which has shown larger than expected correlations between RWA and SDO (Miller et al., in preparation).

Consistent with previous literature (e.g., O’Dea et al., 2015), it was predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB would be positively correlated with participants’ perceptions that racial slurs should be trivialized. Extending this literature, it was predicted that participants higher in RWA, SDO, and ATB would perceive a Black individual using “nigga” toward a White individual to be threatening the status hierarchy. As can be seen in Table 4, these hypotheses were also supported. RWA, SDO, and ATB were all significantly positively correlated with the extent to which participants believe that racial slurs should be trivialized generally and the extent to which participants perceived the Black individual’s use of “nigga” toward the White individual as challenging to the status hierarchy.

I then examined the bivariate correlations among the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur, perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur, and perceived positively expressive nature of the racial slur. Building on previous research by O’Dea and Saucier (2016, in preparation), it was predicted that there would be a strong positive correlation between the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur and the perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur. A strong negative correlation between participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and participants’ perceptions of the slur as positively expressive was also predicted. These hypotheses were confirmed. As can be seen in Table 4, these hypotheses were all supported indicating that these measures are measuring related (absolute  $r_s > .31$ ), but theoretically distinct constructs.

I then tested for replication of Study 1 by examining the correlations between RWA, SDO, ATB, and participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. Recall, in Study 1, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB were generally associated with perceptions of the use of the Black racial slur “nigga” by a Black individual

toward a White individual as more offensive and negatively expressive, and less positively expressive. Positive correlations between participants' levels of RWA, SDO, ATB, and their perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive (negative correlations for positively expressive perceptions) support the hierarchy defense hypothesis due to individuals possibly experiencing threat at the use of "nigga" by a Black individual toward a White individual. Negative correlations between RWA, SDO, ATB, and perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive (positive correlations for positively expressive perceptions) support the racism trivialization hypothesis.

As can be seen in Table 4, the results were nearly identical to Study 1. Specifically, RWA, SDO, and ATB were all positively correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive and negatively correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. RWA was also positively correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive. SDO and ATB were not significantly correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive. These results again generally support the hierarchy defense hypothesis with individuals higher in racial prejudice exhibiting more negative perceptions of slurs used by a Black individual toward a White individual.

Extending the findings of Study 1, Study 2 examined whether racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat predicted participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. It was predicted that status hierarchy threat would be positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis). As can be seen in Table 4, these predictions were confirmed (absolute  $r$ s > .48). This indicates that individuals who experienced threat from the use of



“nigga” by a Black individual toward a White individual perceived the slur as more offensive and negatively expressive, and less positively expressive. It was also predicted that racism trivialization would be negatively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as positively expressive, due to the motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally (i.e., racism justification hypothesis). Racism trivialization was negatively correlated with participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive, which is consistent with the racism justification hypothesis that individuals who are motivated to perceive racial slurs as more trivial will perceive the slur as less offensive. Inconsistent with the racism justification hypothesis, racism trivialization was positively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive and uncorrelated with participants’ perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. I speculate these inconsistent findings may be due to prejudiced White individuals who are motivated to trivialize the use of slurs generally having conflicting motivations. Each of these conflicting motivations is grounded in the justification-suppression model of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). On one hand, trivializing the use of racial slurs reduces the suppression that White individuals higher in racial prejudice experience, allowing for greater racial slur use, due to the loosening of norms surrounding the expression of racial slurs. However, individuals higher in racial prejudice may be experiencing threat possibly due to perceptions that the Black individual is attempting to affiliate with them, a process likely to incite threat in individuals higher in racial prejudice who are motivated to distance themselves from outgroups. As such, rather than being motivated to trivialize the use of racial slurs to allow for more use toward Black individuals, this threat may actually be justifying White individuals’ prejudice toward Black individuals. Therefore, rather than needing to perceive the slur as trivial to allow for more use of the slur (i.e., racism

justification), White individuals may be motivated to perceive “nigga” when used by a Black individual toward a White individual as highly offensive to justify prejudice toward Black individuals (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis).

**Mediation by Status Hierarchy Threat and Racism Trivialization.** Next, status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization were tested as mediators of the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. Study 1 generally showed a series of positive relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and the extent to which participants perceived the slur as offensive and negatively expressive (and negative relationships for the extent to which participants perceived the slur as positively expressive). Building on these results, it was predicted that, consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, participants would recognize the affiliative intentions of “nigga” when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. However, White individuals higher in racial prejudice may be motivated to distance themselves from attempts at affiliation. Therefore, it was predicted that White individuals higher in RWA, SDO, and ATB would perceive racial slurs used in this way as a threat to the status hierarchy and, thus, perceive the slur as more offensive and negatively expressive, while simultaneously perceiving the slur as less positively expressive. But individuals higher in racial prejudice may also experience motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally. Thus, consistent with the racism justification hypothesis, it was predicted that White individuals higher in racial prejudice would experience greater motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally, which would result in lower perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive and greater perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. To test these hypotheses, status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization were tested as mediators of the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and

perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. It is important to reiterate that these hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. Instead, both racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat may be mediating these relationships, but these potential mediators are predicted to result in opposite perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive and positively expressive.

I conducted multiple mediation analyses, with separate analyses for each predictor and criterion pairing due to the predictors being highly correlated, thus avoiding dangers of the effects cancelling out one another (Hayes, 2013). As can be seen in Tables 5 through 7, RWA, SDO, and ATB were positively related to status hierarchy threats and racism trivialization (*a* paths). These results are consistent with both hypotheses as, theoretically; individuals higher in prejudice may experience both racism trivialization motivations and status hierarchy threat following the use of the term “nigga” by a Black individual toward a White individual. Specifically, White individuals higher in prejudice should be motivated to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally (i.e., racism justification), but also experience threat stemming from beliefs that Black individuals are attempting to subvert the status hierarchy (i.e., hierarchy defense).

I also predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB would be significantly related to perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. These effects were generally shown at the zero-order level discussed above. However, controlling for the mediators (i.e., the direct effect), many of these effects became non-significant, indicating the importance of racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat in explaining the relationships between each of the predictor variables and perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. As can be seen in Table 5, across these analyses, RWA was positively related to the perceived offensiveness of the slur, but was not significantly related to the extent to

which participants perceived the slur as negatively expressive and positively expressive controlling for status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization (*c*' paths). Also, controlling for status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization, SDO (Table 6) and ATB (Table 7) were not significantly related to the perceived offensiveness of the slur, but were both positively related to the negatively expressive nature of the slur and negatively related to the positively expressive nature of the slur (Tables 6 and 7; *c*' paths). These small or insignificant direct effects provide preliminary evidence of the importance of both racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat in explaining the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and participants' perceptions of the slur.

I also examined the relationships between status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization controlling for RWA, SDO, or ATB, depending on the analysis being conducted, to examine whether racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat uniquely predicted participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. Building on previous research, it was predicted that status hierarchy threat would be positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. These predictions were generally confirmed. Controlling for the respective predictor (RWA, SDO, or ATB) and racism trivialization (i.e., testing the *b* path), across all analyses, status hierarchy threat was positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, but negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (Tables 5 through 7; *b* paths). Therefore, consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, status hierarchy threat was important in predicting participants' responses to racial slurs. Further, because the *a* and *b* paths were both significant, mediation is possible (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986). Controlling for RWA and status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization was negatively related to

the extent to which participants perceived the slur as offensive, positively related to the extent to which participants perceived the slur as negatively expressive, and uncorrelated with the extent to which participants perceived the slur as positively expressive (Table 5; *b* paths). Controlling for SDO and status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization was negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive, positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive, and uncorrelated with participants' perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive (Table 6; *b* paths). Similarly, controlling for ATB and status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization was negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive, positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive, and uncorrelated with participants' perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive (Table 7; *b* paths). These results are generally consistent with the racism justification hypothesis that racism trivialization would result in lower levels of perceived offensiveness and negative expressiveness, and greater levels of positive expressiveness. However, due to the *b* paths not being significant for RWA predicting positive expressiveness, and SDO and ATB predicting negative expressiveness through racism trivialization, these relationships are not able to be mediated (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986).

More important to the hypotheses of the current study were the mediation effects of racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat explaining the relationships between each of the predictor (RWA, SDO, ATB) and criterion variables (offensiveness, negative expressiveness, and positive expressiveness). It was predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB, through status hierarchy threat, would be positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. The mediation results of status hierarchy threat were remarkably consistent

with this hierarchy defense hypothesis across each of the combinations of predictors (RWA, SDO, ATB) and criterion variables (offensiveness, negatively expressiveness, positively expressiveness). Specifically, through status hierarchy threat, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB were associated with greater perceptions of the Black individual's use of "nigga" toward the White individual as offensive (Table 8) and negatively expressive (Table 9), and with lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (Table 10).

Again, it was predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB, through racism trivialization, would be negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. Consistent with the racism justification hypothesis, through racism trivialization, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB were associated with lower levels of perceived offensiveness (Table 8). Further, higher levels of SDO and ATB were associated with greater perceptions of the slur as positively expressive through racism trivialization (Table 10). Inconsistent with the racism justification hypothesis, through racism trivialization, higher levels of RWA were associated with greater perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive (Table 9). Racism trivialization did not mediate the relationships between SDO, ATB and perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive (Table 9). Racism trivialization also did not mediate the relationship between RWA and perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (Table 10).

**Summary of Perceptions of the Slur Used toward the White Individual.** In sum, the mediating effects of both racism trivialization motivations and perceptions that the slur use was a threat to the status hierarchy were tested in explaining the relationships between each of the predictor variables (RWA, SDO, and ATB) and participants' perceptions of "nigga" when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Consistent with hypotheses based on the

relationships shown in Study 1, participants' perceptions of the slur as threatening to existing status hierarchies significantly mediated every relationship between RWA, SDO, ATB, and perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive.

Specifically, higher levels of each of the predictors were associated with greater perceptions that the slur was being used to subvert the status hierarchy, which were then associated with greater perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. Also, consistent with the racism justification hypothesis, RWA, SDO, and ATB, through racism trivialization, predicted lower levels of offensiveness, while SDO and ATB, through racism trivialization, predicted greater perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. Taken together, these results indicate that individuals higher in racial prejudice are experiencing both threat (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis), and motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs (i.e., racism justification hypothesis). Further, each of these mediators is important in predicting the relationships between racial prejudice and participants' perceptions of "nigga", when used by a Black individual toward a White individual, as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive.

### **Perceptions of the Reciprocated Use of the Black Racial Slur by the White Individual Toward the Black Individual**

I began by examining the bivariate correlations among the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur, perceived negatively expressive nature of the racial slur, and perceived positively expressive nature of the racial slur reciprocated by the White individual toward the Black individual. Because these are theoretically related but distinct criterion variables (see O'Dea et al., 2015), it was predicted that there would, again, be a strong positive correlation between the perceived offensiveness of the racial slur and the perceived negatively expressive nature of the

racial slur, a strong negative correlation between participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negative, and participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. As can be seen in Table 4, these hypotheses were all supported (absolute  $r_s > .32$ ).

I then tested for replication of O'Dea and colleagues' (2015) findings that racial prejudice was related to participants' perceptions of racial slurs used by White individuals toward Black individuals as offensive. Specifically, consistent with findings by O'Dea and colleagues (2015), it was predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB would be negatively correlated with participants' perceptions of a "nigga" used by a White individual toward a Black individual as offensive and negatively expressive. Further, it was predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB would be positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. Interestingly, the pattern of effects was almost identical to the results discussed above for the term "nigga" when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Specifically, RWA, SDO, and ATB were all positively correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive. SDO and ATB were both negatively correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. ATB was negatively correlated with perceptions of the slur as offensive. These results seem counter to hypotheses and previous research by O'Dea and colleagues (2015). However, I speculate that these results may be due to carryover effects following the initial vignette in which the Black individual used "nigga" toward the White individual. The way the vignettes were written was a continuation from one to the other. Therefore, participants may have been placing themselves *into the shoes* of the White individual, and White participants higher in racial prejudice may have believed that if they were in that situation, they would mean the slur to be more offensive, and even justified, due to the threats they were experiencing



because of the Black individual targeting a White individual with the slur. More discussion on these effects will be presented after subsequent analyses.

I also examined whether racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat predicted participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. It was predicted that both status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization would be negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negative, and positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. As can be seen in Table 4, racism trivialization was negatively correlated with participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive. However, inconsistent with hypotheses, status hierarchy threat was positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (absolute  $r$ s > .34). These results are contrary to initial hypotheses, but are consistent with the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and perceptions of "nigga" when reciprocated by a White individual toward a Black individual as discussed above. Again, these results seem to be contrary to findings by O'Dea and colleagues (2015), but individuals may be evaluating the way they would be intending the slur had they been targeted by the slur used by the Black individual toward the White individual rather than simply evaluating a separate scenario in which a White individual uses a slur to target a Black individual. Again, further explanation of these findings will be provided in the General Discussion section and when the mediation of the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and participants' perceptions of the slur by racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat is discussed.

**Mediation by Status Hierarchy Threat and Racism Trivialization.** To test the hypotheses that racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat would mediate the relationships

between RWA, SDO, ATB, and perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive, multiple mediation analyses were conducted, with separate analyses for each predictor and criterion pairing (see Hayes, 2013). As can be seen in Tables 11, 12, and 13, RWA, SDO, and ATB were positively related to status hierarchy threats and racism trivialization (*a* paths). These results are consistent with the hypotheses. Theoretically, individuals higher in prejudice may experience both motivations following the use of the term “nigga”. Specifically, White individuals higher in prejudice should be motivated to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally (i.e., racism justification hypothesis), but also experience threat stemming from beliefs that Black individuals are attempting to subvert the status hierarchy (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis).

I also predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB would be significantly related to perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. These effects were generally shown at the zero-order level discussed above. However, controlling for the mediators (i.e., the direct effect), many of these effects became non-significant, indicating the importance of racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat in explaining the relationships between each of the predictor variables and perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. As can be seen in Table 11, controlling for status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization, across these analyses, RWA was negatively related to the participants’ perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive and positively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. RWA was not significantly related to the extent to which participants perceived the slur as offensive (*c*’ paths). Also, controlling for status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization, SDO (Table 12) and ATB (Table 13) were not significantly related to the perceived offensiveness of the slur, but were positively related to the negatively expressive

nature of the slur and negatively related to the positively expressive nature of the slur ( $c'$  paths). These small or insignificant direct effects provide preliminary evidence of the importance of both racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat in explaining the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and participants' perceptions of the slur.

I also examined the relationships between status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization controlling for RWA, SDO, or ATB, depending on the analysis being conducted. Building on previous research, it was predicted that both status hierarchy threat (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis) and racism trivialization (i.e., racism justification hypothesis) would be negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. In other words, each of these mediators should be related to increased endorsement of racial slurs by White individuals toward Black individuals.

These predictions were generally not confirmed. Interestingly, the results were almost identical to the results of the Black individual using the term "nigga" toward the White individual described above. Controlling for the respective predictor (RWA, SDO, or ATB) and racism trivialization, across all analyses, status hierarchy threat was positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, but negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (Tables 11, 12, and 13;  $b$  paths). These results are counter to the hierarchy defense hypothesis. It was predicted that status hierarchy threat perceived by the Black individual using the term "nigga" toward a White individual would result in increased acceptance of racial slurs when used by a White individual toward a Black individual. Instead, it appears that White individuals who experience greater levels of threat perceived the slurs with greater levels of offensiveness, negative expressiveness,

and lower levels of positive expressiveness. As noted above in the zero-order correlations, I speculate that this may be due to White individuals who experience greater levels of threat from the Black individual referring to the White individual as “nigga”, being motivated to perceive that the White individual is responding to the original slur in a derogative way, and is justified in doing so. Further, controlling for RWA, SDO, or ATB (depending on the analysis) and status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization was negatively related to the extent to which participants perceived the slur as offensive (Tables 11, 12, and 13; *b* paths). Controlling for SDO or ATB (depending on the analysis) and status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization was positively related with participants’ perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (Tables 12 and 13; *b* paths). Similarly, controlling for ATB and status hierarchy threat, racism trivialization was negatively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive (Table 13; *b* paths). No other relationships between racism trivialization and participants’ perceptions of the slur were significant. These relationships are generally consistent with the racism justification hypothesis hypotheses that racism trivialization would result in lower levels of perceived offensiveness and negative expressiveness, and greater levels of positive expressiveness of “nigga” when used by a White individual toward a Black individual. However, due to the *b* paths not being significant for RWA predicting positive expressiveness and negative expressiveness, and SDO predicting negative expressiveness through racism trivialization, these relationships are not able to be mediated (e.g., Baron & Kenny, 1986).

More important to the hypotheses of the current study were the mediation effects of racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat explaining the relationships between RWA, SDO, ATB, and participants’ perceptions of “nigga” when used by the White individual toward the Black individual as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. It was

predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB, through status hierarchy threat and racism trivialization would be negatively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively related to participants' perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. These predictions were based on research which has demonstrated that White individuals higher in racial prejudice are motivated to distance themselves from Black individuals. As such, if White individuals perceive that a Black individual is using "nigga" toward a White individual affiliatively, they may experience status hierarchy threat. It was predicted that this threat would function to justify the use of slurs by White individuals toward Black individuals. Similarly, if White individuals higher in racial prejudice experience motivations to trivialize the use of slurs such as "nigga" generally, they should be more endorsing of "nigga" being used by a White individual to target a Black individual. Interestingly, these two hypotheses predict differing levels of the perceived offensiveness of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals, but similar levels of perceived offensiveness of Black racial slurs used by White individuals toward Black individuals.

The mediation results of status hierarchy threat were remarkably inconsistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis across each of the combinations of predictors and criterion variables. Instead, the results were much like the mediation analyses for "nigga" when used by a Black individual toward a White individual. Through status hierarchy threat, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB were associated with greater perceptions of the White individual's use of "nigga" toward the Black individual as offensive (Table 14) and negatively expressive (Table 15), and with lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (Table 16). As explained, White individuals who are higher in racial prejudice may be experiencing greater levels of threat from the Black individual referring to the White individual as "nigga". As such, they may be

motivated to perceive that the White individual is responding to the original slur in a derogative way and is justified in doing so. It would be interesting to examine whether these effects differ if White individuals are presented with a new situation in which a White individual uses the term “nigga” toward a Black individual who has not already used the term toward him/her. I predict that these effects would trend in the opposite direction, consistent with O’Dea and colleagues (2015) findings that higher levels of racism are negatively related to participants’ perceptions of Black slurs (e.g., “nigga”) as offensive.

I predicted that RWA, SDO, and ATB, through racism trivialization, would be negatively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively related to participants’ perceptions of the slur as positively expressive (i.e., racism justification hypothesis). Consistent with the racism justification hypothesis, through racism trivialization, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB were associated with lower levels of perceived offensiveness (Table 14) and higher levels of perceived positive expressiveness (Table 16). Further, higher levels of ATB were associated with lower perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive through racism trivialization (Table 15). Racism trivialization did not significantly mediate the relationships between RWA, SDO, and perceptions of the slur as negatively expressive (Table 15).

**Summary of Perceptions of the Slur Reciprocated by the White Individual toward the Black Individual.** The mediating effects of both racism trivialization motivations (racism justification hypothesis) and perceptions that the slur use is a threat to the status hierarchy (hierarchy defense hypothesis) in explaining the relationships between each of the predictor variables (RWA, SDO, and ATB) and participants’ perceptions of “nigga” when used by a White individual toward a Black individual were examined. Building on previous research, it was

predicted that, through both racism trivialization and status hierarchy threat, RWA, SDO, and ATB would be negatively related to participants' perceptions of the Black racial slur used by a White individual toward a Black individual as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively related to perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. The mediation of these effects by racism trivialization was generally consistent with hypotheses. Specifically, through racism trivialization, RWA and SDO were significantly related to lower perceptions of the use of the Black racial slur as offensive and greater perceptions of the use of the Black racial slur as positively expressive. Through racism trivialization, ATB was significantly related to lower perceptions of the use of the Black racial slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and greater perceptions of the use of the Black racial slur as positively expressive.

Inconsistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB were associated with greater perceptions that the slur was being used to subvert the status hierarchy, and were then associated with greater perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive; and lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. In examining the vignettes to formulate an explanation for these effects which are contradictory to previous research, it appears that individuals may be experiencing carryover effects from one vignette to the other. Under circumstances in which a White individual uses "nigga" toward a Black individual who has not previously used the slur toward him/her, White individuals higher in racial prejudice are generally motivated to trivialize the use of racial slurs (O'Dea et al., 2015). These lower levels of perceived offensiveness of the use of Black racial slurs by White individuals toward Black individuals theoretically result in decreased suppression of prejudice, leading to increased likelihood that White individuals will exhibit prejudice in the future. However, in the current study, the White individual was reciprocating the use of "nigga" toward

the Black individual, not saying it for the first time toward a Black individual. Specifically, the initial vignette was extended by having the White individual reciprocate the use of “nigga” toward the Black individual who had previously used the same racial slur toward the White individual. As such, White individuals higher in prejudice, who experienced threat when the Black individual targeted the White individual with “nigga”, may have placed themselves *into the shoes* of the White actor. Thus, they may have used their experiences of threat as justification for the derogation of the Black individual (i.e., the White individual is responding to the original slur in a derogative way and is justified in doing so).



## Chapter 4 - General Discussion

Previous research has shown that racial prejudice is significantly negatively correlated with perceptions of the offensiveness of the use of racial slurs by White individuals toward Black individuals (O’Dea et al., 2015). By trivializing the offensiveness of racial slurs, individuals higher in prejudice may experience lower levels of prejudice suppression, thus providing perceived legitimacy for their own future expressions of prejudice (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). However, racial slurs have evolved in recent decades, due to the reclamation of these terms by the groups that they were once meant to target, into a means of affiliation and group bonding. O’Dea and Saucier (in preparation) examined if these affiliative functions would extend beyond one’s own ingroup, consistent with the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012). O’Dea and Saucier (in preparation) showed that Black racial slurs used by Black perpetrators toward White targets were generally perceived as significantly less offensive and more showing of respect to the White targets than were White racial slurs.

I extended these findings by examining whether racial prejudice is related to perceptions of Black racial slurs used by Black individuals toward White individuals. Consistent with previous research on the justification-suppression model of prejudice (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003), slur reappropriation (Bianchi, 2014; Galinsky et al., 2013; Rahman, 2012), and the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2012), two hypotheses were tested in these studies. The first hypothesis (i.e., the racial justification hypothesis) was that levels of racial prejudice would be negatively correlated with perceptions of the use of a Black racial slur used by a Black perpetrator toward a White target as offensive due to White individuals’ motivations to trivialize the offensiveness of racial slurs generally (consistent with research by O’Dea et al., 2015). The second hypothesis (i.e., the hierarchy defense hypothesis), and the more

novel contribution to the literature, was that racial prejudice would be positively correlated with participants' levels of perceived offensiveness due to participants' perceptions of this affiliative intent being to subvert the status hierarchy which they are motivated to maintain (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981, 1998; Pratto et al., 1994).

In Study 1 the relationships between RWA, SDO, and ATB and the extent to which participants perceived the use of the Black racial slur "nigga" as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive when used by a Black individual toward a White individual were examined. Consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, RWA, SDO, and ATB were generally positively related to the extent to which participants perceived the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and negatively related to the extent to which participants perceived the slur as positively expressive. These findings were extended in Study 2 by examining whether motivations to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally, versus the extent to which participants experienced threat following the use of the slur, mediated the relationships between the RWA, SDO, ATB, and perceptions of the slur as offensive, negatively expressive, and positively expressive. Consistent with the hierarchy defense hypothesis, higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB, through status hierarchy threat, were associated with greater perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and with lower perceptions of the slur as positively expressive. The results also generally supported the racism justification hypothesis that higher levels of RWA, SDO, and ATB, through racism trivialization, would be associated with lower perceptions of the slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and with greater perceptions of the slur as positively expressive.

Extending these findings, in Study 2, mediation was tested of the relationships between participants' levels of racial prejudice and their perceptions of the racial slur by participants'

experiences of threat (i.e., hierarchy defense hypothesis) and motivations to trivialize racial slurs (i.e., racism justification hypothesis). It was predicted that, regardless of whether participants experienced status hierarchy threat versus racism trivialization, both mediators would result in increased acceptance of racial slurs by a White individual toward the Black individual. These results were not supported. Interestingly, the results mirrored the effects discussed above when the Black individual targeted the White individual with “nigga”. In examining the methodology of the current study, one explanation could be that individuals were experiencing a carryover effect. Specifically, individuals higher in racial prejudice may be motivated to trivialize the use of slurs (see O’Dea et al., 2015). However, the threat that White participants may have been experiencing following the use of “nigga” by a Black individual toward a White individual may have provided justification for prejudice against the Black individual. Thus, participants may have been taking the perspective of the White individual in the vignette. This may have resulted in feelings of justification for prejudice that would have normally been suppressed (e.g., Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Then, when asked about their perceptions of the reciprocation, participants may have responded as to how they would have intended the slur, as offensive, negatively expressive, and not as positively expressive. Admittedly, this is speculation to explain why the current results are inconsistent with previous findings by O’Dea and colleagues (2015) that racial prejudice was negatively related to the offensiveness of “nigga” when used by a White individual toward a Black individual.

Future research should compare reciprocated use of “nigga” by a White individual toward a Black individual with a situation in which it is not reciprocated (i.e., a White individual uses “nigga” toward a Black individual who has not previously used the slur in reference to him or her). This could be examined by counterbalancing the ordering of the slur use with the White

individual saying the slur first and the Black individual reciprocating the slur versus the Black individual saying the slur first and the White individual reciprocating the slur. I would predict, consistent with O’Dea and colleagues (2015), when the White individual targets the Black individual first, participants’ levels of prejudice would be negatively related to the perceived offensiveness and negative expressiveness of the slur and positively related to the positive expressiveness of the slur. However, consistent with the current findings, when a Black individual uses the slur first, participants’ levels of racial prejudice would be positively related to the perceived offensiveness and negative expressiveness, and negatively related to the positive expressiveness of the slur.

Further research could also examine whether the potential justification White individuals are experiencing function to loosen the norms associated with prejudice generally or if the effect is context specific. Thus, this study would examine a situation in which a White individual uses a slur toward a *different* Black individual rather than a continuation of the same vignette. There would be two alternative hypotheses for this study. On one hand, individuals could be using their experiences of threat, following a Black individual using “nigga” toward a White individual, as a justification of prejudice generally. However, this effect could be constrained to situations in which the term “nigga” is reciprocated toward the Black individual, thus not providing justification for the use of “nigga” in all contexts, just toward the original perpetrator of the slur.

### **Limitations**

The current studies are not without limitations. The first limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the current studies. This limits the ability of the current studies to draw causal conclusions about the relationships between participants’ levels of racial prejudice, perceptions of status hierarchy threat versus racism trivialization, and the perceived offensiveness of the

racial slur. One could make the argument that participants' levels of racial prejudice are relatively consistent across time. However, concrete causal conclusions cannot be drawn from the current study. Steps should be taken in the future to extend this research by examining whether racial prejudice causes greater status hierarchy threat versus racism trivialization.

An additional limitation in the current studies is the use of vignettes, potentially harming the ability of these studies to be applied to real world situations. In conducting studies in this fashion, participants are not able to perceive facial cues and other indications surrounding the intent of the perpetrator of the racial slur, or the interpretation of the racial slur by the target. For example, third party observers may react differently if they were to see the facial expressions and reactions of the perpetrator and target of the slur in real life. Instead, they are given an ambiguous situation and asked to report their perceptions of the slur. That said, there are ethical concerns in the employment of more realistic procedures (e.g., putting a participant in a situation in which a Black individual uses a Black racial slur toward him or her and, subsequently, examining his or her perceptions of the slur). Care was taken to mask the intent of the perpetrator and no information was given to indicate a reaction on the part of the target.

An additional limitation of the current studies is that participants' motivations for their self-reported perceptions of the slur were not measured. In Study 2, contrary to the hierarchy defense hypothesis, participants higher in racial prejudice, through status hierarchy threat, perceived "nigga" when reciprocated by the White individual toward the Black individual a more offensive and negatively expressive, and less positively expressive. In the above discussion, I speculate that this is due to participants using their experiences of threat as justification for explicit prejudice (i.e., use of "nigga") toward the Black individual. However, this is theoretical speculation based on the justification-suppression model of prejudice (Crandall & Eshleman,

2003). Future studies should either qualitatively or quantitatively examine participants' motivations surrounding their perceptions of the reciprocated racial slur. This would help in understanding whether individuals were using the use of "nigga" by the Black individual toward the White individual as justification of explicit prejudice toward the Black individual, or whether there was an alternative motivation for participants' perceptions of the slur.

### **Implications**

Despite the limitations, the current studies offer many important implications. Previous research suggests that of "nigga" used by a Black individual toward a White individual may be intended as and perceived to be more positively expressive (see O'Dea & Saucier, in preparation). However, White individuals higher in racial prejudice are motivated to resist affiliation from Black individuals (Miller et al., 2012) to maintain their position in the status hierarchy (Altemeyer, 1981; Pratto et al., 1994). In the current studies, it was shown that White individuals higher in racial prejudice experienced status hierarchy threat following being shown a vignette in which a Black individual targets a White individual with the term "nigga." It then appears that White individuals may be using this threat to justify their own prejudice that would otherwise be suppressed, responding to the reciprocated use of "nigga" by the White individual toward the Black individual as higher in offensiveness and negative expressiveness and lower in positive expressiveness. Thus, White individuals may experience justification for future prejudiced expressions due to the threat they are experiencing following affiliation attempts by Black individuals. Future research should continue to examine this possibility.

In addition, the racism justification hypothesis was also partially supported as racial prejudice was shown to be generally negatively correlated with perceptions of the racial slur as offensive and negatively expressive, and positively correlated with perceptions of the slur as

positively expressive. This may be due to White individuals being motivated to trivialize the use of racial slurs generally, which is consistent with previous research by O’Dea and colleagues (2015). Interestingly, much like the implications described in the previous paragraph, this may also theoretically lead to decreased suppression for racial prejudice due to lower levels of perceived offensiveness surrounding the use of racial slurs (Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). This was demonstrated as White individuals responded to the reciprocated use of “nigga” by the White individual toward the Black individual as higher in offensiveness and negative expressiveness and lower in positive expressiveness. Interestingly, a question can also be asked: if prejudiced White individuals perceive that racial slurs are not *a big deal*, is their expression of a racial slur indicative of racial prejudice? Future research should examine the possibility for anti-politically correct attitudes to have the potential to not only function with derogatory prejudicial intentions, but also as ways to challenge status hierarchies by eliminating the taboo associated with racial labels.

Future research should also examine whether the effects demonstrated in the current studies extend to the use of slurs toward other marginalized groups. For example, the term “queer” has been reappropriated by the gay and lesbian community (e.g., Bianchi, 2014). Interestingly, Bianchi describes a difference in meaning between ingroup and outgroup uses of the term “queer” with ingroup members using the term affiliatively and outgroup members using the term derogatively. Building on the current work, it is reasonable to expect that the findings demonstrated would generalize to slurs used by other marginalized groups such that prejudice toward the stigmatized group would predict perceptions of the usage of a reappropriated slur used by a member of the stigmatized group toward a member of the majority group (e.g., the use of “queer” by a gay or lesbian individual toward a heterosexual individual). An interesting

juxtaposition arises pending the generalization of the current effects to other social groups and reappropriated terms; if majority group members' prejudices toward stigmatized groups are exacerbated by the use of the reappropriated slur, should the reappropriated use of the slur be suppressed along with the derogative use? To the contrary, it seems wishful thinking to imagine the complete suppression of the derogative use of slurs. Therefore, some may argue for the continued use of reappropriated terms to subvert prejudicial behaviors. Future research should examine the efficacy of reappropriated terms in combating prejudice toward marginalized groups.

The motivations associated with authoritarian and socially dominant attitudes discussed previously also have important implications for predicting the future perpetuation of racial slurs and prejudice by White individuals who have been targeted by a Black racial slur used by a Black individual. As discussed, individuals higher in RWA are motivated to perceive outgroup members as threatening and dangerous, while individuals higher in SDO are motivated to perceive outgroup members as competitors for limited resources. These motivations maintain existing status hierarchies and strike down any opposition to the hierarchy and the existing norms. Duckitt (2006) describes RWA and SDO as being motivations that can be threatened by outgroups challenging the status hierarchy and existing norms. This threat may function to increase individuals' endorsement of these status and norm based motivations for dominance. Thus, individuals will likely express more prejudice in the future due to these perceptions that their position in society is being threatened. That said, this research does not just imply enhancement of antisocial attitudes (e.g., Duckitt, 2006). Rather, the threat will lead to increased polarization, causing individuals who experience threat to become more racist, while individuals, who do not experience threat, should become less racist. Thus, future research should examine if



this polarization of antisocial attitudes following being targeted by the Black racial slur (used by a Black individual) will lead White individuals to exhibit more prejudice toward outgroup members due to perceptions of threat. These affiliative functions of racial slurs may act as a double-edged sword. On one side, racial slurs used affiliatively may strengthen interracial interactions and promote equality between outgroups and non-racist White individuals, but on the other side, racial slurs used affiliatively may function to strengthen the walls already existing between outgroup members and White individuals attempting to reinforce status hierarchies, keeping outgroup members *in their place*.

### **Conclusion**

Two studies examined the effects of racial prejudice on perceptions of the use of Black racial slurs by Black individuals toward White individuals. These studies are timely and extend the existing literature on racial slurs by further examining the potential for racial slurs to be used not only to derogate, but also for their potential to be intended and perceived as affiliative as well. Rather sobering, the potential implications of the current studies may be that affiliative racial slur use, while it may improve affiliation and create ingroups between racial minorities and individuals lower in racial prejudice, may also serve to polarize the anti-affiliative attitudes of White individuals higher in racial prejudice. Therefore, future studies along this line of research are important to fully understand the functions and implications associated with the use of racial slurs. While racial slurs may have the potential to be perceived and intended prosocially, and thus have the potential to improve relations between racial groups, they also have the potential to reinforce status hierarchies and harden the barriers between groups.

## Chapter 5 - Tables

**Table 1**

Means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations between, and alpha levels for each of the measures used in Study 1.

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Social Dominance Orientation	2.96	1.70	(.95)					
2. Right-Wing Authoritarianism	4.95	1.60	.35***	(.85)				
3. Attitudes Toward Blacks	3.19	1.59	.75***	.48***	(.94)			
4. Perceived Offensiveness	4.63	1.66	.11	.36***	.24**	(.85)		
5. Negatively Expressive Nature	2.26	1.94	.47***	.24**	.55***	.37***	(.96)	
6. Positively Expressive Nature	7.21	1.78	-.34***	-.23**	-.33***	-.40***	-.61***	(.93)

*Note.* \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach Alpha levels.

**Table 2**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive ATB as the Antecedent

Antecedent	Consequent														
	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> RWA			<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> SDO			Y Perceived Offensiveness			Y Negatively Expressive			Y Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> ATB	0.50	.06	<.001	0.80	.05	<.001	0.19	.11	.091	0.55	.12	<.001	-0.14	.12	.250
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> RWA	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.33	.08	<.001	-0.04	.08	.616	-0.10	.08	.243
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> SDO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.14	.10	.156	0.17	.11	.116	-0.22	.11	.045
Constant	3.34	.23	<.001	0.38	.18	.035	2.81	.36	<.001	0.22	.38	.563	8.80	.39	<.001
	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .24			<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .57			<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .14			<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .31			<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> = .13		
Model Summary	<i>F</i> (1, 192) = 60.68, <i>p</i> < .001			<i>F</i> (1, 192) = 255.99, <i>p</i> < .001			<i>F</i> (3, 190) = 10.70, <i>p</i> < .001			<i>F</i> (3, 190) = 27.92, <i>p</i> < .001			<i>F</i> (3, 190) = 9.69, < .001		

*Note.* Coefficients are unstandardized.

**Table 3**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur in Study 1 with ATB as the predictor

DV	Total Indirect Effect	$M_1$ RWA	$M_2$ SDO
Perceived Offensiveness	.05 [-.19, .27]	.17 [.08, .27]	-.12 [-.33, .09]
Negatively Expressive	.11 [-.10, .31]	-.02 [-.09, .05]	.13 [-.08, .34]
Positively Expressive	-.22 [-.42, < .01]	-.05 [-.15, .02]	-.18 [-.38, .05]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each dependent measure.

**Table 4**

Means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations between, and alpha levels for each of the measures used in Study 2.

Measure	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Social Dominance Orientation	2.80	1.80	(.96)										
2. Right-Wing Authoritarianism	4.65	1.75	.47***	(.88)									
3. Attitudes Toward Blacks	2.96	1.61	.69***	.50***	(.94)								
4. Status Threat	3.55	1.98	.36***	.42***	.40***	(.83)							
5. Racism Trivialization	4.11	2.17	.40***	.28***	.51***	.01	(.89)						
6. Perceived Offensiveness (WT)	4.65	1.69	.09	.24***	.06	.63***	-.40***	(.86)					
7. Negatively Expressive Nature (WT)	2.11	1.79	.46***	.19***	.50***	.51***	.16**	.31***	(.97)				
8. Positively Expressive Nature (WT)	7.03	1.84	-.30***	-.19**	-.32***	-.48***	.06	-.45***	-.58***	(.89)			
9. Perceived Offensiveness (BT)	5.13	1.82	-.05	.05	-.13*	.42***	-.53***	.77***	.18**	-.32***	(.88)		
10. Negatively Expressive Nature (BT)	2.25	1.93	.32***	.11*	.33***	.36***	.03	.21***	.67***	-.43***	.32***	(.98)	
11. Positively Expressive Nature (BT)	6.94	1.95	-.16**	-.05	-.18**	-.34***	.12*	-.36***	-.43***	.72***	-.41***	-.64***	(.94)

Note. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ . Values in parentheses on the diagonal are Cronbach Alpha levels. (WT) = White Target; (BT) = Black Target.

**Table 5**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive when used Toward the White Target in Study 2 with RWA as the Antecedent

Antecedent	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat			Consequent <i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization			<i>Y</i> Perceived Offensiveness			<i>Y</i> Negatively Expressive			<i>Y</i> Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> RWA	0.47	.06	<.001	0.35	.06	<.001	0.12	.04	.003	-0.09	.05	.094	>-0.01	.06	.953
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.50	.03	<.001	0.49	.05	<.001	-0.45	.05	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.34	.03	<.001	0.15	.04	<.001	0.05	.04	.206
Constant	1.36	.27	<.001	2.49	.32	<.001	3.74	.19	<.001	0.16	.26	.542	8.41	.28	<.001
	$R^2 = .17$			$R^2 = .08$			$R^2 = .57$			$R^2 = .29$			$R^2 = .57$		
Model Summary	$F(1, 346) = 72.60, p < .001$			$F(1, 346) = 29.77, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 150.58, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 47.76, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 150.58, p < .001$		

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized.

**Table 6**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive when used Toward the White Target in Study 2 with SDO as the Antecedent

Antecedent	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat			Consequent <i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization			<i>Y</i> Perceived Offensiveness			<i>Y</i> Negatively Expressive			<i>Y</i> Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> SDO	0.39	.06	<.001	0.48	.06	<.001	0.03	.04	.489	0.29	.05	<.001	-0.22	.06	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.53	.03	<.001	0.37	.04	<.001	-0.38	.05	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.32	.03	<.001	0.03	.04	.403	0.13	.04	.004
Constant	2.46	.18	<.001	2.77	.20	<.001	4.02	.17	<.001	-0.15	.22	.479	8.47	.24	<.001
	$R^2 = .13$			$R^2 = .16$			$R^2 = .56$			$R^2 = .35$			$R^2 = .27$		
Model Summary	$F(1, 346) = 49.75, p < .001$			$F(1, 346) = 64.66, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 144.29, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 61.99, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 42.26, p < .001$		

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized.

**Table 7**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive when used Toward the White Target in Study 2 with ATB as the Antecedent

Antecedent	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat			Consequent			<i>Y</i> Perceived Offensiveness			<i>Y</i> Negatively Expressive			<i>Y</i> Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> ATB	0.49	.06	<.001	0.69	.06	<.001	0.02	.05	.725	0.42	.06	<.001	-0.31	.07	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.53	.03	<.001	0.33	.04	<.001	-0.35	.05	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.32	.03	<.001	-.03	.04	.504	0.17	.05	<.001
Constant	2.11	.20	<.001	2.07	.21	<.001	4.02	.17	<.001	-0.17	.21	.414	8.48	.24	<.001
	$R^2 = .16$			$R^2 = .26$			$R^2 = .56$			$R^2 = .37$			$R^2 = .28$		
Model Summary	$F(1, 346) = 64.77, p < .001$			$F(1, 346) = 122.62, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 144.03, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 67.52, p < .001$			$F(3, 344) = 43.79, p < .001$		

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized.



**Table 8**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive when used Toward the White Target in Study 2

Predictor	Total Indirect Effect	Status Hierarchy Threat	Racism Trivialization
RWA	.12 [.03, .20]	.23 [.18, .30]	-.12 [-.17, -.07]
SDO	.05 [-.04, .15]	.21 [.14, .28]	-.15 [-.21, -.11]
ATB	.04 [-.07, .15]	.26 [.19, .34]	-.22 [-.29, -.17]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each predictor and each mediator due to the predictors being highly correlated with one another.

**Table 9**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Negatively Expressive Toward the White Target in Study 2

Predictor	Total Indirect Effect	Status Hierarchy Threat	Racism Trivialization
RWA	.29 [.21, .38]	.23 [.16, .32]	.05 [.02, .09]
SDO	.16 [.09, .24]	.14 [.10, .21]	.02 [-.02, .05]
ATB	.14 [.04, .26]	.16 [.10, .24]	-.02 [-.08, .04]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each predictor due to the predictors being highly correlated with one another.

**Table 10**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Positively Expressive Toward the White Target in Study 2

Predictor	Total Indirect Effect	Status Hierarchy Threat	Racism Trivialization
RWA	-.19 [-.28, -.11]	-.21 [-.29, -.14]	.02 [-.01, .06]
SDO	-.09 [-.17, -.01]	-.15 [-.21, -.09]	.06 [.02, .11]
ATB	-.06 [-.18, .05]	-.17 [-.25, -.11]	.12 [.04, .19]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each predictor due to the predictors being highly correlated with one another.

**Table 11**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive when used Toward the Black Target in Study 2 with RWA as the Antecedent

Antecedent	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat			Consequent <i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization			<i>Y</i> Perceived Offensiveness			<i>Y</i> Negatively Expressive			<i>Y</i> Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> RWA	0.47	.06	<.001	0.35	.06	<.001	0.03	.05	.569	-0.06	.06	<.001	0.09	.06	.176
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.38	.04	<.001	0.37	.05	<.001	-0.37	.05	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.45	.03	<.001	0.04	.05	.404	0.09	.05	.054
Constant	1.37	.27	<.001	2.48	.32	<.001	5.50	.23	<.001	1.07	.31	<.001	7.48	.31	<.001
	$R^2 = .17$			$R^2 = .08$			$R^2 = .47$			$R^2 = .13$			$R^2 = .14$		
Model Summary	$F(1, 345) = 72.35, p < .001$			$F(1, 345) = 29.81, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 99.48, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 17.14, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 18.19, p < .001$		

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized.

**Table 12**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive when used Toward the Black Target in Study 2 with SDO as the Antecedent

Antecedent	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat			Consequent <i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization			<i>Y</i> Perceived Offensiveness			<i>Y</i> Negatively Expressive			<i>Y</i> Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> SDO	0.39	.06	<.001	0.48	.06	<.001	0.01	.05	.823	0.26	.06	<.001	-0.13	.06	.035
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.39	.04	<.001	0.26	.05	<.001	-0.30	.05	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.45	.04	<.001	-0.06	.05	.202	0.16	.05	.002
Constant	2.46	.18	<.001	2.77	.20	<.001	5.56	.20	<.001	0.83	.26	.002	7.73	.27	<.001
	$R^2 = .13$			$R^2 = .16$			$R^2 = .46$			$R^2 = .17$			$R^2 = .14$		
Model Summary	$F(1, 345) = 49.68, p < .001$			$F(1, 345) = 64.49, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 99.31, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 23.74, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 19.21, p < .001$		

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized.

**Table 13**

Mediation Model Coefficients Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive, Negatively Expressive, and Positively Expressive when used Toward the Black Target in Study 2 with ATB as the Antecedent

Antecedent	<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat			Consequent <i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization			<i>Y</i> Perceived Offensiveness			<i>Y</i> Negatively Expressive			<i>Y</i> Positively Expressive		
	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	Coeff.	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>X</i> ATB	0.50	.06	<.001	0.69	.06	<.001	-0.07	.06	.267	0.35	.08	<.001	-0.21	.08	.008
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Status Hierarchy Threat	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.42	.04	<.001	0.24	.05	<.001	-0.27	.06	<.001
<i>M</i> <sub>1</sub> Racism Trivialization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.42	.04	<.001	-0.11	.05	.044	0.19	.05	<.001
Constant	2.10	.20	<.001	2.07	.21	<.001	5.58	.20	<.001	0.82	.26	.002	7.75	.27	<.001
	$R^2 = .16$			$R^2 = .26$			$R^2 = .47$			$R^2 = .18$			$R^2 = .15$		
Model Summary	$F(1, 345) = 65.72, p < .001$			$F(1, 345) = 121.64, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 100.05, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 24.56, p < .001$			$F(3, 343) = 20.24, p < .001$		

Note. Coefficients are unstandardized.

**Table 14**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Offensive when used Toward the Black Target in Study 2

Predictor	Total Indirect Effect	Status Hierarchy Threat	Racism Trivialization
RWA	.02 [-.07, .11]	.18 [.13, .24]	-.16 [-.23, -.10]
SDO	-.06 [-.15, .03]	.15 [.10, .21]	-.22 [-.28, -.16]
ATB	-.09 [-.19, .02]	.21 [.15, .28]	-.29 [-.36, -.23]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each predictor due to the predictors being highly correlated with one another.

**Table 15**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Negatively Expressive when used Toward the Black Target in Study 2

Predictor	Total Indirect Effect	Status Hierarchy Threat	Racism Trivialization
RWA	.19 [.11, .28]	.17 [.11, .25]	.01 [-.02, .05]
SDO	.07 [.01, .15]	.10 [.06, .16]	-.03 [-.07, .01]
ATB	.04 [-.06, .15]	.12 [.06, .19]	-.07 [-.14, -.01]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each predictor due to the predictors being highly correlated with one another.



**Table 16**

Indirect Mediation Effects Predicting Perceptions of the Slur as Positively Expressive when used Toward the Black Target in Study 2

Predictor	Total Indirect Effect	Status Hierarchy Threat	Racism Trivialization
RWA	-.14 [-.23, -.07]	-.17 [-.25, -.12]	.03 [< .01, .07]
SDO	-.04 [-.12, .03]	-.12 [-.18, -.07]	.07 [.03, .13]
ATB	> -.01 [-.12, .11]	-.13 [-.21, -.08]	.13 [.06, .21]

*Note.* Values are unstandardized regression coefficients. Brackets contain the lower limit and upper limit for 95% confidence intervals for the effects. A separate mediation analysis was conducted for each predictor due to the predictors being highly correlated with one another.

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## **Appendix A - Perceived Offensiveness of the Racial Slur**

1. This type of language is normal. (R)
2. This type of language is offensive.
3. I do not agree with using language like this in any situation.
4. It is okay to use this type of language in certain situations. (R)
5. It is surprising to hear this type of language.
6. DeShawn was just caught up in the moment. He did not mean anything bad. (R)
7. This language is justified. (R)
8. DeShawn should be punished for what he said.
9. This type of language is antisocial.
10. The use of this language encourages prejudice.

## **Appendix B - Negatively Expressive Nature of the Racial Slur**

1. This term was used to express negative emotion toward Mason.
2. This term was meant to insult Mason.
3. DeShawn said this to hurt Mason's feelings.
4. DeShawn used this term to get Mason angry.

## **Appendix C - Positively Expressive Nature of the Racial Slur**

1. DeShawn used this term in a friendly way toward Mason.
2. This term was used by DeShawn to bond with Mason.
3. DeShawn used this term because he thought that it would show Mason that they could be friends.
4. DeShawn was trying to be nice to Mason.

## **Appendix D - Social Dominance Orientation**

1. Some groups are simply inferior to other groups.
2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.
5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
6. It's probably good that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
7. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.
9. It would be good if groups could be equal. (R)
10. Group equality should be our ideal. (R)
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life. (R)
12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups. (R)
13. Increased social equality. (R)
14. We would have fewer problems if we treated people more equally. (R)
15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible. (R)
16. No one group should dominate in society. (R)



## **Appendix E - Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale**

1. What our country really needs instead of more “civil rights” is a good stiff dose of law and order.
2. It is important to protect the rights of radicals and deviants in all ways. (R)
3. The real keys to the “good life” are obedience, discipline, and sticking to the straight and narrow.
4. Homosexual long-term relationships should be treated as equivalent to marriage. (R)
5. A “woman’s place” should be wherever she wants to be. The days when women are submissive to their husbands and social conventions belong strictly to the past.
6. It is good that nowadays young people have greater freedom "to make their own rules" and to protest against things they don't like. (R)
7. The withdrawal from tradition will turn out to be a fatal fault one day.
8. Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn.
9. Being virtuous and law-abiding is in the long run better for us than permanently challenging the foundation of our society.
10. What our country really needs is a strong determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path.
11. There is no such crime to justify capital punishment. (R)
12. People should develop their own personal standards about good and evil and pay less attention to the Bible and other old, traditional forms of religious guidance. (R)

## Appendix F - Attitudes Toward Blacks Scale

1. I enjoy a funny racial joke, even if some people might find it offensive.
2. If I had a chance to introduce Black visitors to my friends and neighbors, I would be pleased to do so. (R)
3. I would rather not have Blacks live in the same apartment building I live in.
4. Racial integration (of schools, businesses, residences, etc.) has benefited both Whites and Blacks. (R)
5. I probably would feel somewhat self-conscious dancing with a Black in a public place.
6. I think that Black people look more similar to each other than White people do.
7. It would not bother me if my new roommate was Black. (R)
8. Inter-racial marriage should be discouraged to avoid the “who-am-I?” confusion which the children feel.
9. If a Black were put in charge of me, I would not mind taking advice and direction from him or her. (R)
10. Generally, Blacks are not as smart as Whites.
11. The federal government should take decisive steps to override the injustices Blacks suffer at the hands of local authorities. (R)
12. It is likely that Blacks will bring violence to neighborhoods when they move in.
13. Black and White people are inherently equal. (R)
14. I get very upset when I hear a White make a prejudicial remark about Blacks. (R)
15. I worry that in the next few years I may be denied my application for a job or promotion because of preferential treatment given to minority group members.
16. I favor open housing laws that allow more racial integration of neighborhoods. (R)

17. Black people are demanding too much too fast in their push for equal rights.
18. I would not mind at all if a Black family with about the same income and education as me moved in next door. (R)
19. Whites should support Blacks in their struggle against discrimination and segregation. (R)
20. Some Blacks are so touchy about race that it is difficult to get along with them.

## **Appendix G - Status Hierarchy Threat**

1. Racial slurs used in this way are a threat to traditional American values.
2. Racial slurs used in this way encourage some cultural values that are harmful to traditional American culture.
3. By using this term, DeShawn is implying that he is better than Mason.
4. Blacks use racial slurs in this way to try to assert dominance over Whites
5. The use of this racial slur has no impact on the social status of either DeShawn or Mason. (R)

## Appendix H - Footnote

<sup>1</sup>Participants for the current study were recruited at \$0.25 (153 participants) in the beginning of data collection. Due to time constraints in the data collection (i.e., these data were collected for a thesis project), the researcher chose to increase the payment to \$0.75 (194 participants) approximately forty-four percent of the way through data collection. The data were coded according to which payment they received and this was shown to have very little impact on the conclusions being drawn in the study. The little impact it had was to minimally strengthen the effects discussed in the paper. In doing so, the indirect effect of ATB on negative expressiveness, the effect of RWA on positive expressiveness, and the effect of SDO on negative expressiveness through racism trivialization became significant. However, these effects were minimal. Further, payment did not affect participants' scores on any of the criterion variables (offensiveness, negative expressiveness, and positive expressiveness) As such, in the final reporting this was not treated as a covariate. The researcher is happy to provide the analyses with the reporting of payment included as a covariate upon request.