Gender Backlash and the Moderating Role of Shared Racial Group Membership

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Abstract

Work has suggested that a target woman's race influences evaluations of her behavior; White women often experience more backlash than Black women in response to agency. We expand on this work by considering the role of the relationship between targets and perceivers. As an inherently relational construct, backlash necessarily implicates both parties. We examine how the racial group memberships of targets and perceivers jointly affect backlash against gender-norm violating women. In analyses of Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford's accusations against Brett Kavanaugh and Anita Hill's accusations against Clarence Thomas during their respective U.S. Supreme Court confirmation hearings, an archival analysis of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and two experiments, we find that samples of White, Black, and Asian participants all express more backlash towards racial in-group than out-group members. These findings suggest that backlash towards gender-norm violating women may be contingent on shared racial group membership between targets and perceivers.

Keywords: gender, race, intersectionality, backlash

Gender Backlash and the Moderating Role of Shared Racial Group Membership

Despite progress made towards gender equality in the U.S., gender-based backlash remains a significant problem (Brescoll et al., 2018; Heilman & Caleo, 2018; Ratliff et al., 2019). Backlash—negative social and economic consequences women face in response to perceived gender-norm violations—occurs across numerous domains, including management, negotiation, and politics (Akinola et al., 2018; Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010). However, despite the ubiquity of backlash, research has shown that race influences the backlash women experience; White women often experience more backlash than women of color (Livingston et al., 2012; Tinkler et al., 2019).

Two streams of research have focused on how a target's race influences backlash. One suggests that racial stereotypes result in different patterns of gender backlash (Livingston et al., 2012; Rosette et al., 2016). The other posits that gender is primarily associated with White women; racial minority women are rendered "invisible," which results in less backlash (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Sesko & Biernat, 2010; Thomas et al., 2014). Both approaches highlight how a target woman's race impacts gender backlash. We build on this work by exploring the role of the perceiver's race.

We posit that the racial group memberships of *both* targets and perceivers affect backlash. We suggest that shared racial group membership between perceivers and targets plays an important role in gender-norm enforcement. Individuals may primarily apply gendered expectancies to racial in-group members. As a result, individuals may express more backlash towards racial in-group than out-group members.

Gendered Expectancies and Backlash

Backlash is an ideal context in which to examine when and towards whom gendered expectancies are applied. Despite women's increasing share of the professional workforce, many individuals are still biased against women (Brescoll et al., 2018; Koenig et al., 2011). Those who are biased tend to hold more traditional gendered expectancies and express more backlash towards agentic women (Gaunt, 2013; Ratliff et al., 2019; Rothwell et al., 2019). By examining towards whom backlash is expressed, it is possible to determine who perceivers are holding to these gendered expectancies.

The Role of Target Characteristics

Work on race and gender stereotyping suggests that racial stereotypes influence the gendered expectancies applied to women of different races. Because Black individuals are stereotyped as relatively masculine, Black women are expected to behave more aggressively and face weaker proscriptions against agency than White women (Galinsky et al., 2013; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Livingston et al., 2012). On the other hand, Asian women are stereotyped as particularly feminine and are expected to behave more communally than White women, which might lead to more backlash for behaving agentically (Galinsky et al., 2013; Ghavami & Peplau, 2012; Rosette et al., 2016).

The Intersectional Invisibility Hypothesis (IIH), in contrast, posits that women of color are viewed as non-prototypical women in American society. According to this view, prevailing cultural biases in the U.S. associate the social category of "woman" with White women; racial minority women's gender is rendered "invisible" (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008). IIH hypothesizes that this invisibility might preclude the expression of gender-based backlash towards racial minority women (Purdie-Vaughns & Eibach, 2008; Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz, 2013; Sesko & Biernat, 2010; Thomas et al., 2014).

To explain why Black women elicit less backlash than White women, both of these theoretical perspectives focus exclusively on the racial group membership of targets. Neither of these theories says much about the role of the perceiver, tacitly assuming that perceivers of all groups will evaluate women of different races similarly.

The Interactive Nature of Gender and Backlash

We suggest that the enactment of gender and backlash are inherently interactive and thus implicates both perceivers and targets (see Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Work in psychology and sociology has long suggested that as a social construct, gender is intrinsically interactive and does not exist within any one individual, absent others to observe it. It is a product of coordinated efforts between individuals in a social community to create a shared reality, resting upon the relationship between target and perceiver (Coles, 2009; Eagly et al., 2000; Glenn, 2000; Lorber, 1994; Pascoe, 2003; Pyke & Johnson, 2003; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Because gender and its associated expectations are constructed within social groups, it is critical to consider the group memberships of both targets and perceivers when studying gender in intergroup contexts. When considering the effect of race on backlash, focusing solely on the race of the target might not be sufficient to fully understand how this phenomenon operates across racial lines.

Racial Groups as Social Communities

There is much reason to believe that the racial group membership of perceivers might influence how they respond to gendered behavior. Decades of research suggests that race is the dominant form of social community in the U.S. (Allport, 1954; Schuman et al., 1997; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). As a result, race is a particularly meaningful and salient group identity that shapes how individuals construe, evaluate, and navigate their social worlds, powerfully influencing how

individuals engage with others (Knowles et al., 2014; Knowles & Peng, 2005; Richeson & Sommers, 2016; Sellers et al., 1998). Taken in conjunction with work on the relational nature of gender, this work suggests that perceiver race, like target race, may be critical in determining individuals' responses to others' gendered behaviors.

Current Research

This paper brings together work on the social construction of gender, the interactive nature of backlash, and the role of race in social interactions in the U.S. in order to generate a novel hypothesis about the way race influences backlash. Existing explanations rest on assumptions about the target's racial group, which predicts a degree of invariance in backlash across groups of perceivers. In contrast, we propose that individuals will express more backlash towards racial in-group women than racial out-group women.

To this end, we conducted five studies, using a variety of contexts and methods to demonstrate the generalizability of our findings. In Studies 1-3, we explore this question using correlational designs to test the real-world validity and importance of our hypothesis in the context of women's accusations of sexual assault (Studies 1 and 2) and pursuit of high-level political office (Study 3). In Studies 4 and 5, we examined how gender bias predicts backlash against agentic women among White perceivers evaluating White, Black, and Asian female targets (Study 4) or White and Asian perceivers evaluating White and Asian female targets (Study 5). Overall, the five studies provide evidence that backlash is strongest when perceivers evaluate racial in-group members.

Although we did not know a priori what the effect size would be, we sought to maximize the statistical power of our tests. Because effect sizes might be small, we took steps to increase our confidence in the statistical power of our tests (see Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2013).

On average, across studies that we collected data for, we recruited 125 participants per cell, after exclusions. See supplementary online materials (SOM) for more detail on methods, samples, and results.

Study 1

In Study 1, we test our hypothesis in the context of the confirmation hearings of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, who was accused by Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford (a White woman) of sexual assault in October of 2018. We examine if members of Dr. Ford's racial in-group (i.e. White participants) evaluated her less favorably as a function of perceived gender-norm violation than members of a racial out-group (i.e. racial minority participants).

Method

Participants. We conducted a two-wave study on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). At Time 1, we recruited 1,585 participants; of these, 620 returned in Time 2. 29 participants did not complete all measures and were excluded from analyses (final $N = 591$). Participants were compensated $1.00 for the completion of each survey. The mean age was 36.30 years old ($SD = 10.26$). The final sample was 73.94% White, 8.46% Black/African-American, 6.09% Asian/Asian-American, 5.41% Hispanic/Latinx, 3.72% Multiracial, and 1.86% Other. We recoded participant race to collapse across racial minority participants, resulting in two categories for analysis: 437 White participants (221 men, 215 women, 1 data missing) and 154 racial minority participants (86 men, 66 women, 2 data missing).[1]

Procedure. We surveyed participants during the week following Kavanaugh's Supreme Court confirmation hearings, prior to Kavanaugh's confirmation.

Time 1. From October 2 to October 3, 2018, participants were recruited to take part in a study investigating opinions and attitudes on current events. Participants reported demographic and individual difference characteristics.

Time 2. A day later, participants were contacted to take part in the Time 2 survey. Participants watched the first 90 seconds of Dr. Ford's opening statement before Congress, as televised by ABC.[2] They reported perceptions of gender-norm violation, how much they liked her, and how believable they found her testimony.

Measures.

Perceived gender-norm violation. Participants evaluated how much seven gender proscriptions applied to Dr. Ford (e.g. rebellious, controlling; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; $\alpha = .91$) on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all*; 5 = *An extreme amount*).[3] Higher scores correspond to greater perceived gender-norm violation.

Liking. Participants reported how much they liked Dr. Ford with one item (*"She is generally likeable*") on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Believability of testimony. Participants reported the believability of Dr. Ford's testimony with one item (*"How believable do you find Dr. Christine Blasey-Ford's testimony?"*) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Extremely believable*; 7 = *Extremely unbelievable*).

Political ideology. Participants reported their political ideology (1 = *Extremely conservative*; 7 = *Extremely liberal*) and political affiliation (1 = *Lean strongly Republican*; 7 = *Lean strongly Democrat*). Items were positively correlated ($r = .86$) and collapsed into a single measure for analysis. Given the political nature of this context, we control for political ideology.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among measured variables are presented in Table 1. See SOM for full regression tables with and without control variables.

Liking. We regressed liking on perceived gender-norm violation, participant race, and their interaction, controlling for participant gender as an interactive term and political ideology. We observed a significant main effect of participant race, b = -.14, SE = .06, t(579) = -2.26, p = .02, η_p^2 = .01, 95% CI:[-.27, -.02], and replicating prior backlash work, a significant main effect of perceived gender-norm violation, b = -.40, SE = .08, t(579) = -5.04, p < .001, η_p^2 = .04, 95% CI:[-.55, -.24]. As predicted, we observed a significant interaction between perceived gender-norm violation and participant race, b = -.25, SE = .07, t(579) = -3.43, p < .001, η_p^2 = .02, 95% CI:[-.40, -.11], as shown in Figure 1. We observed a significant simple effect of gender-norm violation among White participants, b = -.65, SE = .08, t(579) = -8.20, p < .001, η_p^2 = .10, 95% CI:[-.80, -.49], but not among racial minority participants, b = -.15, SE = .13, t(579) = -1.11, p = .27, η_p^2 = .002, 95% CI:[-.40, .11].

Believability of testimony. We regressed believability of testimony on perceived gender-norm violation, participant race, and their interaction, controlling for participant gender as an interactive term and political ideology. We observed significant main effects of participant race, b = -.20, SE = .07, t(579) = -2.63, p = .009, η_p^2 = .01, 95% CI:[-.34, -.05], and perceived gender-norm violation, b = -.52, SE = .09, t(579) = -5.64, p < .001, η_p^2 = .05, 95% CI:[-.70, -.34]. We also observed a significant two-way interaction between perceived gender-norm violation and participant race, b = -.26, SE = .09, t(579) = -2.99, p = .003, η_p^2 = .02, 95% CI:[-.43, -.09], as shown in Figure 2. We observed a significant simple effect of perceived gender-norm violation among White participants, b = -.78, SE = .09, t(579) = -8.40, p < .001, η_p^2 = .07, 95% CI:[-.96,

-.60], but this was attenuated among racial minority participants, b = -.26, SE = .15, $t(579)$ = -1.73, p = .08, η_p^2 = .003, 95% CI:[-.56, .04].

Mediation of believability of testimony through liking. We examined whether liking mediated the effect of perceived gender-norm violation and participant race (White = -1, racial minority = 1) on believability of testimony, controlling for participant gender and political ideology. Using model 8 from Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro (5,000 bootstrap resamples), we observed a significant indirect effect on believability through liking (Index of moderated mediation = .41, 95% CI:[.17, .62]). Consistent with our theorizing, this indirect effect was significantly stronger among White participants (Indirect effect = -.46; 95% CI:[-.61, -.30]) than racial minority participants (Indirect effect = -.05; 95% CI:[-.25, .12]).

Discussion

The results from Study 1 provide initial support for our hypothesis: the perception that Dr. Ford (a White woman) violated gender norms was associated with more negative evaluations and ultimately lower believability of testimony among White than racial minority participants. Interestingly, it was not the case that White individuals perceived a greater gender-expectancy violation and therefore punished Dr. Ford more. If anything, racial minority participants perceived her as *more* gender-norm violating. However, this perceived gender-norm violation mattered far more for White individuals' evaluations of Dr. Ford (a racial in-group member) than racial minority individuals. This finding suggests that participants' gendered concerns are more predictive of racial in-group members' reactions to gendered behavior, providing initial evidence that backlash is most pronounced when perceivers and targets share a racial group membership.

Study 2

In Study 2, we extend our findings from Study 1 by examining backlash in a parallel case study: evaluations of Anita Hill. In October of 1991, Anita Hill (a Black woman) came forward to accuse then Supreme Court Justice Nominee Clarence Thomas (a Black man) of sexual harassment. Although the dataset we use does not include a measure of perceived gender-norm violation, accusations of sexual assault are perceived as agentic and gender-norm violating, particularly so among more gender-biased perceivers (Abrams et al., 2003; Marin & Guadagno, 1999; Yamawaki, 2007). We therefore examined if perceivers from Hill's racial in-group (i.e. Black participants) evaluated her more negatively as a function of their gender bias, compared to racial out-group perceivers (i.e. non-Black participants).

Method

Participants and procedure. Data are drawn from a large, nationally representative sample of 2,485 American voters collected in the nine weeks before and after the 1992 Presidential Election, which took place on November 3 (American National Election Studies [ANES], 1993). After excluding participants who failed to give responses to variables of interest, we were left with a sample of 729 participants. The mean age was 43.58 years old (SD = 16.03). The final sample was 87.93% White, 9.47% Black/African American, 1.92% Asian/Asian American, and .69% Native American. We recoded participant race to collapse across non-Black participants, resulting in two categories for analysis: Black (N = 69; 25 men, 44 women) and non-Black (N = 660; 320 men, 340 women).

Measures.

Feeling thermometer ratings of Anita Hill. Participants reported how warmly or coldly they felt towards Hill using one item (0 = *Not favorable/cold;* 100 = *Favorable/warm*).

Gender bias. Participants reported their gender beliefs using one item (i.e. *"Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government. Others feel that women's place is in the home. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?"*) on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Women and men should have an equal role*; 5 = *Women's place is in the home*).

Political ideology. Participants reported their political ideology using one item (i.e. *"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?"*) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strong Democrat*; 7 = *Strong Republican*). Given the political nature of this context, we control for political ideology.

Racism. Participants reported their degree of anti-Black racism using four items (i.e. *"Over the past few years blacks have gotten less than they deserve"*; $\alpha = .53$) on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Agree strongly*; 5 = *Disagree strongly*). Items were recoded such that higher scores indicated a greater degree of racism. Given that Hill's race likely affected evaluations of her, independent of gender bias, we control for racism.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among measured variables are presented in Table 2. See SOM for full regression tables with and without control variables.

Analysis strategy. We utilized the 'survey' package in R to analyze our data to correct for heteroscedasticity using robust standard errors, allowing us to make valid inferences about the population (Lumley, 2017).

Preliminary analyses. It is possible that Black and non-Black individuals differ in their degree of gender bias. However, an independent-samples t-test revealed that Black and non-

Black participants' gender bias did not differ, $t(727) = -.76$, $p = .45$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, 95% CI:[-.29, .13].

Evaluations of Hill. We regressed feeling thermometer ratings on gender bias, participant race, and their interaction, controlling for participant gender and political ideology as interactive terms, racism, and age. Consistent with prior work, we observed a significant main effect of gender bias, $b = -5.12$, $SE = 1.64$, $t(711) = -3.13$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, 95% CI:[-8.33, -1.90]. As predicted, we observed a significant two-way interaction between gender bias and participant race, $b = 3.35$, $SE = 1.63$, $t(711) = 2.06$, $p = .04$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, 95% CI:[.16, 6.54], as shown in Figure 3. We observed a significant simple effect of gender bias among Black participants, $b = -8.47$, $SE = 3.18$, $t(711) = -2.66$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$, 95% CI:[-14.72, -2.22], but it was attenuated among non-Black participants, $b = -1.77$, $SE = .73$, $t(711) = -2.43$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, 95% CI:[-3.20, -.34].

Discussion

Conceptually replicating Study 1, participants from the target's racial in-group (here, Black participants) expressed more backlash than participants from other racial groups. Gender bias was highly predictive of evaluations of Hill among Black participants, but far less so among non-Black participants. Although Black individuals were no more sexist than non-Black individuals, Black participants' gendered concerns mattered more for their evaluations of a gender-norm violating Black woman that of non-Black participants. These results build on Study 1 by demonstrating that the stricter enforcement of gender norms among racial in-group members is not limited to White individuals. This study represents perhaps the first empirical study on backlash to explicitly focus on Black perceivers. The results suggest that Black women

do indeed receive backlash, but that these negative evaluations may come primarily from racial in-group members.

Study 3

In this study, we extend the generalizability of our findings by moving beyond the particulars of Supreme Court confirmation hearing context. We use archival data from the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election to further test our hypothesis that individuals primarily express backlash towards racial in-group women. Previous research has demonstrated that women who run for political office—such as Hillary Clinton, the 2016 Democratic Nominee—are seen as agentic and trigger backlash, particularly so among more gender biased individuals (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010; Ratliff et al., 2019). We seek to replicate and extend this work by contrasting how White and racial minority individuals evaluated Clinton (a White woman). As in Study 2, we hypothesize that gender bias will be more predictive of evaluations of this agentic woman among racial in-group members (i.e. White individuals) than among racial out-group members (i.e. racial minority individuals).

Method

Participants and procedure. Data are drawn from a large, nationally representative sample of 3,649 American voters collected in the nine weeks before and after the 2016 Presidential Election, which took place on November 8 (ANES, 2017). After excluding participants who failed to give responses to variables of interest, we were left with a sample of 1,967 participants. The mean age was 52.09 years old (*SD* = 16.93). The final sample was 79.30% White, 7.37% Black/African American, 7.12% Hispanic/Latinx, 2.34% Asian/Asian American, .25% Native American, and 3.61% Other/multiracial. We recoded participant race to

collapse across racial minority participants, resulting in two categories for analysis: White (N = 1,560; 759 men, 801 women) and racial minority (N = 407; 190 men, 217 women).[4]

Measures.

Liking. Participants reported how much they liked or disliked Clinton using one item (0 = *Strongly dislike*; 10 = *Strongly like*).

Voting behavior. Participants indicated who they voted for in the 2016 Presidential Election (1 = *Hillary Clinton*; 2 = *Donald Trump*). We recoded this variable such that the larger value corresponded to a vote for Clinton (1 = *Hillary Clinton*; 0 = *Donald Trump*).

Gender bias. Participants reported their gender beliefs using two items (i.e. *"When women demand equality these days, how often are they actually seeking special favors?"* and *"When women complain about discrimination, how often do they cause more problems than they solve?"*) on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Always*; 5 = *Never*). Items were reverse-scored such that higher scores indicated more gender bias. These items were positively correlated (r = .63) and collapsed into a single measure for analysis.

Political ideology. Participants reported their political ideology using one item (i.e. *"Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?"*) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Extremely liberal*; 7 = *Extremely conservative*). Given the political nature of this context, we control for political ideology.

State of residence. Information on participants' state of residence—the state in which they were registered to vote—was collected. Given the widely varying voting patterns across states, we control for state of residence.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among measured variables are presented in Table 3. See SOM for full regression tables with and without control variables and an additional robustness check.

Analysis strategy. We again utilized the 'survey' package in R to account for the complex survey designed used by the ANES, allowing us to make valid inferences about the population (Lumley, 2017).

Preliminary analyses. It is possible that White and racial minority individuals differ in their degree of gender bias. However, an independent-samples t-test revealed that White and racial minority individuals' gender bias did not differ, $t(1834) = .55$, $p = .59$, $\eta_p^2 = .0002$, 95% CI:[-.05, .10].

Liking. We regressed liking on gender bias, participant race, and their interaction, controlling for participants' gender and political ideology as interactive terms, state of residence, and age. We observed significant main effects of participant race, $b = 1.07$, $SE = .11$, $t(1769) = 9.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, 95% CI:[.84, 1.29], and consistent with prior work, gender bias, , $b = -.35$, $SE = .12$, $t(1769) = -2.91$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[-.58, -.11]. As predicted, we observed a significant two-way interaction between gender bias and participant race, $b = .36$, $SE = .12$, $t(1769) = 3.03$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[.13, .60], as shown in Figure 4. Among White participants, we observed a significant simple effect of gender bias on liking , $b = -.71$, $SE = .10$, $t(1769) = -6.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, 95% CI:[-.91, -.51], but not among racial minority participants, $b = .02$, $SE = .22$, $t(1769) = .08$, $p = .94$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$, 95% CI:[-1.64, .42].

Voting behavior. We used a binary logistic regression to predict voting behavior with gender bias, participant race, and their interaction, controlling for participants' gender and political ideology as interactive terms, state of residence, and age. We observed significant main

effects of participant race, $b = 1.18$, $SE = .13$, $t(1769) = 8.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, 95% CI:[.92, 1.45], and gender bias, $b = -.71$, $SE = .13$, $t(1769) = -5.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, 95% CI:[-.96, -.46]. We also observed a significant two-way interaction between gender bias and participant race, $b = .52$, $SE = .13$, $t(1769) = 4.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[.28, .77], as shown in Figure 5. Among White participants, we observed a significant simple effect of gender bias on likelihood of voting for Clinton, $b = -1.24$, $SE = .16$, $t(1769) = -7.61$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, 95% CI:[-1.55, -.92], but not among racial minority participants, $b = -.19$, $SE = .19$, $t(1769) = -.97$, $p = .33$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, 95% CI:[-.57, .19].

Mediation of voting behavior through liking. We examined whether liking mediated the effect of gender bias and participant race (White = -1, racial minority = 1) on voting behavior, controlling for participants' gender, political ideology, state of residence, and age. Using model 8 from Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro (5,000 bootstrap resamples), we observed a significant indirect effect on voting behavior via liking ratings (Index of moderated mediation = .64; 95% CI:[.34, .98]). Consistent with our theorizing, this indirect effect was significantly stronger among White participants (Indirect effect = -.56; 95% CI:[-.73, -.43]) than racial minority participants (Indirect effect = -.08; 95% CI:[-.19, .38]).

Discussion

The results from Study 3 further support our hypothesis. We observed that White participants' gender bias was highly predictive of how much they liked Clinton, but this relationship was significantly attenuated among racial minority participants. Conceptually replicating Studies 1 and 2, participants' gendered concerns mattered more for how they evaluated a racial in-group member than a racial out-group member. Furthermore, we found that these evaluations were predictive of an important consequence: voting behavior. In our sample,

after controls, the marginal effect of a one standard deviation increase from the mean in gender bias on likelihood of voting for Clinton was an approximately 20.15% lower likelihood among White voters, but only approximately a .61% lower likelihood among racial minority voters.

In this study, although we demonstrated the robustness of our effect over and above a number of control variables, including political ideology, it is possible that some unobserved heterogeneity between White and racial minority voters weakened the association between gender bias and outcomes among racial minority voters. Further, Studies 1-3 are limited by their correlational nature. We account for these concerns in Studies 4 and 5 by using true experimental designs.

Study 4

In Study 4, instead of relying on *perceived* gender-norm violations, we *manipulate* it. Furthermore, we move into the organizational context to demonstrate the generalizability of our findings to more mundane contexts. In this study, instead of varying the *perceiver's* racial group and holding target racial group constant, we vary the *target's* racial group while holding perceiver racial group constant. From our perspective, what should matter is the *match* between perceiver and target racial group membership.

Manipulating targets' races allows us to more directly contrast our prediction with that made by work on racialized gender stereotypes. The stereotyping literature suggests that because of the particular gender expectancies associated with Black and Asian women, Black women should incur the least backlash for behaving agentically, while Asian women should incur the most. In contrast, we predict that White participants will express more backlash towards racial in-group women (i.e. White targets) as a function of gender bias than racial out-group women (i.e. Black and Asian targets).

Method

Participants. 503 White male participants were recruited from MTurk and compensated $1.00 for their participation in a 10-minute survey. Four participants did not complete all measures and were excluded from analyses (final $N = 499$). The mean age was 37.31 years old ($SD = 12.02$).

Procedure. We employed a 3 (target race: White vs. Black vs. Asian) x 2 (target behavior: agentic vs. communal) between-subjects design. Participants were recruited to take part in a study investigating how individuals form perceptions of and attitudes towards others. Participants read a passage that described a female leader who reprimanded a subordinate, whose race and gender were left unspecified. They reported how much they liked the target, assessed her leadership skills, completed individual difference measures, and reported demographic characteristics.

Manipulation and measures.

Target race. Participants read a passage describing a woman with either a stereotypically White name (Molly Johnson), Black name (Aisha Johnson), or Asian name (Emily Wong).

Target behavior. We described the woman's interaction with her subordinate either in a more stereotypically masculine and dominant way (*"I am a tough, determined boss"*), or a more stereotypically feminine and communal way (*"I am a caring, committed boss"*; adapted from Livingston et al., 2012).

Liking. Participants reported how much they liked the target using three items (e.g. "*She is likeable"*; $\alpha = .85$) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *Very much*).

Leader evaluations. Participants reported leadership evaluations of the target using eight items (e.g. "*She handled the situation with the employee well"*; adapted from Livingston et al., 2012; α = .94) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *Very much*).

Gender bias. Participants reported their gender beliefs using five items (e.g. *"Men and women simply have different roles in society"*; α = .92) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all*; 7 = *Very much*).

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). Participants completed the 8-item $SDO_{7(s)}$ scale (e.g. *"An ideal society requires some groups to be on top and others to be on the bottom"*; Ho et al., 2015; α = .93) using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Not at all*; 4 = *Somewhat*; 7 = *Very much*). Because gender bias is often highly correlated with the general preference for hierarchy, we control for SDO to isolate the variance that gender bias explains, above and beyond broader hierarchy concerns.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among measured variables are presented in Table 4. See SOM for full regression tables with and without control variables.

Analysis strategy. We dummy coded target race such that Asian targets were the reference group. In line with our a priori hypothesis, this coding scheme allows us to contrast evaluations of (a) White (i.e. racial in-group) and Asian (i.e. racial out-group) targets and (b) Black and Asian (i.e. both racial out-group) targets.

Preliminary analyses. We regressed gender bias and SDO on target behavior, target race, and their interaction to ensure that our manipulations did not affect participants' responses to these measures. We observed no main or interactive effects of our manipulations on gender

bias (p's > .40) or SDO (p's > .12) and thus treat these as an individual difference variables in all subsequent analyses.

Liking. We regressed liking on target behavior, target race, gender bias, and their interactions, controlling for SDO. Consistent with prior work, we observed a significant main effect of target behavior, b = .25, SE = .09, t(486) = 2.68, p = .008, η_p^2 = .01, 95% CI:[.07, .43]. As predicted, when comparing Asian against White targets, we observed a significant three-way interaction among target behavior, target race, and gender bias, b = .20, SE = .09, t(486) = 2.31, p = .02, η_p^2 = .01, 95% CI:[.03, .37], as shown in Figure 6.

We observed a significant simple two-way interaction between target behavior and gender bias among White targets, b = .12, SE = .06, t(486) = 1.95, p = .05, η_p^2 =.01, 95% CI:[.00, .24], but not Asian targets, b = -.08, SE = .06, t(486) = -1.31, p = .19, η_p^2 = .003, 95% CI:[-.20, .04]. Among White targets, communal targets were liked significantly more than agentic targets, b = .58, SE = .20, t(486) = 2.96, p = .003, η_p^2 = .02, 95% CI:[.19, .96]. We observed a negative, though not significant, simple effect of gender bias for agentic White targets, b = -.12, SE = .09, t(486) = -1.31, p = .19, η_p^2 = .003, 95% CI:[-.30, .06], and a positive, though not significant, simple effect for communal White targets, b = .12, SE = .09, t(486) = 1.33, p = .18, η_p^2 = .003, 95% CI:[-.06, .30].

When comparing Asian against Black targets, the interaction between target behavior, gender bias, and target race was not significant, b = .12, SE = .08, t(486) = 1.56, p = .12, η_p^2 = .01, 95% CI:[-.03, .29], nor was the two-way interaction between gender bias and target behavior among Black targets, b = .05, SE = .06, t(486) = .88, p = .38, η_p^2 = .002, 95% CI:[-.06, .16].

Leader evaluations. We regressed leader evaluations on target behavior, target race, gender bias, and their interactions, controlling for SDO. When comparing Asian against White targets, we observed a significant three-way interaction among target behavior, target race, and gender bias, $b = .20$, $SE = .08$, $t(486) = 2.59$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$, 95% CI:[.05, .35].

We observed a significant simple two-way interaction between target behavior and gender bias among White targets, $b = .17$, $SE = .05$, $t(486) = 3.09$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, 95% CI:[.06, .28], but not Asian targets, $b = -.03$, $SE = .05$, $t(486) = -.53$, $p = .60$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$, 95% CI:[-.13, .08]. We observed a significant simple effect of gender bias among agentic White targets, $b = -.24$, $SE = .08$, $t(486) = -2.96$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, 95% CI:[-.40, -.08], but not communal White targets, $b = .10$, $SE = .08$, $t(486) = 1.23$, $p = .22$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, 95% CI:[-.06, .26].

When comparing Asian against Black targets, the interaction between target behavior, gender bias, target race was not significant, $b = .06$, $SE = .07$, $t(486) = .82$, $p = .41$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[-.08, .20], nor was the two-way interaction between gender bias and target behavior for Black targets, $b = .03$, $SE = .05$, $t(486) = .63$, $p = .53$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, 95% CI:[-.07, .13].

Mediation of leader evaluations through liking. We examined whether liking mediated the effect of target behavior (agentic = -1, communal = 1), gender bias, target race (dummy coded as described above) on leader evaluations, controlling for SDO. Using model 12 from Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro (5,000 bootstrap resamples), we observed a significant indirect effect on leader evaluations via liking when comparing White against Asian targets (Index of moderated mediation = .12; 95% CI:[.01, .24]), but not when comparing Black against Asian targets, (Index of moderated mediation = .08; 95% CI:[-.03, .19]).

Discussion

The results of Study 4 conceptually replicate our findings from Studies 1-3 and provide causal evidence that shared racial group membership predicts backlash. Gender bias predicted backlash primarily towards agentic racial in-group targets (i.e. White women). Agentic White female targets were evaluated more negatively than communal White female targets as a function of participants' gender beliefs, but this was not the case for racial out-group targets. Importantly, we found that these White participants tended to evaluate Black and Asian female targets comparably. Previous theorizing suggests that because, relative to White women, Black women and Asian women are stereotyped as more agentic and communal, respectively, the backlash they evoke for agentic behavior should vary widely. However, in our study, Asian targets faced no more backlash than Black targets. This suggests that shared racial group membership between perceivers and targets is key in determining backlash.

Study 5

In this study, instead of only observing variations in participant race as in Studies 1-3 or only varying target race as in Study 4, we manipulate both. This design allows us to conceptually replicate the findings from the previous four studies. We predict that gender bias will be most predictive of backlash when perceivers and targets share a racial group.

Methods

Participants. We conducted a two-wave study. At Time 1, we recruited 628 White and Asian-American participants via Lucid; of these, 411 returned in Time 2. Two participants took the survey multiple times, and only their first responses were included (final $N = 409$; 205 White participants: 64 men, 141 women; 204 Asian participants: 56 men, 148 women). Participants were compensated with $1.00 for the completion each survey. The mean age was 39.23 years old ($SD = 15.14$).

Procedure. We employed a 2 (target race: White vs. Asian) x 2 (participant race: White vs. Asian) between-subjects design, conducted at two time points to ensure that our manipulation did not contaminate responses to individual difference measures.

Time 1. Participants were recruited to take part in an online study investigating how individuals form perceptions of and attitudes towards others. Participants responded to individual difference measures and demographic questions.

Time 2. One week later, participants were contacted to take part in the Time 2 survey. Participants read a passage describing a woman running for city council in her hometown. Her career ambitions were framed in an agentic way; she described her aspirations as a "top priority in her life" and stated "For me, my career has always come first".[5] Participants reported how much they liked her and assessed her leadership skills.

Manipulations and measures.

Target race. Participants read a passage describing a woman with either a stereotypically White name (Molly Davis) or Asian name (Emily Wong).

Liking. Liking was assessed with the same scale used in Study 4 ($\alpha = .60$).

Leader evaluations. Participants reported leadership evaluations of the target using a five-item version of the scale used in Study 4 ($\alpha = .89$).

Gender bias. Participants reported their gender beliefs using two items adapted from the ANES survey (2017) used in Study 3 (*"Women who demand equality seek special favors"* and *"Women complaining about discrimination cause more problems"*) on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 7 = *Strongly agree*). Items were positively correlated ($r = .71$) and were collapsed into a single measure for analysis.

SDO. SDO was assessed with the same scale used in Study 4 (α = .81). We again control for SDO.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among measured variables are presented in Table 5. See SOM for full regression tables with and without control variables.

Liking. We regressed liking on gender bias, target race, participant race, and their interactions, controlling for participants' gender as an interactive term and SDO. As predicted, we observed a significant three-way interaction between target race, participant race, and gender bias, $b = .07$, $SE = .03$, $t(392) = 2.22$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[.01, .14], as shown in Figure 7.

We observed a directionally consistent though not significant simple two-way interaction between target race and gender bias among White participants, $b = -.06$, $SE = .04$, $t(392) = -1.46$, $p = .15$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$, 95% CI:[-.15, .02], but among Asian participants, this interaction was trending, $b = .08$, $SE = .05$, $t(392) = 1.68$, $p = .09$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[-.01, .18]. We observed a trending simple effect of gender bias on liking when Asians evaluated Asian targets, $b = -.13$, $SE = .08$, $t(392) = -1.71$, $p = .09$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, 95% CI:[-.28, .02], but not when Asians evaluated White targets, $b = .04$, $SE = .07$, $t(392) = .53$, $p = .60$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, 95% CI:[-.10, .17].

Leader evaluations. We regressed leader evaluations on gender bias, target race, participant race, and their interactions, controlling for participants' gender as an interactive term and SDO. We did not observe the predicted the three-way interaction, $b = .05$, $SE = .03$, $t(392) = 1.30$, $p = .20$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$, 95% CI:[-.02, .11].

Mediation of leader evaluations through liking. Although no significant effect of target race, participant race, and gender bias on leader evaluations emerged, indirect effects may be tested in the presence of non-significant paths (Hayes, 2009; Rucker et al., 2011). We therefore

examined if the effect of target race (White = 0, Asian = 1), participant race (White = -1, Asian = 1), and gender bias affected leader evaluations through liking, as in the previous studies, controlling for participants' gender and SDO. Using model 12 from Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro (5,000 bootstrap resamples), we observed a significant indirect effect on leader evaluations via liking (Index of moderated mediation = -.10; 95% CI:[-.18, -.02]).

Discussion

The results from Study 5 are consistent with our findings from previous studies that individuals primarily express backlash towards agentic racial in-group women as a function of gender bias, and this study again extends this effect beyond White perceivers. Importantly, like White and Black participants in previous studies, Asian participants' gender beliefs were more predictive of evaluations of racial in-group targets' than racial out-group targets' gendered behavior. This study provides causal evidence that shared racial group membership predicts backlash among racial minority group members.

General Discussion

In this paper, across a range of contexts—courtroom testimony, politics, and organizational leadership—we find that individuals primarily express backlash towards racial in-group members. In Studies 1-3, we found that *perceived* gender-norm violations trigger more backlash from racial in-group than racial out-group perceivers, across both White and Black participants. In Studies 4 and 5, we found causal support for these claims by *manipulating* gender-norm violations and shared racial group membership, finding that this effect extends to Asian participants. Across these studies, we find that individuals enforce gender norms primarily within the context of their racial in-groups.

Theoretical Implications

Our findings suggest that the way race and gender are understood in intersectional theory might need to be expanded. Both stereotyping work and IIH astutely highlight that target characteristics influence the expression of backlash. However, both have relied on predominantly White samples and tacitly assume a degree of invariance across perceivers of different races. In contrast, we explicitly recruit racial minority participants and show that *shared* racial group membership between targets *and* perceivers is key in determining backlash. We believe that our findings offer an important extension to current theorizing in this space.

Scholars may need to reevaluate theoretical conceptions of race and gender at a fundamental level. Drawing from a long tradition of work on the interactive nature of gender and backlash, we suggest that intersectional theory could benefit from explicit consideration of the perceiver. The present work demonstrates that the relationship between the racial group memberships of perceivers and targets is important; scholars ought to take seriously the notion that gender is constructed within meaningful social communities (e.g. West & Zimmerman, 1987). Gender, with all of its expectations but also its benefits, may primarily be conferred to racial in-group members. Racial out-group members might face less backlash because gender norms and expectations are not extended to them. However, they might not reap any benefits from meeting gender expectations either. Although we did not examine potential benefits for gender-norm conformity, we believe that this is a fruitful avenue of future research.

In the present paper, we focused on the intersection between race and gender, but we believe that our theorizing can extend to explain gender-norm enforcement across other meaningful intergroup boundaries. We focus on race because the racial hierarchy is tremendously influential in American society (Allport, 1954; Schuman et al., 1997; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). However, race is but one of many potentially meaningful social groups within

which gender can be policed. In contexts in which other meaningful social communities are salient or in national contexts wherein race is not the dominant form of intergroup hierarchy, these dynamics may play out as well. In these contexts, the dominant (non-gender) dimension of intergroup hierarchy will be the community within which gender is policed. Future research ought to test the generalizability of this phenomenon beyond race.

Practical Implications

Work has already begun to unveil the complexities of how gender and race function in organizations (Livingston et al., 2012; Rosette et al., 2016; Tinkler et al., 2019). The current research outlines a new framework to explain and predict a broad range of outcomes. This work predicts harsher consequences for gender-norm violations when perceivers evaluate racial in-group than racial out-group women. As America becomes increasingly racially diverse (Burns et al., 2012), it is important to fully understand how gender bias operates within versus across racial lines. One might imagine that women of color could face less resistance for breaking gender norms as leaders than expected if we assumed racism simply compounds sexism; however, future work is needed to compare the magnitude of this effect relative to other barriers to racial minority women's advancement.

Finally, we believe that our findings complement previous work on stereotypes or prototypicality to offer a parsimonious explanation to seemingly conflicting findings in the literature. Some work suggests that individuals may indicate different preferences when engaging in leader *evaluation* versus leader *selection*. For example, while White women receive more backlash than Asian women for agentic behavior, Asian women are deemed less suitable for leadership by a predominantly White sample (Tinkler et al., 2019). This suggests that differing concerns may be at play in each stage of leader assessment. Individuals may focus on

*intra*group concerns such as gender-norm enforcement when evaluating targets but shift their focus to *inter*group concerns when deciding which leaders to support. As a result, White individuals may report liking agentic White women less than agentic racial minority women, but still prefer White women as leaders over racial minority women when forced to choose. Future research ought to focus on disentangling these two sets of concerns.

Conclusion

In this paper, we provide, to our knowledge, the first empirical test of the inherently relational nature of backlash as it relates to race. By explicitly considering the roles of perceivers *and* targets we expand our understanding of how gender operates within racialized contexts. From our perspective, the tendency to punish gender-norm violations more strongly within than across racial groups reflects the way individuals understand gender as a social construct. We suggest that gender is understood in the context of a meaningful social community, and in the U.S., one such community is race. We posit that individuals primarily confer gender as a social identity, with its associated norms and expectations, to racial in-group members. The ascription of gender comes laden with behavioral responsibilities that individuals are expected to fulfill, which may ironically lead to stricter policing of racial in-group members' gendered behavior than racial out-group members' behavior.

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Footnotes

[1] Multiracial participants were categorized as non-White. This hypodescent categorization strategy is consistent with cognitive racial classification schemas (e.g. Ho, Sidanius, Levin, & Banaji, 2011).

[2] We included a manipulation of Dr. Ford's testimony. In one condition, we edited her testimony to omit all mention of her family; in the other, we preserved her original testimony in which she mentioned her family. We expected that mentioning family would increase perceptions of communality and reduce backlash, but we did not find significant differences between the two conditions on perceived gender norm violations (p's > .52), liking (p's > .60), or believability of testimony (p's > .68). Results were comparable with and without controlling for political ideology. All analyses presented in this manuscript collapse across these two conditions.

[3] We used "heightened proscriptions" because these traits are least desirable in women and therefore the clearest representation of gender-norm violations (Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

[4] Multiracial participants were again categorized as non-White. See Footnote 1 above.

[5] Scenario was pre-tested to ensure that the target was perceived as gender-norm violating (N = 219). Participants rated the target's masculinity and femininity (adapted from Bem, 1974) on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The target was rated less feminine (M = 2.83, SD = .88), $t(218) = -10.34$, $p < .001$, and more masculine (M = 3.85, SD = .82), $t(218) = 15.36$, $p < .001$, than the midpoint, which we take to mean that she was perceived as gender-norm violating. See SOM for more details.

Table 1.

Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) by participant race, and correlations among measured variables in Study 1.

Measure	1	2	3	4	White	Racial minority
1. Perceived gender-norm violation		-.42***	-.45***	.42***	1.77 (.85)[a]	1.97 (.98)[b]
2. Liking			.75***	-.52***	5.16 (1.67)[a]	5.44 (1.36)[b]
3. Believability of testimony				-.62***	5.18 (2.16)[a]	5.60 (1.66)[b]
4. Political ideology					3.54 (1.81)	3.41 (1.62)

*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, $^{+}$ = $p < .10$

Note. Means with different subscripts differ at $p < .05$.

Table 2.

Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) by participant race, and correlations among measured variables in Study 2.

Measure	1	2	3	4	Black	Non-Black
1. Ratings of Hill		-.14***	-.25***	-.18***	49.35 (24.87)	49.48 (23.49)
2. Gender bias			.12**	.13***	2.10 (1.55)	2.04 (1.43)
3. Political ideology				.14***	2.23 (1.42)[a]	3.93 (2.00)[b]
4. Racism					2.78 (.51)[a]	3.24 (.65)[b]

*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, $^{+}$ = $p < .10$
Note. Means with different subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

Table 3.

Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) by participant race, and correlations among measured variables in Study 3.

Measure	1	2	3	White	Racial minority
1. Liking		-.40***	-.72***	3.85 (3.54)[a]	6.13 (3.28)[b]
2. Gender bias			.44***	2.09 (.89)	2.08 (.96)
3. Political ideology				4.23 (1.69)[a]	3.80 (1.43)[b]

*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, $^{+}$ = $p < .10$

Note. Means with different subscripts differ at $p < .001$.

Table 4.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among measured variables in Study 4.

Measure	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1. Liking		.74***	-.09*	-.08^{+}	4.79	1.24
2. Leader evaluations			-.16***	-.17***	5.15	1.09
3. Gender bias				.64***	2.96	1.57
4. SDO					2.68	1.45

*** = $p < 0.001$, ** = $p < 0.01$, * = $p < 0.05$, $^{+}$ = $p < 0.10$

Table 5.

Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) by participant race, and correlations among measured variables in Study 5.

	1	2	3	4	White	Asian
1. Liking		.73***	-.20***	-.34***	5.05 (1.15)	4.97 (.96)
2. Leader evaluations			-.16**	-.30***	5.07 (1.20)	5.07 (1.03)
3. Gender bias				.54***	3.30 (1.85)	3.31 (1.62)
4. SDO					3.00 (1.18)	3.09 (1.03)

*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$, $^{+}$ = $p < .10$

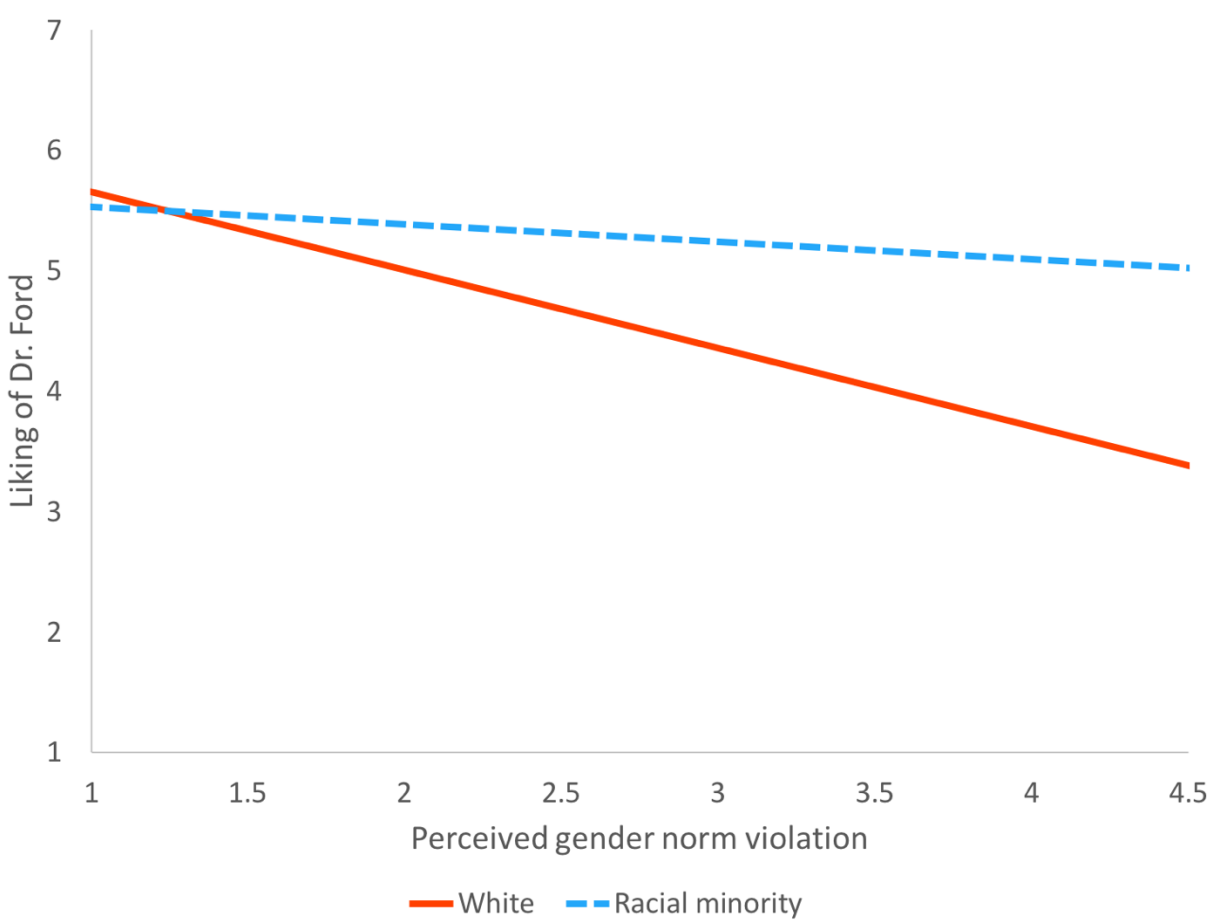

Figure 1. Liking as a function of perceived gender-norm violation and participant race in Study 1.

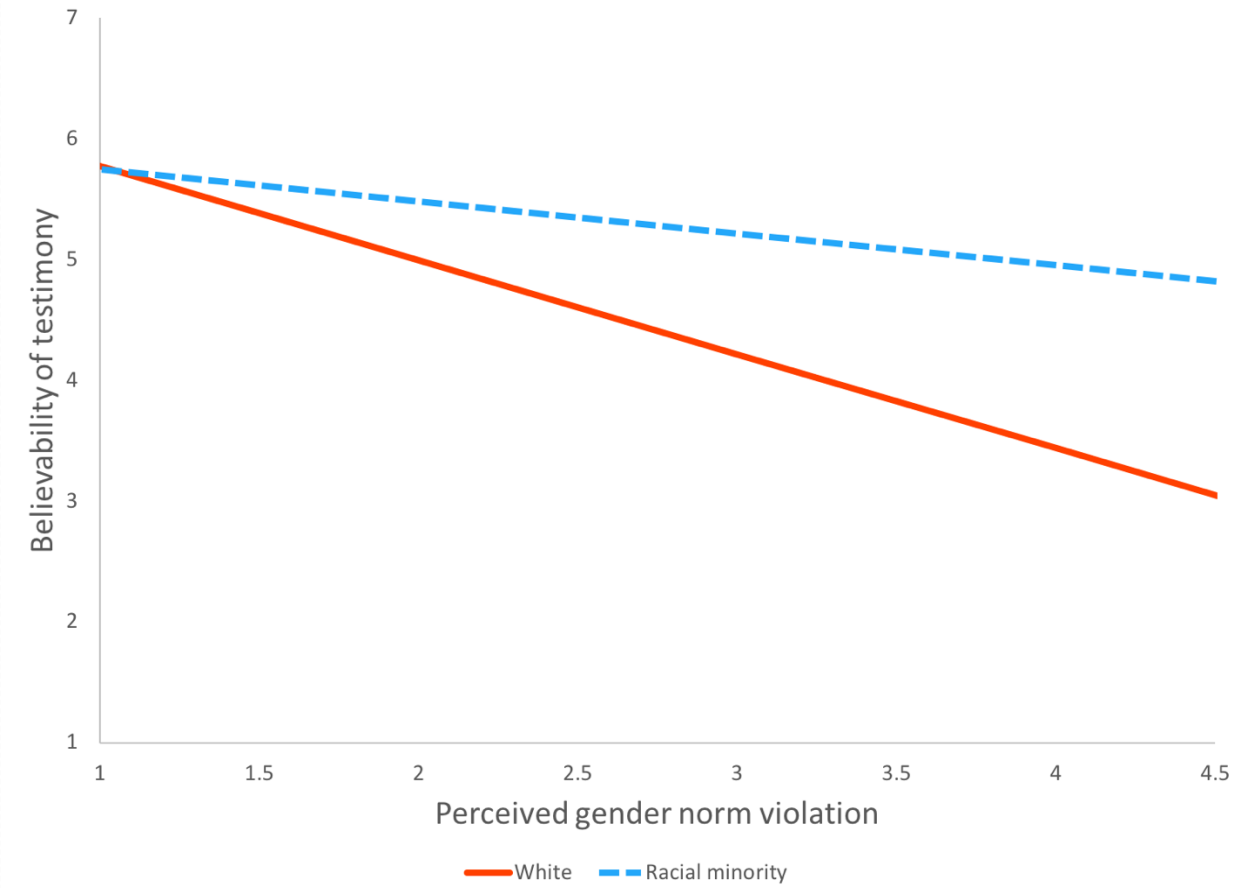

Figure 2. Believability of testimony as a function of perceived gender-norm violation and participant race in Study 1.

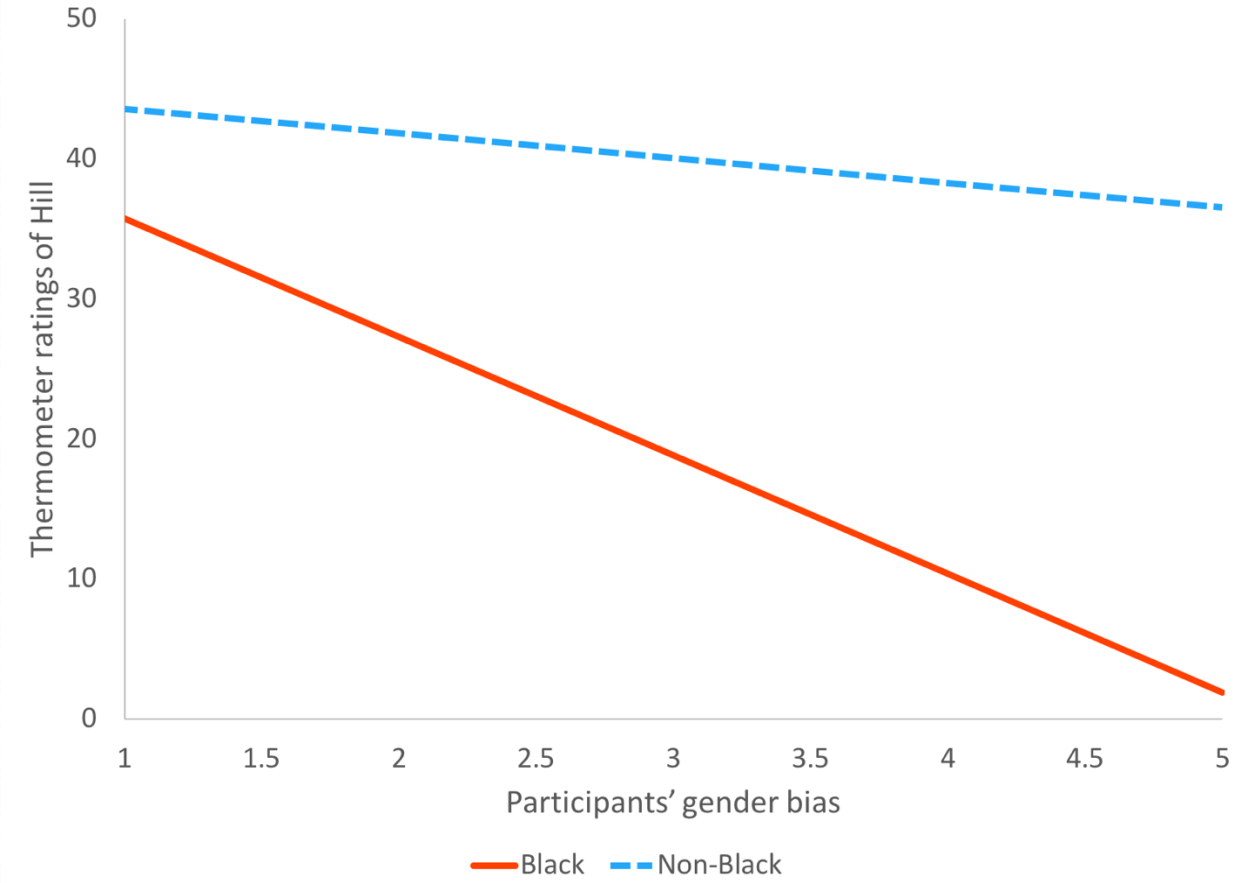

Figure 3. Thermometer ratings of Hill as a function of gender bias and participant race in Study 2.

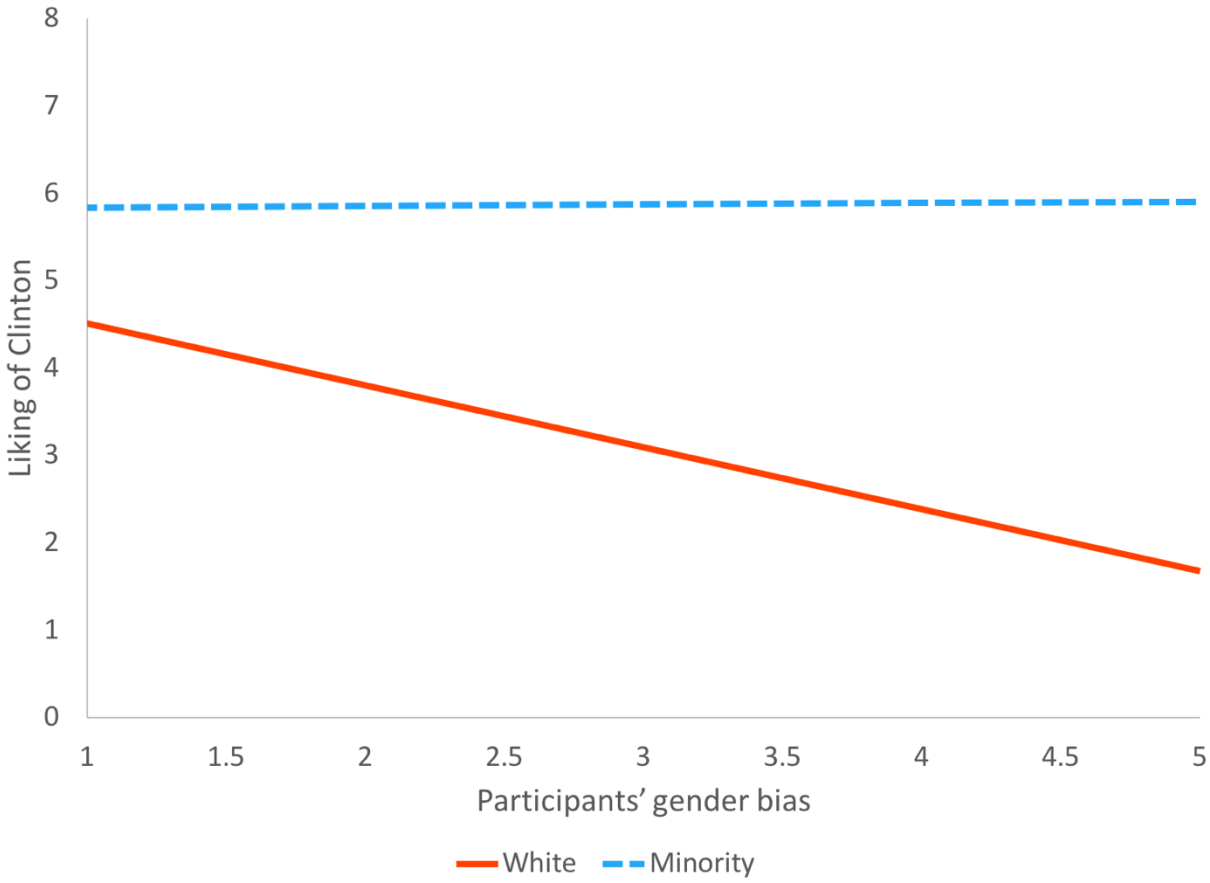

Figure 4. Liking as a function of gender bias and participant race in Study 3.

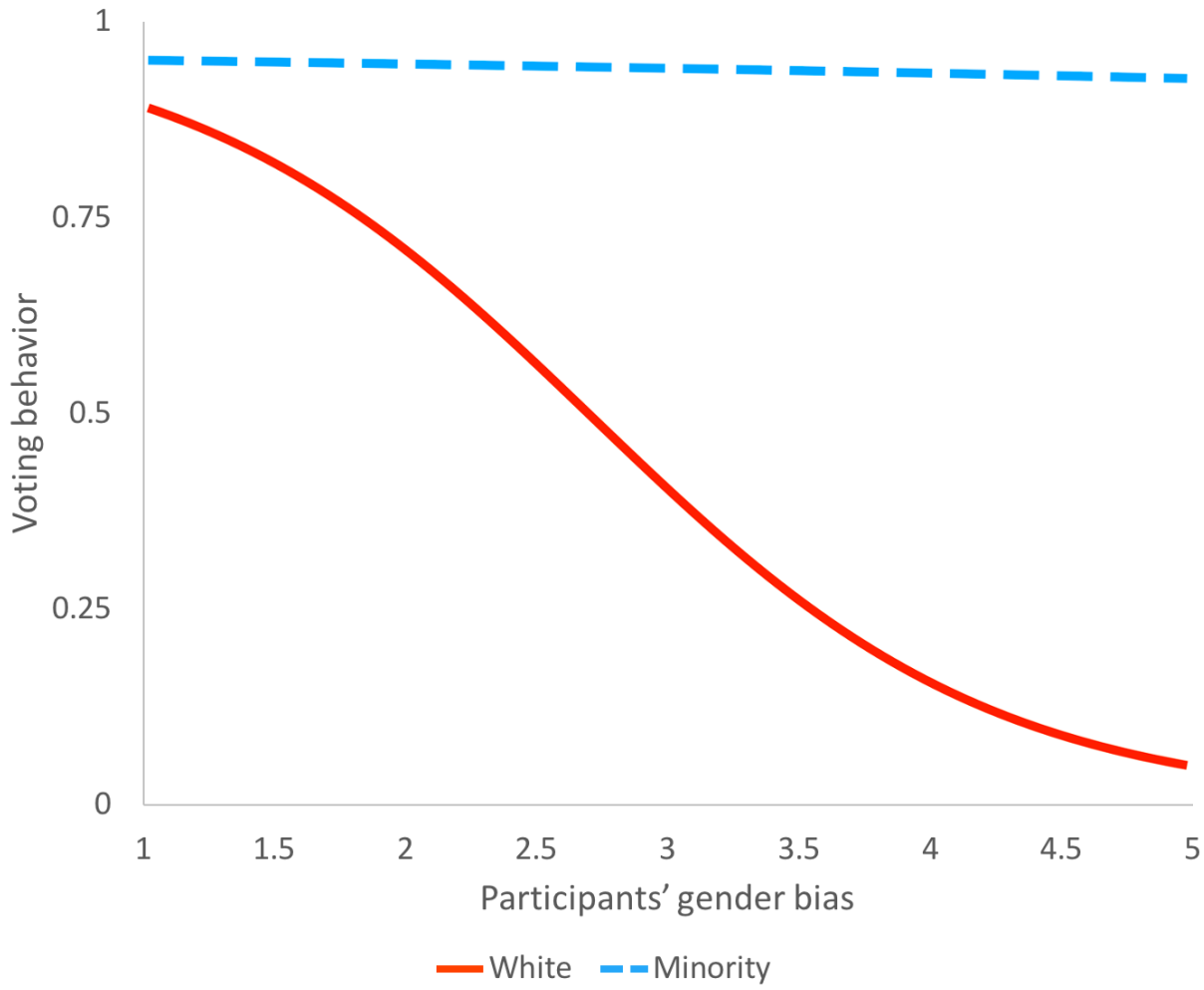

Figure 5. Voting behavior as a function of gender bias and participant race in Study 3 (0 = vote for Trump, 1 = vote for Clinton).

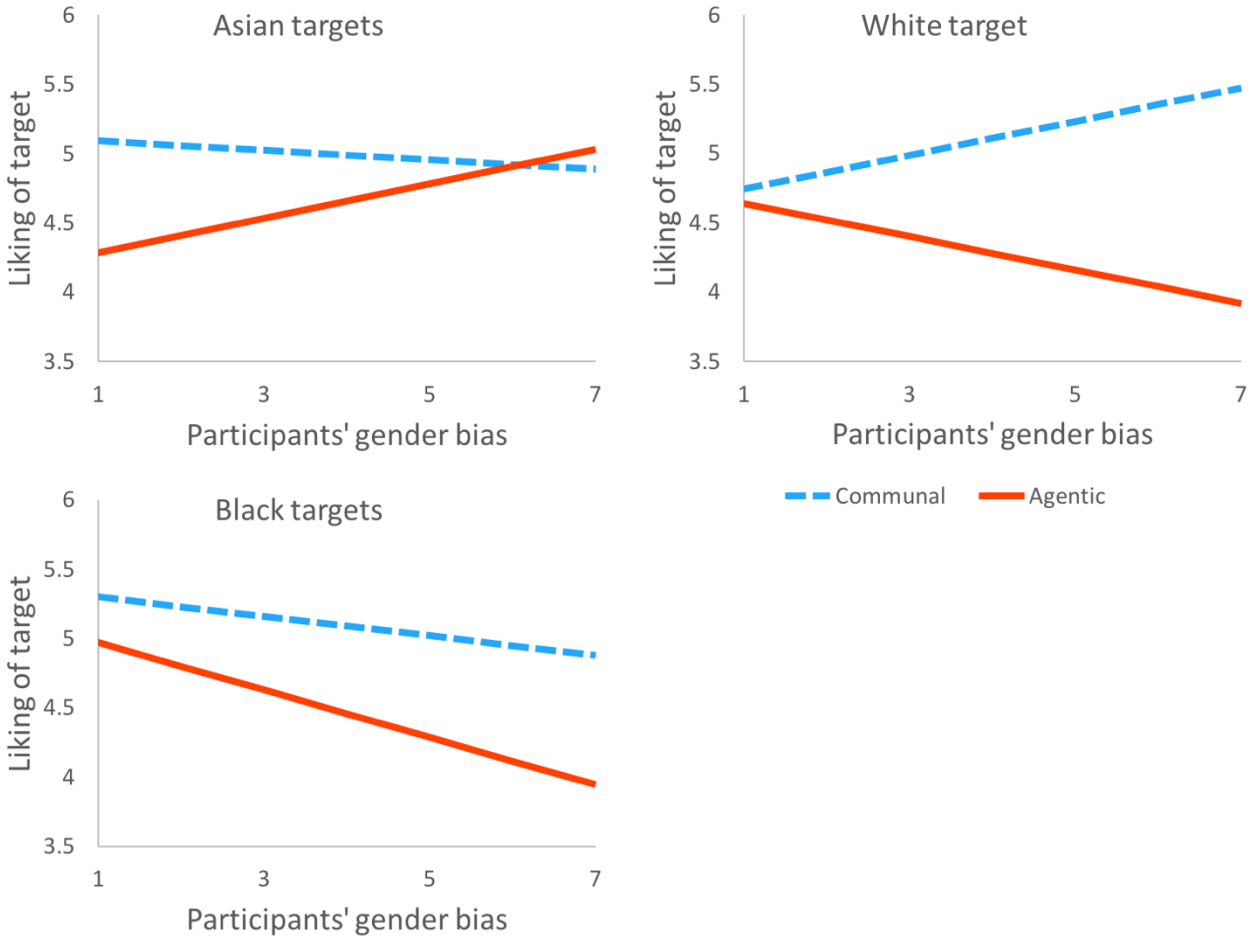

Figure 6. Liking as a function of target behavior, target race, and gender bias in Study 4.

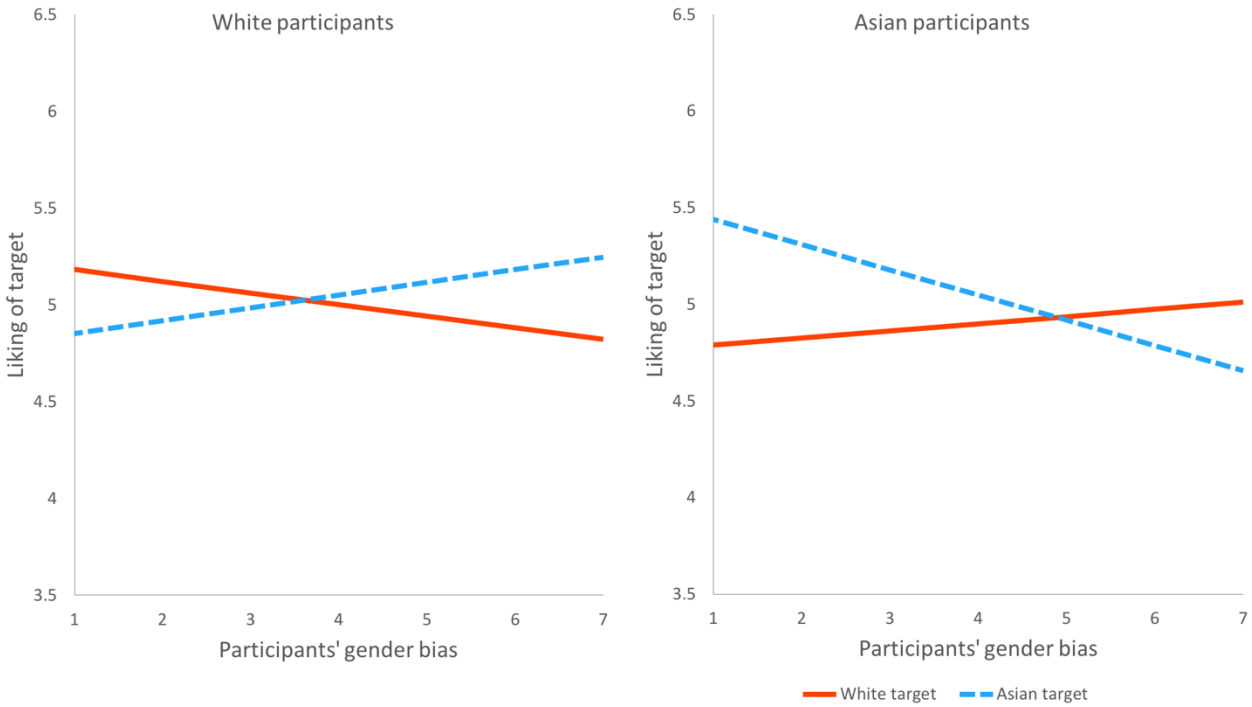

Figure 7. Liking as a function of target race, participant race, and gender bias in Study 5.