Western Kentucky University

TopSCHOLAR®

Masters Theses & Specialist Projects | Graduate School

Summer 2020

Organizational Dissent: The Implications of Race and Dissent Outcomes

Siera N. Bramschreiber
Western Kentucky University, siera.bramschreiber148@topper.wku.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses

Part of the Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons, Industrial and Organizational Psychology Commons, Organizational Communication Commons, and the Organization Development Commons

Recommended Citation

Bramschreiber, Siera N., "Organizational Dissent: The Implications of Race and Dissent Outcomes" (2020). *Masters Theses & Specialist Projects.* Paper 3212.
https://digitalcommons.wku.edu/theses/3212

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by TopSCHOLAR®. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters Theses & Specialist Projects by an authorized administrator of TopSCHOLAR®. For more information, please contact topscholar@wku.edu.

ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT:
THE IMPLICATIONS OF RACE AND DISSENT OUTCOMES

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Psychological Science
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

By
Siera N. Bramschreiber

August 2020

ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT:
THE IMPLICATIONS OF RACE AND DISSENT OUTCOMES

Date Recommended June 3, 2020

Katrina Burch Digitally signed by Katrina Burch Date: 2020.07.14 13:55:03 -05'00'

Katrina A. Burch, Director of Thesis

Elizabeth Shoenfelt Digitally signed by Elizabeth Shoenfelt Date: 2020.07.14 15:45:35 -05'00'

Elizabeth L. Shoenfelt

Reagan Brown Digitally signed by Reagan Brown Date: 2020.07.15 11:33:42 -05'00'

Reagan D. Brown

Ranjit T. Koodali Digitally signed by Ranjit T. Koodali Date: 2020.07.27 13:38:57 -05'00'

Associate Provost for Research & Graduate Education

I dedicate this thesis to my friend, mentor, and sister, Dr. Anisha Thomas. You inspire me to live up to my fullest potential. I will not take full credit for my success as an academic and as a researcher because we both know all that it took to get me here. Peace and love to you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis chair Dr. Katrina Burch for supporting me as I conceptualized this research project and supervising my thesis while giving me full autonomy to explore my interest in organizational dissent. I would also like to thank Dr. Betsy Shoenfelt for assisting with the creation of the scenarios for this study as well as her support and professional advice throughout my time in the I/O program. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Reagan Brown who assisted me with conceptualizing and walking through the data analysis.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Griffith-Ellis and Shanda Spencer, the coordinators of the Distinguished Minority Fellows program. This program provided not only provided financial support but also social support through mentorship and community with truly distinguished Black and Brown students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Organizational Dissent 2

Diversity 3

The Role of Leaders 5

Present Study 6

Method 7

Participants 8

Materials 9

Procedure 11

Results 12

Supplemental Analyses 13

Discussion 14

Outcomes and Willingness to Dissent 14

Race and Perceptions of the Dissenter 16

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research 20

Conclusions 21

References 22

Appendices 30

Articulated Dissent Subscale 30

Manipulation Check 31

Willingness to Dissent 32

Perceptions of the Dissenter Measure 33

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations 26

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Perceptions of the Dissenter by Race..... 13

Table 3. Interaction between Outcome and Race on Perceptions of the Dissenter..... 27

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Interaction between Race and Dissent Outcome on Perceptions of Intelligence 28

Figure 2. Interaction between Race and Dissent Outcome on Perceptions of Likeability 29

ORGANIZATIONAL DISSENT:
THE IMPLICATIONS OF RACE AND DISSENT OUTCOMES

Siera N. Bramschreiber August 2020 33 pages

Directed by: Katrina A. Burch, Elizabeth L. Shoenfelt, and Reagan D. Brown

Department of Psychological Science Western Kentucky University

Dissent, the public expression of a minority perspective, is valuable to organizations due to its connections with improving decision-making processes within teams. The current study sought to integrate what is known about diversity in thought and diversity in people and how this influences the dissent process. Specifically, I examined if positive perceptions of dissenters (i.e., worthy of respect or courageous) differ based on the race of the dissenter. Second, I examined if stories of successful articulated dissent influence subsequent willingness to dissent. In developing a scenario to manipulate dissent outcomes ranging from negative outcomes (i.e., hostility) to positive outcomes (i.e., acceptance and influence), I studied the impact of varied responses dissent of one's one willingness to engage in dissent. The outcome of the dissent scenario did not influence one's willingness to dissent. However, the race of the dissenter did influence perceptions of the dissenter. Specifically, the Black dissenter was viewed as more intelligent, deserving of respect, and likeable. This study has implications for how coworkers and leaders may respond differentially to a dissenter depending on their race.

Introduction

Instead of promoting unity in thought, organizations and teams benefit from the expression of opposing viewpoints, which in turn affects the success of achieving organizational goals. The value of dissent in organizations is demonstrated in terms of diversity in thought (Nemeth, Brown, & Rogers, 2001; Nemeth, Connell, Rogers, & Brown, 2001), innovation (Greitemeyer, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2009), and psychological safety (Detert & Burris, 2007). Ultimately, disagreement or the dissenting views should not be seen as a barrier or obstacle that undermines the decision-making process, but rather one that strengthens and improves it. Organizations should anticipate criticism and feedback from its members. The organization's openness to this is a true test of its value of accountability, responsibility, and progress (Shaninpoor & Matt, 2007). How organizations respond to instances of organizational dissent can either reinforce dissenting behaviors or discourage them. I will explore the implications for dissent within organizations, highlighting the relationship to dissent and favorable outcomes for both the individual and the organization. Also of interest are the perceptions of the dissenter, as it relates to individual differences (i.e., race) and outcome of dissent.

When teams are working towards a common goal, one that could be met by various strategies and through diverse paths, there is great potential for differing opinions. Dissent, a public protest or expression of a differing perspective, arises for various reasons, some of which are more neutral in terms of implications and others that are socially risky and could involve evaluations of perceived fairness, integrity, and harm (Koerner, 2014). A difference in viewpoint and competing ideas or thoughts are not inherently negative; the act of dissent does not imply that conflict will arise. However,

there can be negative implications for those who dissent, especially in those circumstances that involve perspectives surrounding moral issues (Amos & Klimoski, 2014). If employees fear the social consequences more so than the risk of an inefficient idea or process, they may not be willing to speak up regarding errors in processes or oversights that could end up costing the organization in terms resources or reduced productivity.

Organizational Dissent

Dissent occurs when an individual publically opposes beliefs, attitudes, positions, or ideas of the majority group (McLeod, Baron, Marti, & Yoon, 1997). By nature, this goes against one's natural inclination to conform (Shaninpoor & Matt, 2007). When one engages in this behavior, one accepts all social implications for challenging group thought or approach in an effort, often to improve the organization or group strategy in some way. There are numerous benefits for encouraging employees to express dissent; these benefits exist not only for the individual but also for the organization and work teams. Dissenters are often the champions of their organizations, as they are highly motivated, competent, and committed, which are attitudes necessary for the success and health of an organization (Rothschild & Miethe, 1994). Positive individual outcomes associated with dissent include sense of integrity, pride and joy, relief, and confidence (Koerner, 2014). At the organizational level, a positive outcome associated with dissent is worker engagement, particularly when dissent is expressed to someone in a supervisory position (i.e., upward dissent; Kassing, Piemonte, Goman, & Mitchell, 2012).

Additionally, the presence of heterogeneous thought in work groups reduced the pursuit of losing courses of action (e.g., escalation of commitment), which resulted in

wasting fewer resources. When groups are heterogeneous in thought, whether actual or contrived, this heterogeneity created space for them to own mistakes in the original plan and leds to a more successful solution (Greitemeyer et al., 2009). Also, it has been demonstrated that exposure to dissent can generalize to novel situations, promoting the exploration of novel solutions or alternatives (Nemeth, 1986). Conversely, if groups remain homogenous in thought, members generate lower levels of innovation in terms of quality and quantity (De Dreu & West, 2001; Nemeth et al., 2001a; Nemeth et al., 2001b). Even further, dissent provides an opportunity to reconsider a particular plan or course of action. Without dissent, group members may be more likely to ignore obvious flaws or inaccuracies (Nemeth & Chiles, 1988).

Diversity

A contributor to diversity in thought is the diversity of the people who make up the team. Differences in perspective, experiences, and culture inform the lens through which individuals view a problem or a task. By increasing diversity in perspective and experience, this introduces greater opportunities for the sharing of divergent perspectives and information which can result in potentially larger support for the basis of decisions (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). That said, there is evidence to suggest that ethnic group membership that is non-White is negatively associated with one's willingness to engage in voice. Voice is defined as the act of speaking up in order to make better the organization or situation. While voice and dissent are two independent concepts, they are similar when speaking up involves offering a minority perspective (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Conversely, identifying as White or male is positively associated with one's willingness to engage in voice (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). When groups are comprised

of diverse perspectives and information, value can only be drawn from this if the information is introduced into the group for consideration (Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). Thus, to foster the positive benefits of decision-making and creative solutions, it is necessary to have both diverse teams and environments in which diverse perspectives are encouraged.

Diversity in organizations is complex, because although it contributes to the richness and quality of decision-making, there are cognitive shortcuts and preferences that draw people away from individuals who are different. Social categorization emphasizes that detectable differences in groups such as biological sex, age, and ethnicity influence how individuals relate to one another in a group (i.e., in-group versus out-group). There is a human propensity to be drawn towards sameness and members of group, and this can translate to higher cohesion in groups (O'Reilly, Caldwell, & Barnett, 1989). This has implications for inclusion and also opportunities for the exchange of information among diverse team members. There is a lack of research that captures both value of diversity in decision-making and diversity as it relates to social categorization in groups; these streams of research are often conducted independently. To address both the benefits and challenges which accompany diverse teams, Knippenberg, De Dreu, and Homan (2004) created the categorization-elaboration model (CEM). The CEM incorporates mediator and moderator variables that factor in the influence of social categorization on evaluative reactions to the group and ultimately how this, coupled with task decision requirements, produce elaboration (i.e., the desired outcome of discussing and integrating information; Knippenberg et al., 2004). The differential relationship between diversity and components related to dissent (i.e., expression of perspective and

social categorizations) have implications for how ethnic minorities may engage in sharing information and also how they might be perceived while doing so.

The Role of Leaders

When one reaches the point where they are offering divergent information to a group, how the organizational leader responds can influence the success of the dissent and its integration. Edmondson and Munchus (2007) classified dissent as successful only when the behavior or use of voice results in supervisor or peer reconsideration of or reversal of the outcomes. This highlights the criticality of having a group member, often a leader, who has power and resources to ensure the dissenting information is actively considered. Dissent that is directed to the supervisor or appropriate person(s) who can utilize the dissenting information to reconsider outcomes is called "upward" or "articulated" dissent (Kassing, 1998). Unsurprisingly, one's trust for their organizational leader is positively associated with engaging in articulated dissent (Payne, 2014).

The reality is that not all organizations or teams encourage dissent. The perceptions of organization openness to divergent thinking are based on individual interpretation of openness, as well as one's own social evaluations of the risks involved with dissenting. Moreover, there are a number of factors that would prevent someone from engaging in dissent. Individuals who choose to withhold their differing perspectives may do so for fear of being dismissed as wrong (Nemeth, 1986), fear of subsequent division within the group (Buttery & Richter, 2003; Janssen, van de Vliert, & West, 2004), or fear of retaliation or career derailment (Koerner, 2014) as well as job loss (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003). Such risks are greater for individuals who lack authority in their organizations (Amos & Klimoski, 2014). Given the role that leaders and decision-

makers have in incorporating dissenting information, leaders must put forth effort to encourage and accept dissent. Research suggests that establishing psychological safety (Detert & Burris, 2007), admitting when errors have occurred, and assuming (and communicating) that there are multiple "right" answers are a few ways to begin establishing a dissent culture (Edmondson & Munchus, 2007). Even further, researchers recommend telling stories of successful dissent to employees to create a safe space to and even promote dissent (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson & Munchus, 2007). Although some negative perceptions surround those that dissent (e.g., "unintelligent"), individuals who engaged in dissent also have been viewed as having "courage" and being "worthy of respect" (Nemeth & Chiles, 1988).

Present study

The purpose of the proposed study is to further understand dissent so that organizations are encouraged to promote dissent in its decision making processes. Additionally, this study seeks to integrate what is known about diversity in thought and diversity in people and how this influences the dissent process. Specifically, do positive perceptions of dissenters as described in the literature (e.g., worthy of respect or courageous) extend to all dissenters no matter their race? Second, my proposed research seeks to examine if stories of successful articulated dissent influence subsequent willingness to dissent. In developing a scenario to manipulate dissent outcomes ranging from negative outcomes (e.g., hostility) to positive outcomes (e.g., acceptance and influence), I explored the impact of various dissent outcomes on individuals' willingness to dissent.

The following hypotheses and research questions are addressed in the current study:

Hypothesis 1: Willingness to dissent will differ based on dissent outcomes.

Hypothesis 2: Perceptions of the dissenter as courageous will differ based on the race of the dissenter.

Hypothesis 3: Perceptions of the dissenter as confident will differ based on the race of the dissenter.

Hypothesis 4: Perceptions of the dissenter as likeable will differ based on the race of the dissenter.

Hypothesis 5: Perceptions of the dissenter as individualistic will differ based on the race of the dissenter.

Hypothesis 6: Perceptions of the dissenter as intelligent will differ based on the race of the dissenter.

Hypothesis 7: Perceptions of the dissenter as likable will differ based on the race of the dissenter.

Research Question 1: Is there an interaction between race and outcome of dissent on perceptions of the dissenter?

Research Question 2: Is there an interaction between race and outcome of dissent on willingness to dissent?

Method

This study used a 2 (Race: Black and White) X 5 (Dissent Outcome: negative-negative, negative-neutral, positive-neutral, positive-positive, and no outcome) between-subjects experimental design to assess the impact of race and dissent outcome on

perceptions of the dissenter and one's willingness to dissent. The independent variables were operationalized in fifteen different scenarios, communicating the various combinations of race identity of the dissenter and possible outcomes (described further below). The dependent variables were perceptions of the dissenter (characterized by six descriptors) and willingness to dissent.

Participants

Participants were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants first completed a prescreening survey to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria: a minimum of 18 years of age, currently employed full-time, and working outside of the home more days than not (the latter criterion was waived due to stay a home orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic). Out of the 771 participants who completed the prescreening survey, 414 met eligibility criteria and were enrolled in the study. Of those 414, 354 responded (85.5% response rate). Data were excluded for 73 participants for either incomplete data or failure to pass the manipulation check, with a sample size of 281 participants. For the purposes of this study, data were not examined for the condition when race was undisclosed. The final sample size was 184.

Participants in this study identified as White (79.3%) and primarily male (64.1%). Other participants identified as Black (4.9%), Asian (11.4%), and Hispanic (3.8%). Seventy-seven percent had obtained either a four-year degree (53.8%) or a graduate degree (23.4%). The average age of the sample was 35.5 years (SD = 9.92). Participants worked primarily in profession roles (29.3%), management or business (20.7%), and office/administrative support (19%) with an average job tenure of 5.9 years (SD = 5.02).

Participants were randomly assigned to one of 10 scenarios that differed on the two independent variables: race of the dissenter and the outcome of the dissent scenario. In the scenario, 101 participants were presented with a dissenter who was Black and 83 with a dissenter who was White. For the outcome variable, 40 were in the negative-negative condition, 41 in the negative-neutral condition, 41 in the positive-neutral condition, 35 in the positive-positive condition, and 28 in a condition where the outcome to dissent was not disclosed.

Materials

Prescreening Survey. Prior to completing the experimental measures, participants completed a brief demographics questionnaire. Information on participant age, race, ethnicity, sex, job industry, tenure, and level within the organization was gathered. Only participants who meet the inclusion criteria as described above were permitted to move forward with the study.

Articulated Dissent Subscale. The articulated dissent subscale of the Organizational Dissent Scale (ODS; Kassings, 1998) was used to evaluate the participant's current dissenting behaviors in the workplace. The articulated dissent subscale consists of nine items that assess willingness to express disagreement with supervisors and/or managers. An example is, "I tell management when I believe employees are being treated unfairly." Responses were assessed using 5-point, Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* (see Appendix A). The ODS was presented at the outset of the study, followed by filler tasks to avoid any priming or influence of participant dissenting behaviors on the manipulation of the scenarios.

Scenario. Below is the core narrative for the scenario used in the current study:

> "Alex is a [race] employee at a consulting firm. Alex is in a team meeting where they are voting on a decision related to a new team project. Most team members have shared opinions that differ from Alex's perspective. The team is about to vote when Alex decides to offer information that is contrary to the other opinions. Alex states the opposing information to the team."

In the no outcome scenario, the scenario was presented as described above. In the negative-negative scenario, the narrative concluded with the following statement: "The team ignores Alex's recommendation and several team members exhibit hostility toward Alex." In the negative-neutral scenario, the narrative concluded with the following statement: "The team ignores Alex's recommendation and votes against it." In the positive-neutral scenario, the narrative concluded with the following statement: "The team explains the rationale behind why they cannot incorporate Alex's information and vote against Alex's recommendation." In the positive-positive scenario, the narrative concluded with the following statement: "The incorporates Alex's information and votes in favor of Alex's recommendation." The scenario was followed by a manipulation check to determine if participants paid attention to key information. Specifically, the manipulation check confirmed if the participant could correctly identify the race of the dissenter in the scenario and the outcome of the dissent.

Willingness to Dissent. After reading the scenario and successfully completing the manipulation check (see Appendix B), participants answered a question rating the likelihood that they would have dissented in the assigned scenario condition (see Appendix C).

Perceptions of the Dissenter. Chiles and Nemeth (1998) developed a scale to evaluate perceptions of dissenters based on descriptors identified in previous research (Nemeth, Wachtler & Endicott, 1977; Nemeth & Wachtler, 1974; Wolf, 1979). In their study, the descriptors were used to measure perceptions of consistent dissenters relative to inconsistent dissenters and those holding majority perspectives. Descriptors included in the present study are "courageous", "confident," "likeable," "individualistic," "intelligent," and "deserving of respect". All but two (i.e., consistency and color vision) were used in the present study; these two were not used because they lack relevance for the purposes of the current study. Participants rated the degree to which the term or phrase described the dissenter in the scenario. Responses were on a 4-point scale ranging from *not at all* to *a great extent*. (See Appendix D).

Procedure

Participants who passed the prescreening were presented with the informed consent document at the outset of the study, which informed them of the voluntary nature of their participation and the low risk associated with the participating. Participants completed the individual difference measure and the measure of articulated dissent. To prevent any priming effects on responses related to the scenario, a filler task followed the articulated dissent measure. This task was associated with additional research questions affiliated with other projects for members on the research team. Following the filler task, one of fifteen scenarios was randomly assigned to the participant. The scenario was followed by a manipulation check to verify that participants can identify the race and outcome of the dissenter. Both questions must be answered correctly for inclusion in the study. After the manipulation check, participants completed the willingness to dissent

item followed by the perceptions of dissenter questionnaire. All participants who completed the study received $5.00 compensation through MTurk.

Results

The study employed a 2 X 5 between-subjects factorial design. It was anticipated that there would be a main effect for race on perceptions of the dissenters and that there would be a main effect for dissent outcomes one's willingness to dissent. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and correlations) are included in Table 1.

Almost all participants agreed that Alex made the right decision in dissenting in the workplace scenario (n = 176, 95.7%). Fifty-seven percent (n = 106) reported that they would be likely or very likely to dissent if they were in the workplace scenario presented in the study. On average, willingness to dissent was mild with a mean of 3.42 (SD = 1.03), falling between two scale points—*somewhat unlikely, somewhat likely* and *likely.* A two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to evaluate if willingness to dissent differed based on the outcome that was presented in the scenario and Research Question 1. Willingness to dissent did not differ based on the outcome presented in the scenario, $F(4, 180) = ..433$, $p = .79$. Additionally, there was not an interaction between race and outcome of dissent on one's willingness to dissent, $F(4, 174) = .815$, $p = .52$.

Two-way ANOVA was also used to evaluate the relationship between perceptions of the dissenter (Hypothesis 2 through 7) and the race of the dissenter, as well as *Research Question 2.* Again, it was hypothesized that perceptions of a given trait (confidence, courageousness, etc.) would differ based on the race of the dissenter in the

scenario. The race of the dissenter did not influence perceptions of courageousness, $F(1, 182) = 1.554$, $p = .21$, confidence, $F(1, 182) = .421$, $p = .52$, and individualism, $F(1, 182) = .116$, $p = .73$. Race of the dissenter did influence perceptions of intelligence, $F(1, 182) = 5.843$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .032$, worthiness of respect, $F(1, 182) = 5.683$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .032$, and likability, $F(1, 182) = 3.983$, $p = .048$, $\eta^2 = .022$. The Black dissenter was viewed more favorably than the White dissenter on all three characteristics (see table below).

Dependent Variable	Mean (Black)	SD	Mean (White)	SD
Deserving of Respect	3.60	.549	3.40	.604
Intelligent	3.46	.609	3.23	.611
Likeable	3.24	.723	3.01	.653

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Perceptions of the Dissenter by Race

ANOVA results for the test of interactions between each the race of the dissenter for each of the six dependent variables are presented in Table 3. The significant interaction between race and dissent outcomes on perceptions of intelligence is depicted in Figure 1. The significant interaction between race and dissent outcomes on perceptions of likability is depicted in Figure 2.

Supplemental Analyses

There was a strong positive relationship between articulated dissent, one's propensity to engage in dissent in the workplace, and willingness to dissent in the workplace scenario presented in the study ($r = .620$, $p < .01$). Interestingly, the dissenter in the scenario was perceived as male 61.4% ($N = 113$) of the time, although the

dissenter's sex was not disclosed in the scenario. Male and female participants made this error at similar rates. Lastly, there were no significant differences between willingness to dissent based on participant's race ($r = .026$, $p > .05$) or sex ($r = -026$, $p > .05$).

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the implications for organizational dissent as it relates to the consequence or outcome of engaging in dissent as well as the race of the dissenter. Specifically, it was anticipated that willingness to dissent would differ based on the outcome or response to engaging in dissent. Presumably, more positive outcomes to dissent in the scenario would increase one's willingness to dissent and vice versa for negative outcomes. Additionally, it was anticipated that perceptions of the dissenter would differ by the race of the dissenter in the scenario.

Outcomes and Willingness to Dissent

After reading a scenario involving a dissenter, participants were asked to rate their willingness to dissent in the given scenario. The differences across conditions no matter the outcome (positive or negative) were not significant, meaning the outcome variation did not impact willingness to dissent. There was a strong positive relationship between articulated dissent (measured by the ODS) and willingness to dissent. Articulated dissent was measured before exposure to the experimental conditions. The high correlation demonstrates that willingness to dissent in the given scenario was driven by factors outside of the experimental manipulations. Such factors include the scenario manipulations, education level, and a majority White and male sample.

It is possible that the scenario manipulation itself was not strong enough to influence attitudes around dissent. The literature suggests it is recommended for leaders to share successful organizational dissent stories to foster a culture of diversity in thought and dissent (Detert & Burris, 2007; Edmondson & Munchus, 2007). The dissent scenario was not in the context of the participant's own industry or organization nor did someone of influence over the participant deliver it. The salience of the outcome may also be compromised by the minimal detail used in the scenario. To avoid confounding influences, the scenario were kept minimal, including only information necessary to set up the dissenting scenario. Thus, it is possible that the scenario was not vivid enough to have an impact on pre-existing dissenting behaviors. In future studies it will be important to ensure that the outcomes to dissent are perceived as they were classified (i.e., extremely negative or extremely positive) before incorporating them into the scenarios.

Average ratings on both the articulated dissent scale and willingness to dissent in the given scenario hover around the neutral response option on the scale (i.e., agree some and disagree some and somewhat unlikely, somewhat likely respectively). Despite indicators that are highly correlated with willingness to dissent (i.e., White, male, and high education levels; Farr & Ford, 1990; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), participants' own willingness to dissent is neither high nor low. The overwhelming majority indicated that Alex did the right thing by dissenting in the workplace and yet they are unsure if they would be willing to dissent in the same scenario in general.

Research suggests that higher education levels may contribute to more willingness to dissent (Farr & Ford, 1990; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Education teaches people to think critically, evaluate information, and decide multiple solutions to problems. Even

further, education may increase one's confidence in sharing their point of view and perspective. The majority of participants have a college degree or higher. One possible explanation for moderate levels of willingness to dissent is that more education may also produce greater awareness around organizational politics and navigating professional conflict in a way that may hinder dissent. Further research should examine this relationship to understand if barriers to dissent that increase with education.

As mentioned above, identifying as White or male is positively associated with willingness to voice one's or dissent (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Given that the sample was majority White and/or male, it would be expected that willingness to dissent would be high. Analyses revealed no significance difference between males and females in their willingness to dissent ($p > .05$, see Table 1). Due to a small sample of non-White participants in comparison to White participants, it will be important for future research to continue to examine the relationship between race and willingness to dissent.

By nature of being a non-White in America, often people of color are in the minority in terms of representation within their organization. With racial diversity comes diversity in thought, which can be attributed to differing perspectives, cultures, experiences, and treatment among other things. These differences, as demonstrated to be valuable for decision-making processes (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992), may also create greater opportunity and willingness to engage in dissent than White employees. Again, future research should continue to examine this relationship.

Race and Perceptions of the Dissenter

The data revealed a relationship between the race of the dissenter in the scenario and how they were perceived. Depending on with whom you speak, race relations are

perceived to either be improving, getting worse, or staying about the same. It is no secret that dark skin has been associated with negative stereotypes related to cognitive domains (i.e., intelligence) and interpersonal domains (i.e., attitude, level of threat, etc.; Clark & Clark, 1947; CNN, 2010). This is evident in education systems and within the criminal justice system. It is true that dark skin is associated with more threat. So what about in the workplace? How will race influence how someone is perceived when they are disagreeing? In a work context, black employees report having a difficult time establishing credibility, and are often referred to as aggressive as opposed to passionate (Roberts, Mayo, & Thomas, 2020). Given that the dissenter who was Black was perceived as more intelligent, deserving of respect, and likeable than a dissenter who was White, this makes for an interesting conversation. At face value, this collective perception of Black dissenters in the workplace is countercultural and some may even say progressive. However, it violates basic in-group/out-group principles.

Basic in-group/out-group principles demonstrate that people tend to show favoritism towards their in-group and judge the out-group more harshly. Given this study's predominantly White sample, one would speculate that the White dissenter would receive more favorable perceptions of intelligence, worthiness of respect, and likability. A closer look at the data revealed that perception ratings from non-White participants demonstrated in-group favoritism. On the other hand, White participants held higher perceptions of the Black dissenter and had the lowest perceptions of the dissenter who was White. It is not socially acceptable to express attitudes that affirm traditionally held stereotypes in America (i.e., White is equated to more intelligence). Given race relations in America and the historical role that White people have played in oppression,

participants might be particularly sensitive to the characterization of the employee as "Black" in the scenario. The mention of race might have been powerful enough for the participant to override in-group/out-group biases.

It is important to emphasize that these findings suggest that race is not a neutral variable. How employees engage in dissent in the workplace may be influenced by their racial identity. These findings suggest that Black dissenters in the workplace will be viewed more favorably than White dissenters. If participants did not attend to racial differences, the data would have demonstrated that the White and Black dissenter would have been viewed similarly for engaging in the same behavior. Because this was not the case, it is likely that race is a salient factor when one is determining value of some kind. Becoming aware of White privilege and its connection to White guilt may explain why White participants rated their in-group less favorably than they rated the out-group dissenter and the dissenter (Swim & Miller, 1999).

Interestingly, internalized knowledge of privilege and anti-racist views by White people are often maintained in a vacuum (Grzank & Parks, 2010). Most people of color have to maintain diverse cultural exchanges in every day life (i.e., professional, service, business, etc.). However, it is far more rare that a White person has to engage people of color on a regular basis or do so in a way that influences their life in noticeable ways. This calls into question if the mere expression of explicit positive attitudes necessarily captures implicit attitudes (Axt, 2018). Holding a belief, even if positive, and having few opportunities to apply it practically may limit the impact of the expression of inclusive ideas, treatment of diverse people, and where resources are allocated. If driven by White guilt, the self-focused nature of the beliefs and subsequent fears of being portrayed as

racist, it may limit the potential to transform social relationships and systems of inequality (Grzanka & Parks, 2010).

What does these findings mean in terms of the workplace? Implications may differ based on industry and the education level required for the profession. In general, these findings suggest that employee actions may be filtered through a lens of race but also social desirability or efforts to reverse a history of assigning value based on race. When two people engage in the same behavior and someone is praised or viewed more favorably, this may lead to unfair treatment or disproportion and unequal allocations of resources and time.

Ultimately, it is unclear if the differential perceptions observed in this study are the result of deeply held beliefs or if those perceptions will influence the allocation of resources and opportunity in the workplace. Even further, it is unclear if the differences observed here are authentic or if they reflect socially desirable responding. Again, most people of color in the workplace report greater barriers to promotion or perceptions of credibility in the workplace (Roberts, Mayo, & Thomas, 2020). These data would seem to contradict those barriers, particularly if dissenting in the workplace leads to more positive perceptions of a Black employee. What is more probable is that something else is driving the more positive perceptions of people of color. The goal is equality not swinging the pendulum in the opposite direction for self-perceptions or guilt's sake. The goal is to view people equally and evaluate their performance, credibility, and contribution objectively to provide the same opportunity and playing field for all employees.

Differential perceptions of employees who engage in the same behavior are problematic. If this develops into differential opportunities or feedback, this could lead to frustration and job stress and hinder motivation. Ultimately differential perceptions can reduce employee perceptions of organizational justice or fairness. If an employee receives praise or respect for engaging in behavior that others are engaging in without the same outcomes, the person of color may perceive the praise as inauthentic or it may communicate that there is a lower expectation for the person of color or it is more "impressive" if achieved by a person of color. This may communicate that the bar is lower for employees of color, causing frustration from both White and non-White employees.

If these positive perceptions are only vocalized as praise or presented as a mindset of equality, yet employees of color observe any level of inequality in the workplace, the perception or articulation of such is merely that. What does this mean? Words and actions are not likely to align. This compromises trust in leadership. Even further, it may lead organizational leaders to falsely assume they are creating equitable feedback, opportunity, and development. It may also create blindness to problems around differential treatment.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research

An experimental design was employed, randomly assigning participants to each condition of the study to increase the internal validity. Additionally, MTurk allowed for data collection across the United States, providing a better approximation of the general population geographically. However, the sample was not diverse in terms of race and education level. Data were also gathered during a global pandemic, meaning participants

may not have been working at the time of the study due to being furloughed. Another limitation of this study is that the use of race classifications of the dissenter may have prompted socially desirable responding. Future research might examine if the relationship exists when race is manipulated by the use of traditionally White and African-American or Black names. This study is also limited in how it generalizes to other race groups as well, and future studies may expand the race categories included to see if trends remain. All speculations about what could be driving the pattern of these data were drawn from social psychology and an understanding of race relations in America. Future studies should explore how perceptions of the dissenter influence employment decisions, such as how resources are allocated or how feedback is provided. Because of the sensitivities around conversations and mentions of race in America, it is recommended that a measure of social desirability be used to ensure that expressed attitudes or perceptions reflect internalized values and reality.

Conclusions

Whether the intention is fear- or self-focused or it is driven by an authentic acknowledgement that there may be greater barriers in the workplace for people of color, there are implications for interactions with employees across diverse backgrounds. Differential perceptions based on race, no matter the direction, have the potential to provide unequal opportunities for employees. If held by someone with positions of power, the influence will be even greater.

References

Amos, B. & Klimoski, (2014) Courage: Making teamwork work well. *Group and Organization Management, 39,* 110-1128. doi: 10.1177/1059601113520407

Ancona, D. & Caldwell, D. (1992). Bridging the boundary: External activity and performance in organizational teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly. 37*, 634-665. doi: 10.2307/2393475.

Axt, J. (2018, November 19). *Ingroup outgroup favoritism in implicit attitudes.* Society for Personality and Social Psychology. http://spsp.org/news-center/blog/ingroup-outgroup-implicit-attitudes

Buttery, E. A. & Richter, E. M. (2003). "On Machiavellian management". *Leadership and Organizational Development, 24,* 426-35. doi: 10.1108/01437730310505858

Clark, K. B. & Clark, M. P. (1947). Racial identification and preference in negro children. Socialization of the Child. http://i2.cdn.turner.com/cnn/2010/images/05/13/doll.study.1947.pdf

CNN (2010). Study: White and Black children biased toward lighter skin. https://www.cnn.com/2010/US/05/13/doll.study/index.html

De Dreu, C. K. W. & West, M. A., 2001. Minority dissent and team innovation: The importance of participation in decision making. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86,* 1191-1201. doi: 10.1037//0021-9010.86.6.1191

Detert, J. R. & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open? *Academy of Management Journal, 50,* 869-884. doi: 10.5465/amj.2007.26279183

Farr, J.L., & Ford, C.M. (1990). Individual innovation. In M. A. West & J. L. Farr (Eds.), Innovation and creativity at work (pp. 63-80). Chichester, England: Wiley.

Edmondson, V. C. & Munchus, G. (2007). Managing the unwanted truth: A framework for dissent strategy. *Journal of Organizational Change Management, 20,* 746-760. doi: 10.1108/09534810710830993

Greitemeyer, T., Schulz-Hardt, St., & Frey, D. (2009). The effects of authentic and contrived dissent on escalation of commitment in group decision making. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 39,* 639-647. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.578

Grzanka, P. R. & Parks, S. L. (2010). White guilt: Race, gender, sexuality and emergent racisms in the contemporary united states. (Unpublished dissertation). University of Maryland, College Park.

Janssen, O., van de Vliert, E. & West, M. (2004). The bright and dark sides of individual and group innovation: A special issue introduction. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25,* 129-145. doi: 10.1002/job.242

Kassing, J. W. (1998). Development and validation of the Organizational Dissent Scale. *Management Communication Quarterly, 12,* 183-229. doi: 10.1177/0893318998122002

Kassing, J. W., Piedmonte, N. M., Goman, C. C., & Mitchell, C. A. (2012). Dissent expression as an indicator of work engagement and intention to leave. *International Journal of Business Communication, 49,* 237–253. doi: 10.1177/0021943612446751

Knippenberg, D., De Dreu, C. K. W., & Homan, A.C. (2004). Work group diversity and group performance: An integrative model and research agenda. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89,* 1008-1022. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.6.1008

Koerner, M. M. (2014). Courage as identity work: Accounts of workplace courage. *Academy of Management Journal, 57,* 63-93. doi: 10.5465/amj.2010.0641

LePine, J. A., & Van Dyne, L. (1998). Predicting voice behavior in work groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83*, 853-868.

McLeod, P. L., Baron, R., Marti, M.W. & Yoon, K. (1997). The eyes have it: Minority influence in face-to-face and computer mediated group discussions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 82,* 702-718. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.82.5.706

Nemeth, C. & Chiles, C. (1988). Modeling courage: The role of dissent in fostering independence. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 18,* 275-280. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.2420180306

Nemeth, C. & Wachtler, J. (1974). Creating the perception of consistency and confidence: A necessary condition of minority influence. *Sociometry, 37,* 529-540. doi: 10.2307/2786425

Nemeth, C. J. (1986). Differential contributions of majority and minority influence. *Psychological Review, 93,* 23-32. doi: 10.1037/0033-295X.93.1.23

Nemeth, C. J., Connell, J. B., Rogers, J. D., & Brown, K. S. (2001). Improving decision making by means of dissent. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 31*, 48-58.

Nemeth, C., Brown, K., & Rogers, J. (2001). Devil's advocate versus authentic dissent: Stimulating quantity and quality. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 31,* 707-720. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.58

Nemeth, C., Wachtler, J., & Endicott, J. (1977). Increasing the size of the minority: Some gains and some losses. *European Journal of Social Psychology, 1,* 11-23. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.2420070103

O'Reilly, C. A., Caldwell, D. F., & Barnett, W. P. (1989). Work group demography, social integration, and turnover. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 34,* 21-37. doi: 10.2307/2392984

Payne, H. J. (2014). Examining the relationships between trust in supervisor-employee relationships and workplace dissent expression. *Communication Research Reports, 31,* 131-140. doi: 10.1080/08824096.2014.907141

Roberts, L. M., Mayo, A. J., & Thomas, D. (2020, January 7). *Race and Leadership: The Black experience.* News Wise. *https://www.newswise.com/articles/race-and-leadership-the-black-experience-in-the-workplace*

Rothschild, J. & Miethe, T. D. (1994). Whistleblowing as resistance in modern work organizations: The politics of revealing organizational deception and abuse. *Resistance and Power in Organizations, 74,* 252-273.

Shaninpoor, N. & Matt, B. F. (2007). The power of one: Dissent in organizational life. *Journal of Business Ethics, 74,* 37-48. doi: 10.1007/s10551-006-9218-y

Swim, J. K. & Miller, D. L., (1999). White guilt: Its antecedents and consequences on affirmative action. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25,* 500-514. doi: 10.1177/0146167299025004008

Van Dyne, L., Ang, S., & Botero, I. C. 2003. Conceptualizing employee silence and voice as multidimensional constructs. *Journal of Management Studies, 40,* 1359–1392. doi: 10.1111/1467-6486.0038

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	*M*	*SD*
1. Participant Sex	1.36	0.48
2. Participant Race	1.55	1.19
3. Education Level	4.80	1.10
4. Articulated Dissent Total	29.27	7.67
5. Willingness to Dissent	3.42	1.03
6. Courageous	3.33	0.63
7. Confident	3.57	0.57
8. Deserving of Respect	3.51	0.58
9. Individualistic	3.37	0.71
10. Intelligent	3.35	0.62
11. Likeable	3.14	0.70

Note: *Significant at the $p < .05$ level, 2-tailed. ** Significant at the $p < .01$ level, 2-tailed

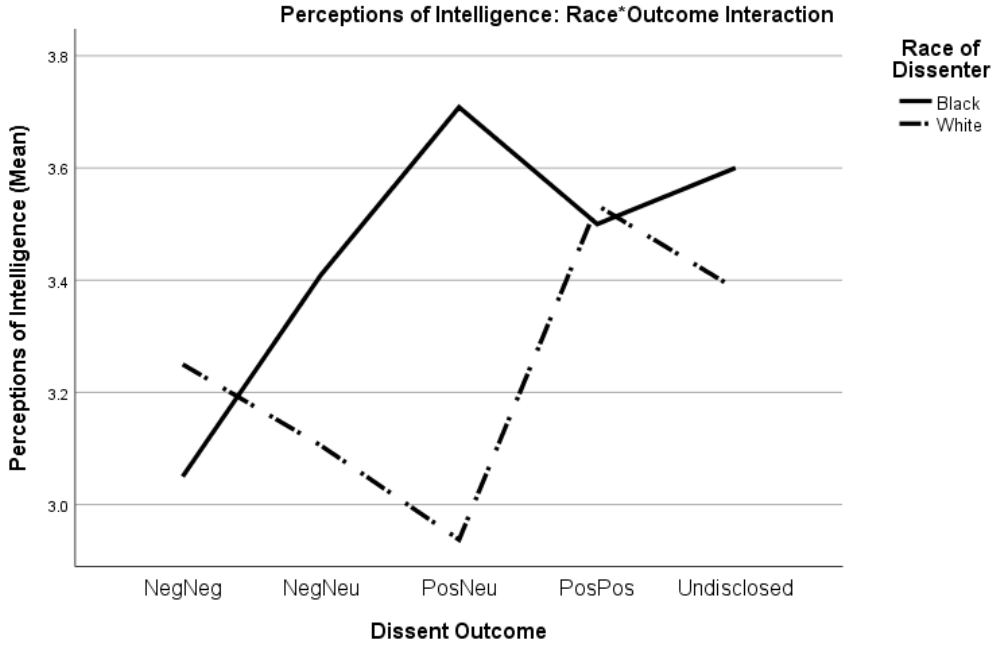
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Participant Sex	1										
2. Participant Race	.075	1									
3. Education Level	.077	.094	1								
4. Articulated Dissent Total	-.054	.008	-.023	1							
5. Willingness to Dissent	-.026	.026	.037	.620**	1						
6. Courageous	.103	.067	.066	.018	.026	1					
7. Confident	.122	-.01	.004	-.143	-.051	.415**	1				
8. Deserving of Respect	.176*	-.001	.099	.040	.147*	.504**	.452**	1			
9. Individualistic	.039	.059	-.079	.119	.107	.370**	.343**	.371**	1		
10. Intelligent	.165*	-.06	.029	.013	.141	.427**	.449**	.543**	.420**	1	
11. Likeable	.106	-.012	.100	.130	.243**	.368**	.299**	.567**	.225**	.595**	1

Table 3. Interaction between Outcome and Race on Perceptions of the Dissenter

Dependent Variable	***F***	**df**	***p***	***Eta squared***
Courageous	1.027	4,174	.40	-
Confident	.954	4,174	.43	-
Deserving of Respect	1.660	4,174	.16	-
Individualistic	.831	4,174	.51	-
Intelligent	3.898**	4,174	.005	.082
Likeable	3.021*	4,174	.02	.065

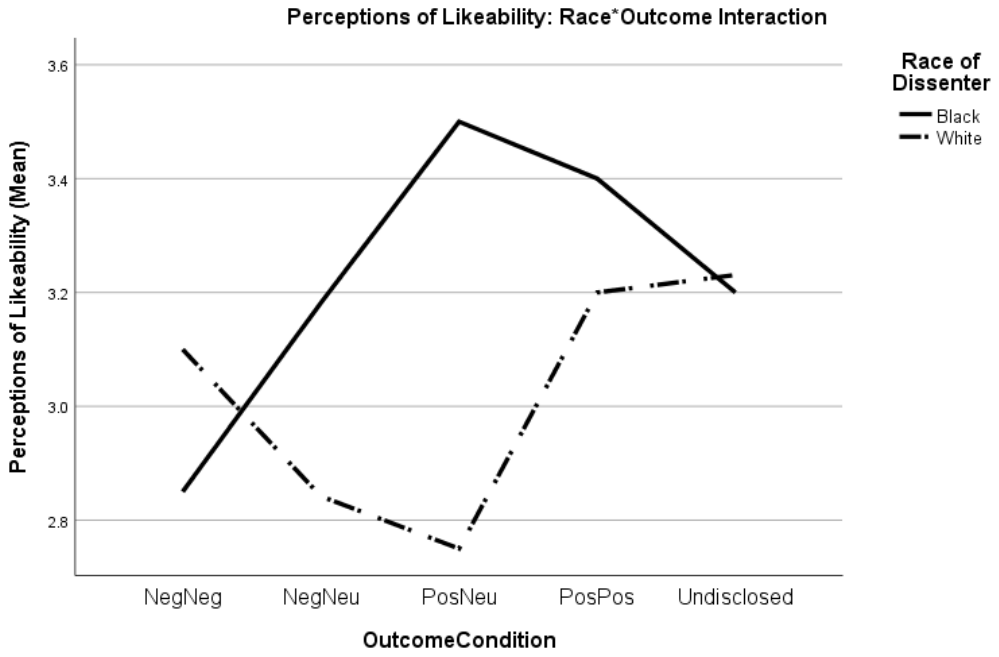
Note: *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 1. Interaction between Race and Dissent Outcome on Perceptions of Intelligence



Note: The scenario for each condition defined below. NegNeg: "The team ignores Alex's recommendation and several team members exhibit hostility toward Alex." NegNeu: "The team ignores Alex's recommendation and votes against it." PosNeu: "The team explains the rationale behind why they cannot incorporate Alex's information and vote against Alex's recommendation." PosPos: The incorporates Alex's information and votes in favor of Alex's recommendation." Undisclosed: No outcome to dissent provided.

Figure 2. Interaction between Race and Dissent Outcome on Perceptions of Likeability



Note: The scenario for each condition defined below. NegNeg: "The team ignores Alex's recommendation and several team members exhibit hostility toward Alex." NegNeu: "The team ignores Alex's recommendation and votes against it." PosNeu: "The team explains the rationale behind why they cannot incorporate Alex's information and vote against Alex's recommendation." PosPos: The incorporates Alex's information and votes in favor of Alex's recommendation." Undisclosed: No outcome to dissent provided.

Appendices

Appendix A
Articulated Dissent Subscale on the Organizational Dissent Scale

This is a series of statements about how people express their concerns about work. Considering how you tend to express your concerns at work, indicate your degree of agreement with each statement by using the scale provided.
1 = strongly disagree
2 = disagree
3 = agree some and disagree some
4 = agree
5 = strongly agree

1. I am hesitant to raise questions or contradictory opinions in my organization.
2. I do not question management.
3. I'm hesitant to question workplace policies.
4. I don't tell my supervisor when I disagree with workplace decisions.
5. I bring my criticism about organizational changes that aren't working to my supervisor or someone in management.
6. I do not express my disagreement to management.
7. I speak with my supervisor or someone in management when I question workplace decisions.
8. I make suggestions to management or my supervisor about correcting inefficiency in my organization.
9. I tell management when I believe employees are being treated unfairly.

Note: The items were originally numbered in this order on the full ODS: 1, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, and 22

Kassing, J. W. (1998). Development and validation of the Organizational Dissent Scale. *Management Communication Quarterly, 12*, 183-229.

Appendix B
Manipulation Check

Instructions: Answer the following questions about Alex.

1. What is Alex's race?
a) Black
b) White
c) Undisclosed

2. How did the team respond to Alex's recommendation?
a) Ignores Alex's recommendation and several team members exhibit hostility towards Alex.
b) Ignores Alex's recommendation and votes against it.
c) Explains the rationale behind why they cannot incorporate Alex's information and vote against Alex's recommendation.
d) Votes and incorporates Alex's information, voting in favor of Alex's recommendation.
e) No response was provided.

3. What is Alex's biological sex?
a) Male
b) Female
c) Undisclosed

4. Do you believe Alex did the right thing in sharing the minority perspective with the group?
a) Yes
b) No

Note: Items 1 and 2 were the true manipulation check items. Items 3 and 4 were exploratory.

Appendix C
Willingness to Dissent

If you were in Alex's position, how likely would you be to share a differing perspective with the team?

1 = very unlikely
2 = unlikely
3 = somewhat unlikely, somewhat likely
4 = likely
5 = very likely

Appendix D
Perceptions of the Dissenter Measure

Instructions. Indicate the extent to which the descriptors describe Alex.

Courageous

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent

Confident

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent

Likable

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent

Individualistic

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent

Intelligent

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent

Deserving of Respect

1	2	3	4
Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent