Routes to Positive Interracial Interactions: Approaching Egalitarianism or Avoiding Prejudice

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Abstract

The current work examined factors that contribute to positive interracial interactions. It argues that the source of people's motivation to respond without prejudice and the goals and strategies they pursue in interracial interactions influence the quality of these interactions. Three studies show that non-Black participants who are highly internally motivated to respond without prejudice tend to focus on strategies and behaviors in interactions with Black people that approach a positive (i.e., egalitarian) outcome. As a result of engaging in these approach behaviors, their interracial interactions go more smoothly for both themselves and their interaction partners as compared to people less internally motivated. In contrast, externally motivated people tend to focus on avoiding negative (i.e., prejudiced) outcomes, which ironically results in their coming across to their partners as prejudiced. The implications of the findings for smoothing out the rocky road to positive intergroup interactions are discussed.

Keywords

In multicultural societies, interracial interactions are increasingly common and in some cases inevitable. As a result, it is critical to understand the factors likely to shape the course and quality of these interactions. Many studies have examined factors that interfere with good interracial interactions, such as anxiety and concerns about prejudice (e.g., Butz & Plant, 2006; Plant, 2004; Plant & Devine, 2003; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Shelton, 2003; Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005; Stephan & Stephan, 1985; Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Although this work has highlighted responses and reactions that should be targeted to improve interracial interactions, it does not clarify the specific factors that may contribute to a positive interaction. That is, as a field we are getting a clearer picture of what can go wrong in interracial interactions, but far less is known about what characterizes positive interracial interactions. A major goal of the current work was to identify factors that pave the way to positive interracial interactions by focusing both on individual differences that may help people respond in a more positive manner in interactions and on specific goals and strategies that contribute to positive interracial contact.

We believe that motivation to respond without prejudice is likely to play an important role in the quality of interracial interactions. Specifically, we propose that those strongly motivated to respond without prejudice are likely to be concerned

about their responses in interracial interactions and to be driven to pursue strategies they believe will help them meet their interaction goals. However, in reflecting on the nature and likely success of people's goals and strategies for interracial interactions, we believe it is important to consider the specific reasons underlying their motivation to respond without prejudice. In today's social climate people can be motivated to respond without prejudice for fear of social sanction if one was to respond with prejudice (i.e., external motivation) or because of a personal dedication to responding consistently with egalitarian standards (i.e., internal motivation). Although both sources of motivation are likely to result in people being highly concerned with the outcome of interracial interactions, we suspect these motivations are associated with different objectives and are not equally effective in leading to positive interracial interactions.

Emerging evidence suggests that for majority group members, concerns about the possibility of appearing prejudiced

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and, consequently, being evaluated negatively loom large (e.g., Dunton & Fazio, 1997; Plant & Butz, 2006; Plant & Devine, 1998, 2003; Shelton, 2003; Vorauer, Hunter, Main, & Roy, 2000; Vorauer & Kumhyr, 2001; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998). Thus, if majority group members are motivated to respond without prejudice in interracial interactions, it may seem that a wise goal would be to avoid responding with prejudice. To that end, they should focus on specific strategies to avoid behaving in prejudiced ways. We believe, however, that not all people motivated to respond without prejudice come to interactions with avoidance goals and strategies. We argue that people who are strongly, internally motivated to respond without prejudice are instead likely to focus on a goal of responding consistently with their egalitarian standards. We believe that this egalitarianism goal results in the pursuit of strategies and behaviors geared toward approaching a pleasant interaction. Finally, we posit that as a result of pursuing these approach-related goals and strategies, people who are internally motivated are more likely to experience positive interracial interactions than those less internally motivated.

In previous work, we (Plant & Devine, 1998) argued that these alternative motivations to respond without prejudice reflect chronic individual differences, and we developed two separate scales, the Internal (personal) Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (IMS) and the External (normative) Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (EMS). We provided evidence of the reliability as well as the convergent and discriminant validity of the measures. In addition, we demonstrated that the IMS and EMS are largely independent from each other such that people can be motivated to respond without prejudice primarily for internal reasons, primarily for external reasons, for both internal and external reasons, or they may not be motivated for either reason. We argue that people's source of motivation influences their primary goals and favored strategies regarding interracial interactions, which in turn influence the quality of interracial interactions.

Our analysis draws on insights from the classic motivation and self-regulation theories (Atkinson, 1964; Carver & Scheier, 1981, 1998). These theories distinguish between motivational systems focused on approaching desired end-states and those focused on avoiding undesired end-states. The motivation to approach a desired end-state leads to the active pursuit of the end-state and behavioral adjustments to reduce the discrepancy between current behavior and the desired end-state. As such, approach motivation results in the pursuit of success-related behaviors, such as setting realistic goals and persisting in the face of adversity (e.g., Atkinson & Litwin, 1960; Elliot & Church, 1997; Mahone, 1960). In contrast, the motivation to avoid an undesired end-state leads to a focus on avoiding actions that result in the undesired end-state and behavioral adjustments to increase the discrepancy between current behavior and the undesired end-state. Avoidance motivation results in the engagement in responses that provide excuses for failure, thereby protecting the self-concept from the negative implications of failure (e.g., Atkinson & Litwin, 1960; Mahone, 1960).

Particularly relevant to current concerns, Elliot and Church (1997) found that people highly motivated to approach success tended to set approach-related goals, whereas people motivated to avoid failure tended to set avoidance-related goals.

Based on our theorizing and this previous work, we posit that in regulating racial prejudice, internally motivated people are primarily concerned with living up to their personally important, self-defining egalitarian standards (Plant & Devine, 1998). Therefore, in interracial interactions, we believe that high-IMS people should set and pursue approach-related goals and strategies in interracial interactions. We anticipate that such approach-related responses would have positive implications for the quality of interracial interactions. Externally motivated people are instead concerned with avoiding negative reactions from others that would result from an overt expression of prejudice. Therefore, in interracial interactions they would likely be focused on the goal of avoiding prejudiced responses during the interaction that might elicit social sanction (i.e., avoid an undesired end-state), which is unlikely to have positive implications for the quality of interracial interactions.

Although these issues have not been examined directly, prior work is consistent with our predictions. For example, we (Plant & Devine, 2009) provided evidence concerning the link between IMS and the goal to approach desired outcomes and EMS and the goal to avoid undesired outcomes in interracial interactions. Specifically, we measured how much effort people expended on a computer program to help reduce prejudice before an interracial interaction. Participants were told the program would help reduce either detectable or undetectable prejudice. Consistent with expectations, low-IMS/high-EMS participants spent extensive time on the program only if they were told the program reduced detectable prejudice that would be apparent to their Black partner in the interaction. We contend that interest only in the reduction of detectable prejudice is consistent with a desire to avoid the undesired end-state of overt prejudice. In contrast, internally motivated people who believed they had prejudice to eliminate spent extensive time working on the prejudice-reduction program regardless of the type of prejudice it would eliminate. This interest in reducing both detectable and undetectable prejudice is consistent with what one might expect from people focused on approaching egalitarianism. Although we speculated that these differential motivations and patterns of effort were likely to be related to distinct behavior in interracial interactions, we did not directly examine responses in interracial interactions.

In addition, previous work examining people's desire to avoid interracial interactions found that EMS was associated with a heightened desire to avoid interracial interactions (Plant, 2004). In contrast, IMS was associated with low levels of avoidance (i.e., high interest in engaging). If externally motivated participants are focused on avoiding coming across as prejudiced, avoiding interracial contact would be an effective route. However, if internally motivated participants are interested in approaching egalitarianism, they should not want to avoid the contact.

Also suggesting a link between EMS and an avoidance focus, in a study assessing attention toward Black and White faces, Richeson and Trawalter (2008) found that externally motivated people's attention was drawn to Black faces with neutral expressions when they were shown for a brief duration. However, when exposure durations were longer, high-EMS people avoided looking at the Black faces. Thus, although they were sensitive to the presence of Black faces, once they perceived them, they responded with attentional avoidance. Further supporting a link between EMS and avoidance, Apfelbaum, Sommers, and Norton (2008) found that high-EMS participants were more likely than low-EMS participants to avoid acknowledging race when describing a person, particularly during interracial interactions.

Supporting our proposition that adopting approach goals may be beneficial for interracial interactions, Trawalter and Richeson (2006) found that White people who adopted the goal to have a positive interaction showed less depletion of self-regulatory resources after the interaction than those who tried to avoid prejudice during the interaction. Although these findings suggest that an approach focus may be less depleting of self-regulatory energy than an avoidance focus, they do not speak to implications for the quality of interracial interactions. Apfelbaum et al. (2008) found that participants who did not acknowledge race in an interracial context were rated as expressing less nonverbal friendliness than those who acknowledged race. Avoiding acknowledging race is likely one of the strategies that a person seeking to avoid appearing prejudiced may use in interracial contexts, and these findings suggest it may not be a successful strategy. Another strategy that people may draw on to avoid prejudice, stereotype suppression, has been found to result in stereotype rebound and, thus, may have negative implications for interracial contact (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994).

Also suggestive, Vorauer and Turpie (2004) found that although low-prejudice people were typically more likely than high-prejudice people to engage in intimacy-building (i.e., approach-focused) behaviors when creating a message for an outgroup member, heightening low-prejudice people's evaluative concerns led to fewer intimacy-building responses. The evaluative concerns may have activated an avoidance focus, which could have interfered with approach behaviors. However, the manipulation had the reverse effect on the higher prejudiced participants with evaluative concerns, resulting in more positive responses. These inconsistent responses across high- and low-prejudice participants indicate that more work is needed to clarify the implications of focusing on approaching a positive outcome versus avoiding a negative outcome when responding to outgroup members.

The Current Work

Across three studies, we explored White people's responses in interracial interactions and the relation between their source of motivation to respond without prejudice, their goals and strategies in interracial interactions, and the outcome of these interactions. Studies 1 and 2 examined the goals and strategies White people anticipated pursuing in interracial interactions as a function of their motivation to respond without prejudice. Study 2 also examined how participants' motivation and strategies related to anticipated outcomes of interracial interactions. In Study 3, White participants engaged in an interracial interaction with a Black confederate, and we examined the participants' behavior during the interaction. We also explored the consequences of the participants' source of motivation and their pursuit of approach or avoidance strategies for the quality of the interaction as experienced by the participants and their Black interaction partners, and as rated by objective observers.

Study 1

In Study 1, we examined people's self-reported goals for an upcoming interracial interaction as a function of their source of motivation to respond without prejudice. We anticipated that high-IMS participants would be more likely than low-IMS participants to endorse a goal of approaching egalitarianism. In addition, we expected high-EMS participants would be more likely than low-EMS participants to endorse a goal of avoiding prejudice.

Method

Participants. One hundred and twelve White introductory psychology students (51% female), who completed the IMS (α = .83) and EMS (α = .89) early in the semester, participated for course extra credit. The IMS and EMS each consist of five items rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. Students were considered eligible to participate in the study if their responses fell into the top or bottom 30% of the IMS (high-IMS *M* = 8.86; low-IMS *M* = 6.16) and EMS (high-EMS *M* = 6.85; low-EMS *M* = 2.41) distributions.[1] Participants were scheduled individually for a study examining interactions (IMS *M* = 7.48, *SD* = 1.73, skewness = −1.35; EMS *M* = 4.71, *SD* = 2.44, skewness = .06).

Procedure. Participants were told that the study examined first-time interactions between people of different racial groups and that they would be interacting with a Black student. They were asked to complete a questionnaire assessing their goals regarding the upcoming interaction. Participants responded to each item on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scale. Five items reflected the goal of treating the Black partner in a pleasant manner, uninfluenced by the partner's race and consistent with approaching egalitarianism (e.g., "My goal during this interaction is to be friendly"; α = .75). Four items reflected a goal of avoiding prejudiced responses (e.g., "My goal during this interaction will be to avoid coming across as prejudiced"; α = .73). After completing the questionnaire, participants were debriefed, thanked, and given their credit.

Results and Discussion

We examined the responses to the Approach Egalitarianism and Avoid Prejudice scales and found that they were nonsignificantly positively related to each other, $r = .16$, $p = .08$. We next analyzed participants' responses to the Approach Egalitarianism and Avoid Prejudice scales using multiple regression with IMS and EMS both z-scored and their interaction entered as predictors.[2] Consistent with expectations, the source of White people's motivation to respond without prejudice toward Black people had important implications for their self-reported goals. The analyses of the Approach Egalitarianism scale revealed that high-IMS participants reported being more likely to pursue a goal of approaching egalitarianism during the interaction than low-IMS participants, $F(1, 108) = 11.13$, $p < .002$, $\beta = .31$. Analyses of the Avoid Prejudice scale revealed that high-EMS participants reported being more likely to pursue a goal of avoiding prejudice during the interaction than low-EMS participants, $F(1, 108) = 28.34$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .46$. None of the other effects reached significance.

Study 2

Having examined interracial interaction goals, we next wanted to examine people's more specific strategies (i.e., what they would do to achieve their goals) for interracial interactions. Therefore, in Study 2 we examined non-Black people's self-reported goals and strategies for a hypothetical interaction with a Black person as a function of their source of motivation to respond without prejudice. We expected high- compared to low-IMS participants to report greater endorsement of goals and strategies for the interaction that focused on approaching egalitarianism. In addition, we expected high- compared to low-EMS participants to report greater endorsement of goals and strategies for the interaction that focused on avoiding prejudice. In Study 2 we also included participants from the full range of scores on the IMS and EMS instead of preselecting participants at the extremes of the scales.

In addition, we were interested in people's expectations about the quality of interracial interactions and whether the anticipated quality was related to their motivation and interaction strategies. Therefore, in the current study participants were asked to imagine an interracial interaction and describe how well they thought it would go. We anticipated that high-IMS participants would expect a more pleasant interracial interaction than low-IMS participants. Furthermore, we believed that high-IMS participants' more positive expectations would be due to the fact that they anticipated pursuing approach strategies. In contrast, we expected that high-EMS participants' avoidance focus would not lead to positive expectations about interaction quality. It was possible that focusing on what could go wrong would actually lead to more negative expectations about the interaction quality.

Participants also completed related, but more general, measures to explore whether the relations between IMS and approaching egalitarianism and EMS and avoidance of prejudice could be accounted for by more general motivational or social anxiety constructs. Specifically, participants completed the Regulatory Focus Questionnaire (RFQ; Higgins et al., 2002) and the Interaction Anxiety Scale (IAS; Leary, 1983). Including the RFQ allowed us to assess whether the IMS and EMS influenced interaction intentions and expectations above and beyond whether the participants tended to have a promotion focus (i.e., focus on the presence or absence of positive outcomes) or a prevention focus (i.e., focus on the presence or absence of negative outcomes; Higgins, 1997). In addition, one could imagine that externally motivated people's concerns about avoiding prejudice in interracial interactions may be due to a more general fear of making a bad impression.

Method

Participants. Respondents were 70 non-Black (84% White, 14% Hispanic, 2% Asian) introductory psychology students (66% female, age $M = 19.13$) who participated in exchange for course credit.

Procedure. Participants completed a questionnaire packet in group sessions of 8-15. The packet included a scenario that asked participants to imagine that they had been matched up with an African American classmate for a class assignment where they were supposed to have a "getting to know you" interaction. They provided open-ended descriptions about how they thought the interaction would go, and two independent coders rated the responses for quality from 1 (*extremely negative*) to 9 (*extremely positive*). Because the coder's responses were highly correlated, $r = .81$, the ratings were averaged for the analyses.

Participants next completed a questionnaire that asked them to "imagine that you are about to interact with a Black person you have never met before in a social setting." They were provided with a series of statements and rated the extent to which the statements reflected their likely response in the interaction on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).[3] The statements reflected both the types of goals and more specific strategies that people might pursue in the interaction. Five items assessed the goal to approach egalitarianism during the interaction ($\alpha = .91$; see the appendix for all items). Three questions assessed the goal to avoid prejudice during the interaction ($\alpha = .86$). In addition, six items focused on specific strategies concerned with approaching a pleasant, egalitarian interaction ($\alpha = .83$). Seven items focused on specific strategies to avoid coming across as prejudiced in the interaction ($\alpha = .86$). In each case, the items assessing the different constructs were averaged to create an index; higher scores indicate stronger agreement with the statements.

Also included in the packet were the IMS ($\alpha = .87$), EMS ($\alpha = .84$), RFQ, and IAS. The RFQ includes six items

Table 1. Correlations between variables in Study 2

	1	2	3	4	5
1. IMS	—				
2. EMS	.15	—			
3. Promotion	.09	.01	—		
4. Prevention	.18	−.12	.25*	—	
5. IAS	−.04	.18	−.31*	−.03	—

IMS = Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale;
EMS = External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale;
IAS = Interaction Anxiety Scale.
*p < .05.

assessing a promotion focus ("I feel like I have made progress toward being successful in my life"; α = .71) and five items assessing a prevention focus ("Not being careful enough has gotten me into trouble at times"; α = .81). The IAS consists of 15 items (e.g., "I often feel nervous even in casual get-togethers"; α = .92).

Results

Examination of the intercorrelations between the predictor variables (see Table 1) revealed nonsignificant relations, with a couple of exceptions. Promotion focus was positively related to prevention focus and negatively related to interaction anxiety scores. None of the other correlations were significant. We also examined whether people's goals and strategies were related to each other. The participants' endorsement of the approach goals and approach strategies were strongly and positively related to each other, $r = .82$, $p < .001$. In addition, the avoidance goals and strategies were strongly and positively related to each other, $r = .74$, $p < .001$. Finally, there was a modest negative correlation between approach goals and avoidance strategies such that participants who endorsed the approach goals were unlikely to endorse the avoidance strategies, $r = −.28$, $p < .02$.

The goals and strategies indices as well as the quality rating were analyzed using multiple regression analyses with IMS, EMS, promotion focus, prevention focus, IAS, and the interaction between IMS and EMS entered as predictors. Following Aiken and West's (1991) suggestion, predictor variables were z-scored for all analyses. Effects that are not mentioned did not reach significance.

The analysis of the approach-egalitarianism goals index revealed that high-IMS participants were more likely than low-IMS participants to report that their goal would be to approach egalitarianism, $t(63) = 6.68$, $p < .001$, β = .72. The analysis also revealed an interaction between IMS and EMS, $t(63) = 2.24$, $p < .03$, β = .24. Simple slopes analyses revealed that among high-IMS participants, both high- and low-EMS participants reported high endorsement of the approach goals

($\hat{Y} = 6.95$ and $\hat{Y} = 6.86$, respectively), $t < 1$. In contrast, among low-IMS participants, high-EMS participants ($\hat{Y} = 5.09$) reported less endorsement of the approach goals than the low-EMS participants ($\hat{Y} = 5.94$), β = .73, $p < .008$.

The analysis of the approach-egalitarianism strategies index revealed that high-IMS participants reported that they would be more likely than low-IMS participants to use strategies for the interaction that focused on approaching a pleasant interaction, $t(63) = 6.03$, $p < .001$, β = .66. The analysis also revealed an interaction between IMS and EMS, $t(63) = 2.11$, $p < .04$, β = .23. Similar to the findings for the approach goals, simple slopes analyses indicated that high-IMS participants reported high endorsement of approach strategies whether they were high ($\hat{Y} = 6.85$) or low in EMS ($\hat{Y} = 6.49$), β = .18, $p = .14$. Among low-IMS participants, high-EMS participants ($\hat{Y} = 5.36$) reported nonsignificantly lower endorsement of the approach goals than low-EMS participants ($\hat{Y} = 5.78$), β = −.30, $p = .09$. Thus, low-IMS/high-EMS participants were relatively less likely to endorse approach goals and strategies than the other low-IMS participants, perhaps due to their avoidance focus.

The analysis of the avoid-prejudice goals index revealed only a main effect of EMS, such that high-EMS participants were more likely than low-EMS participants to endorse a goal that focused on avoiding coming across as prejudiced during the interaction, $t(63) = 4.16$, $p < .001$, β = .48. Similarly, the analysis of the avoid-prejudice strategies revealed that high-EMS participants were more likely than low-EMS participants to report that they would use avoidance strategies for the interaction, $t(63) = 4.70$, $p < .001$, β = .54. There was also an effect of prevention focus such that participants with a higher compared to lower prevention focus reported greater endorsement of avoidance strategies, $t(63) = 2.01$, $p < .05$, β = .22.

The analysis of the interaction quality ratings revealed that high-IMS participants anticipated a more positive interracial interaction than low-IMS participants, $t(63) = 3.59$, $p < .002$, β = .43. In addition, there was an effect of IAS scores; participants higher in social anxiety anticipated a less pleasant interaction than those with low social anxiety, $t(63) = −2.19$, $p < .04$, β = −.27.

Finally, we examined whether the high-IMS participants' expectation that the interracial interaction would go well was because they anticipated pursuing approach strategies during interracial interactions. The mediation analyses revealed that, as reported previously, IMS predicted the endorsement of approach strategies and interaction quality. In addition, when endorsement of approach strategies was included in the regression predicting the quality of the interaction, approach strategies significantly predicted interaction quality, $t(62) = 2.48$, $p < .02$, β = .35, but IMS was no longer a significant predictor, $t(62) = 1.74$, $p = .09$, β = .24. A Sobel test indicated that approach strategies significantly mediated the effect of IMS on interaction quality, $z = 2.34$, $p < .02$.

Discussion

The current findings provide insight into non-Black people's expectations about the outcome of interracial interactions as well as the goals and strategies they anticipate pursuing in interracial interactions. Specifically, supporting the proposed conceptualization and consistent with Study 1, high-IMS participants were more likely than low-IMS participants to endorse goals and strategies for a hypothetical interaction with a Black person that focused on approaching egalitarianism. In addition, high-IMS participants expected that they would have a higher quality interracial interaction than low-IMS participants. Mediation analyses indicated that the reason why the internally motivated participants expected their interracial interactions to go well was because they would pursue approach strategies. In contrast, high-EMS participants were more likely than low-EMS participants to endorse avoidance goals and strategies. It is worth noting that IMS and EMS predicted participants' goals, strategies, and anticipated interaction quality above and beyond measures of promotion and prevention focus and interaction anxiety.

Although these findings indicate that the self-regulation and anxiety measures did not account for the effects of IMS and EMS on the goals and strategies, we considered the possibility that a measure of racial prejudice would account for them. Specifically, we conducted a study ($n = 73$) that included the Attitudes Toward Blacks Scale (ATB; Brigham, 1993) in addition to our measures of goals and strategies for interracial interactions, IMS, EMS, promotion and prevention focus, and IAS.[4] The IMS and EMS findings paralleled those in the current study. The only effects involving ATB scores were that more prejudiced participants were more likely than less prejudiced participants to report that they would use avoidance goals and strategies in an interracial interaction. Interestingly, however, the less prejudiced participants were no more likely than the more prejudiced to report that they would pursue approach goals and strategies for the interracial interaction. Thus, by considering only participants' attitudes, it was not possible to identify those who would focus on approaching a positive interaction. These findings are consistent with mounting evidence that examining the source of people's motivation to respond without prejudice provides more detailed insight into the processes of the regulation and control of prejudice than traditional measures of prejudice alone (e.g., Amodio, Devine, & Harmon-Jones, 2008; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002; Plant & Devine, 1998, 2009).

Study 3

Although our initial findings supported our framework, they were limited because we examined only participants' anticipated responses during interracial interactions. In our final study, participants engaged in a real interracial interaction, and we explored how the source of White people's motivation

to respond without prejudice and the strategies they pursued during the interaction related to interaction quality. As such, we could directly examine the factors that contribute to positive interracial interactions. Specifically, White participants interacted with a Black confederate. We assessed participants' behavior during the interaction, their self-reported goals and strategies during the interaction, and the participants' as well as their partners' ratings of the quality of the interaction. Furthermore, we explored how participants' approach and avoidance responses affected the perceived quality of contact during the interaction.

We anticipated that high-IMS participants would engage in approach-related behaviors and high-EMS participants would engage in avoidance-related behaviors during the interracial interaction. Because these approach-related strategies, such as being responsive and self-disclosing, are key intimacy-building behaviors (e.g., Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998; Reis & Patrick, 1996), we expected that the approach-related behaviors pursued by high-IMS participants would result in relatively positive interactions, as rated by both participants and their interaction partners. Indeed, in Study 2, high-IMS participants anticipated pursuing approach strategies and, as a result, expected the interaction to go well. In contrast, avoidance responses may result in a stilted and awkward interaction as the person focuses on what NOT to say rather than focusing on getting to know the other person (Devine, Evett, & Vasquez-Suson, 1996). As noted previously, there is some reason to anticipate that avoidance concerns may have negative implications for interracial interactions (e.g., Apfelbaum et al., 2008). Thus, it was possible that high-EMS participants' avoidance behaviors would lead them to be perceived more negatively by their interaction partner than low-EMS participants.

Method

Participants. A total of 48 White introductory psychology students (25 males and 23 females) at a Southeastern university participated in this study for course credit. The mean age of participants was 18.9 years ($SD = .80$).

Procedure. After participants provided consent, they completed a brief questionnaire packet that included a demographics questionnaire and the IAS (Leary, 1983). Participants were then told they would be taking part in a "getting to know you" interaction and were taken to a room where the confederate, a same-sex Black student, was already seated. Each participant and confederate was given a list of questions to be answered during the interaction (e.g., "Where are you from?" "What is your greatest fear?"). The confederates had been provided with an answer to each of the questions, and they memorized these answers to ensure that the responses were similar across participants. In addition, the confederates were trained to respond pleasantly but not too pleasantly during the interactions. Many practice interactions were conducted with all the confederates present, and we focused on consistency of behavior across

confederates. Rigged drawings ensured that participants were the designated question selector. Participants selected questions to ask the partner and to answer themselves. They were instructed to select as many questions and talk as long as needed to get to know the partner. Participants were asked to alert the experimenter when they felt that they had finished getting to know one another. The experimenter explained that the interaction would be videotaped and started the videotape just before leaving the room.

To measure interaction duration, the experimenter started a timer upon exiting the room and stopped the timer when signaled that the interaction was over. Participants and confederates were separated following the interaction and completed several questionnaires in different rooms.

Materials. Before the interracial interaction, participants completed the IAS ($\alpha = .87$; Leary, 1983). Following the interaction, participants completed the IMS ($\alpha = .84$) and EMS ($\alpha = .89$).

Participants' postinteraction questionnaire. After the interaction, participants completed a measure assessing their behavior and experiences during the interaction using 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scales. Twelve questions measured approach-related behaviors (e.g., "I smiled frequently during the interaction" and "I was interested in getting to know my interaction partner") and were averaged to create an index of approach behaviors ($\alpha = .85$). Ten questions measured avoidance-related behaviors (e.g., "I was concerned about making a bad impression" and "I tried to avoid prying too much during the conversation") and were averaged to create an index of avoidance behaviors ($\alpha = .91$). Six of the questions assessed the overall quality of the interaction (e.g., "I enjoyed speaking to my partner during this interaction" and "I would say that our interaction was pleasant") and were averaged to create a measure of interaction quality, with higher scores indicating a more pleasant interaction ($\alpha = .89$).

Confederates' postinteraction questionnaire. The confederates (2 men, 2 women) completed a questionnaire assessing the quality of the interaction and their perceptions of their interaction partners by responding to items on 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*) scales. Five items were combined to assess the confederates' perception of the quality of the interaction ($\alpha = .77$; e.g., "Overall, I felt the interaction went smoothly" and "I could imagine becoming friends with the participant"). In addition, five items were combined to assess the confederates' perception that the interaction partner was racially prejudiced ($\alpha = .81$; e.g., "The participant appeared to be biased towards my ethnic group" and "The participant did not seem comfortable with people from my ethnic group")

Videotaped interaction. Two independent coders blind to the participants' IMS and EMS scores rated the videotaped interactions on 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*) scales. One coder rated all of the videotapes and the second coder rated half of the videotapes. The coders evaluated how pleasant the interaction was overall and evaluated the interaction on six items designed to assess the participant's approach-related behaviors ($\alpha = .94$; e.g., "Tried to draw the partner into the conversation" and "Smiled genuinely during the interaction") and six items designed to assess the participant's avoidance-related behaviors (e.g., "Avoided sensitive topics" and "Did not look at partner when answering questions").

Reliability analyses indicated that the avoidance items did not hold together well as an index ($\alpha < .50$). Furthermore, although the two coders' responses on the approach index and on the quality item were in good agreement, rs > .72, the responses to the avoidance items showed weak agreement, with correlations at or below .50. We suspect that the problems with this measure stem from the difficulty of identifying when people are attempting to avoid a behavior (i.e., how do you know when someone is avoiding certain topics?). Work on the feature positive effect, for example, suggests that people find it much easier to think about the presence of features than the absence of features (Fazio, Sherman, & Herr, 1982; Newman, Wolff, & Hearst, 1980). Participants' ability to identify approach behaviors but not avoidance behaviors may reflect the relative ease with which people can think about and identify the presence of behaviors compared to the absence of behaviors.

Results

For each of the key dependent variables, hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with participants' IMS and EMS scores, and their interaction, as well as participant gender included as predictors. Participants' IAS scores were included as a covariate to control for individual differences in social anxiety that were not specific to interracial interactions. Even though confederates were trained extensively to respond similarly during the experiment, it was possible that the specific confederate who interacted with the participants would affect the quality of the interaction or that the confederates would respond with different rating styles. Therefore, analyses including codes for the confederates and interactions between these codes and IMS and EMS scores were conducted. There were no significant main effects or interactions with the confederate codes, and the results were highly similar with and without the codes. To simplify the analyses, we report the analyses without the confederate codes. Effects that are not mentioned did not reach significance.

Interaction duration. The analysis of the interaction duration revealed that high-IMS participants interacted with the confederate for a longer time than low-IMS participants $t(42) = 2.27$, $p < .03$, $\beta = .34$.

Participants' responses to interactions. Analysis of participants' self-reported approach behaviors revealed that high-IAS participants reported being less likely to have used approach strategies than low-IAS participants, $t(42) = -2.63$, $p < .02$, $\beta = -.34$. More importantly, consistent with predictions, high-IMS participants reported using approach strategies during the interaction more than low-IMS participants, $t(42) = 3.48$, $p < .002$, $\beta = .46$.
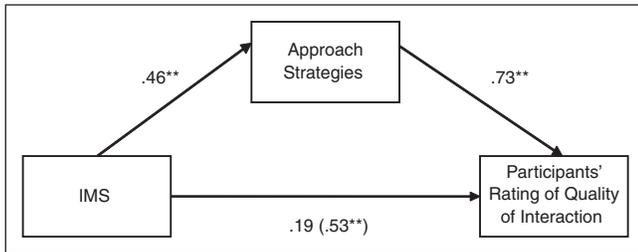
Figure 1. Mediation of the effect of internal motivation to respond without prejudice on participants' rating of quality of the interaction by self-reported approach strategies
IMS = Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale.
**p < .01.
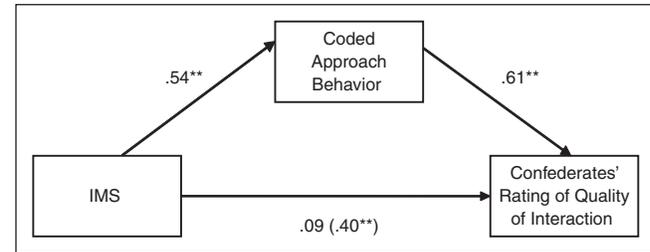
Figure 2. Mediation of the effect of internal motivation to respond without prejudice on confederates' rating of quality of the interaction by coded approach behavior
IMS = Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale.
**p < .01.

An analysis of participants' self-reported avoidance responses revealed that female participants were less likely to report using avoidance strategies than male participants, $t(42) = -2.46$, $p < .02$, $\beta = -.27$. In addition, as predicted, high-EMS participants were more likely to report the use of avoidance-related strategies during the interaction than low-EMS participants, $t(42) = 5.96$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .64$.

An analysis of the quality of the interaction indicated that high-IMS participants reported having a better interaction than low-IMS participants, $t(42) = 3.82$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .53$. A follow-up analysis examined whether the reason high-IMS participants had a better interaction was because they used more approach strategies than low-IMS participants. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with IMS, EMS, gender, and IAS entered in the first step, and approach strategies entered in the second step (see Figure 1). Consistent with the analysis reported earlier, the first step revealed an effect of IMS being positively related to interaction quality. In the second step, approach strategies significantly predicted interaction quality, $t(42) = 6.41$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .73$. When approach strategy scores were included in the regression, the effect of IMS was nonsignificant, $t(42) = 1.72$, $p < .10$, $\beta = .19$. A Sobel test indicated that approach strategies significantly mediated the effect of IMS on interaction quality, $z' = 3.28$, $p < .001$. These findings suggest that high-IMS participants, compared to low-IMS participants, were more likely to report a positive interaction because they reported using more approach strategies.

Confederates' responses to interaction. Analysis of confederates' evaluation of the interaction quality revealed that confederates who interacted with high-IMS participants rated the interaction as more positive than confederates who interacted with low-IMS participants, $t(36) = 2.65$, $p < .01$, $\beta = .40$.

An analysis of the confederates' evaluation of participants' prejudice revealed that confederates interpreted the behavior of high-EMS participants as more prejudiced than the behavior of low-EMS participants, $t(42) = 2.09$, $p < .05$, $\beta = .32$.

Videotaped interactions. An analysis of the coders' ratings of participants' approach-related behaviors revealed that, as predicted, high-IMS participants were rated as more likely to use approach-related behaviors than low-IMS participants, $t(35) = 3.94$, $p < .001$, $\beta = .54$. The analysis of the coders' rating of interaction quality also revealed that interactions were rated as more pleasant for interactions with high-IMS than low-IMS participants, $t(35) = 2.61$, $p < .02$, $\beta = .39$.

A follow-up analysis examined whether the reason the confederates had a better interaction with high-IMS participants was because high-IMS participants were more likely to engage in approach-related behaviors during the interaction than low-IMS participants. This analysis paralleled the mediation analysis of the participants' responses to the interaction but focused on the external observer ratings. Hierarchical regression analyses were conducted with IMS, EMS, gender, and IAS entered in the first step, and the approach behaviors of the participant, evaluated by the coders, entered in the second step (see Figure 2). When coded approach-related behavior was included in the analysis, it was a significant predictor of the confederates' perception of the quality of the interaction, $t(29) = 3.73$, $p < .002$, $\beta = .61$, but IMS was no longer a significant predictor of interaction quality, $t(29) < 1$, *ns*, $\beta = .09$. A Sobel test indicated that coded approach-related behaviors mediated the effect of IMS on interaction quality, $z' = 2.71$, $p < .007$. Thus, confederates who interacted with high-IMS participants were more likely to report a positive interaction because the participants engaged in more approach-related behaviors that were apparent to an outward observer, as compared to low-IMS participants.

A parallel analysis was conducted to see whether the coders' ratings of the approach behaviors also mediated the effect of IMS on their own (i.e., the coders') evaluation of the interaction quality. This analysis indicated that the effect of IMS on quality of the interaction, as evaluated by the coders, was mediated by the influence of IMS on approach behaviors, Sobel $z' = 3.57$, $p < .001$.

Discussion

The findings from this study provide insight into the factors that contribute to positive interracial interactions. In addition,

the results supported the hypothesis that high-IMS White people have positive interracial interactions because they engage in approach-focused behaviors during these interactions. More specifically, high-IMS people were more likely to have longer interactions with the confederate than low-IMS people. Persisting in the interaction and spending more time with the interaction partner is consistent with the desire to approach a positive interaction and get to know the partner. Also, in line with predictions, high-IMS participants were more likely to report that they used approach strategies (i.e., maintained eye contact, smiled, and shared personal information) during the interaction than low-IMS participants. Importantly, high-IMS participants were also more likely to rate the interaction positively compared to low-IMS participants. Mediation analyses revealed that high-IMS people were more likely to report a positive interaction because they perceived that they had used more approach-related strategies than low-IMS people. In sum, using approach strategies during the interracial interaction helped those who were internally motivated to facilitate communication with the partner and enhanced enjoyment of the interaction.

Also consistent with predictions, confederates who interacted with high- compared to low-IMS participants reported that they enjoyed the interaction more. Consistent with participants' self-ratings, objective observers also rated high-IMS participants as behaving in a more approach-related manner than their low-IMS counterparts. Finally, mediation analyses revealed that confederates who interacted with high-IMS participants were likely to report a positive interaction because the participant engaged in more approach-related behaviors as evaluated by objective observers (i.e., coders) than low-IMS participants.

Considering the implications of external motivation, and supporting our predictions, high-EMS participants were more likely to report using avoidance strategies during the interaction compared to low-EMS participants. Interestingly, confederates rated the behavior of high-EMS participants as more prejudiced than those with low EMS. External motivation seems to have a paradoxical effect whereby trying to avoid prejudice leads high-EMS people to come across as prejudiced to the confederate. It may be that focusing on the potential for failure leads to anxious, awkward responses that are interpreted by the partner as prejudiced (Devine et al., 1996). Additionally, the confederates may have construed the avoidant behavior as suggestive of prejudice that the high-EMS participants were trying not to reveal. In either case, the result of focusing on avoiding prejudice among the high-EMS participants is counterintentional and has detrimental effects on interaction quality.

General Discussion

A major goal of the present work was to identify factors that may contribute to positive interracial interactions by focusing on people's motivations to respond without prejudice and the specific goals and strategies pursued in these interactions. We posited that in regulating racial prejudice, internal motivation results in a primary concern with approaching a desired end-state of egalitarianism whereas external motivation results in a primary concern with avoiding an undesired end-state of appearing prejudiced. These regulatory concerns influence White people's goals and strategies for interracial interactions, which in turn affect the quality of these interactions. Across a series of studies, the current work tested and provided strong support for the proposed framework.

Studies 1 and 2 showed, for example, that high-IMS White participants were more likely than low-IMS White participants to anticipate pursuing goals and strategies in interracial interactions that focus on approaching egalitarianism. High-EMS participants were more likely than low-EMS participants to anticipate pursuing goals and strategies in interracial interactions that focus on avoiding prejudice. These findings were replicated in the context of a hypothetical interaction (Study 2) and an anticipated interaction (Study 1), even when controlling for other constructs related to self-regulation in social settings (Study 2). Study 2 further demonstrated that internally motivated people's pursuit of approach-related strategies resulted in a more positive outlook regarding the likely outcome of interracial interactions.

Study 3 demonstrated that White people's anticipated responses and outcomes in Studies 1 and 2 were consistent with their actual behavior in an interracial interaction. High- compared to low-IMS participants had longer interactions and reported (and were coded as) engaging in more approach-related behaviors during the interaction. They also reported having a more pleasant interaction than their low-IMS counterparts, and their perceptions were supported by ratings made by their interaction partners and by objective coders.[5] Also supporting our theorizing, the approach-related responses mediated the effect of internal motivation on interaction quality. Thus, these findings indicate that internally motivated people experience relatively positive interracial interactions as a result of their pursuit of behaviors geared toward approaching a good interaction. In contrast, those who were highly externally motivated reported that they engaged in behaviors to avoid coming across as prejudiced during the interaction but, ironically, actually came across as relatively prejudiced to their Black interaction partners. These findings highlight how people's motivation to respond without prejudice relates to their self-regulatory concerns and ultimately their success (or failure) in interracial interactions.

Importance of Assessing Why People Are Motivated to Respond Without Prejudice

The findings from these studies support previous theorizing on the regulation of prejudice stressing the importance of being motivated to control prejudice as a precursor to initiating control efforts (Bodenhausen & Macrae, 1998; Devine, 1989; Fazio, 1990; Monteith, 1993). That is, in the current studies, those who were motivated to respond without prejudice set goals and pursued strategies with the expressed intention of

successfully regulating their behavior in interracial interactions. However, the present work refines previous theorizing by identifying the specific goals that White people pursue in efforts to regulate prejudice toward Black people (approaching egalitarianism and avoiding prejudice), their pursuit of strategies to meet these goals, and the implications of these strategies for the quality of actual dynamic interracial interactions from the vantage point of both interaction partners.

The current findings underscore that knowing whether a person is motivated to respond without prejudice is not sufficient to understand their regulatory efforts; one must know why the person is motivated. Consider that if the current studies had only assessed people's overall amount of motivation to respond without prejudice, the distinction between the concerns with approaching egalitarianism and avoiding prejudice manifested by participants would have been clouded. Furthermore, if instead of examining the source of motivation we had only assessed people's racial attitudes, the nuances we observed would have been lost as well. For example, low- compared to high-prejudice participants were less likely to endorse avoidance goals and strategies for interracial interactions. However, the participants' attitudes were unrelated to the endorsement of approach goals and strategies, which, as we demonstrated, have important implications for interracial interaction quality. By examining the source of White people's motivation to respond without prejudice toward Black people, we were able to pinpoint White participants' primary regulatory concerns for interracial interactions and make important distinctions between their goals and the strategies they pursued to regulate prejudice.

Improving Interracial Interactions

Our focus on White people's goals and strategies for interracial interactions, as well as the implications of these goals and strategies for the quality of interracial interactions, sheds light on factors that may improve interracial interactions. The current findings revealed that those who pursued approach goals and strategies had relatively positive interactions because of these approach-related responses. By identifying which goals and behaviors resulted in more positive intergroup interactions, we may be able to help those who are eager to have positive interactions bring their behavior in line with their desires. It may be possible, for example, to develop training techniques that encourage people to pursue those strategies and behaviors that are most likely to result in positive interactions.

Previous work indicates that those who are motivated to respond without prejudice will actively work to improve their interracial interaction skills if they believe the effort will help them meet their goals (Plant & Devine, 2009). Even those who were primarily externally motivated to respond without prejudice actively worked on techniques if they believed the techniques would help them avoid overt prejudiced behaviors in interracial interactions. The current work suggests that pursuing approach strategies may help them address their underlying concerns by improving the experience for all. Of course, it

will be important to determine whether these approach-related responses improve interactions even when the person pursuing them is not personally dedicated to responding without prejudice.

It is also worth considering the interesting situation of the participants who were high in both IMS and EMS. Our findings suggest that these people pursued both approach and avoidance behaviors during the interactions. It is possible that such conflicting goals would have interfered with their goal pursuit. The present findings suggest instead that they benefited from their internal motivation and pursued approach goals and strategies and, therefore, had relatively pleasant interactions. However, they also had avoidance concerns and came across as somewhat more biased to their partners than their high-IMS/low-EMS counterparts. In future work it may be possible to help the high-IMS/high-EMS participants focus more on their approach concerns and thereby possibility eliminate the negative implications of their avoidance concerns.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the findings across our studies strongly support our conceptual framework, there are clear limitations to our studies, and additional research will help clarify these issues. For example, all of our participants were undergraduates at state universities. Although there is no reason to expect that the theoretical processes should operate differently in noncollege samples, it is possible that college students have a heightened sensitivity to race-related concerns and may be especially vigilant and thoughtful about interracial settings. It will be important to examine whether our findings generalize to other populations. Another limitation of Study 3 is that the Black interaction partners were confederates. Although a reasonable first step, it will be essential to test our conceptual analysis when both interaction partners are naive participants (Devine et al., 1996).

In addition, we should note that the present research focused on only one type of interracial interaction and primarily on only one side of this interaction (i.e., White people's responses to interactions with Black people). To develop a complete analysis of dynamic interracial interactions, it is critical to examine interracial interactions from the perspective of members of both nonstigmatized and stigmatized groups (Devine et al., 1996; Shelton, 2000). As such, it will be important in future work to examine the goals and strategies that Black people pursue in interactions with White people. Finally, it will be valuable to examine a broader range of interracial interactions (e.g., Hispanics with non-Hispanics) to determine the similarities and differences across types of interactions. Although these are surely limitations, we view them as exciting and productive avenues for future research.

Conclusions

As a field, we have long focused on those factors that lead to intergroup tension. The current work shifted the focus toward

identifying what can make an interracial interaction go well and possibly smooth out the rocky road to positive intergroup interactions. The resulting findings highlighted the importance of examining the source of White people's motivation to respond without prejudice toward Black people and its implications for their approach to regulating their behavior in interracial interactions. Our hope is that by identifying the goals and strategies that White people pursue in interracial interactions (e.g., approaching egalitarianism vs. avoiding prejudice), the field may be in a better position to understand the unfolding dynamics of interracial interactions in our increasingly multicultural society and develop effective techniques to improve the quality of interracial interactions.

Appendix

Study 2 Index Items

Approach Goal
_____My goal in the interaction would be to be friendly.
_____I would be focused on having a good interaction.
_____I would want to treat my interaction partner as I would anybody else.
_____I would look forward to getting to know the person.
_____I would be interested in getting to know my interaction partner.

Avoidance Goal
_____My goal would be to avoid coming across as prejudiced.
_____I would be focused on not being viewed as a racist.
_____My goal would be to avoid the appearance of racial bias.

Approach Strategies
_____I would ask him/her questions about himself/herself.
_____I would smile frequently at my interaction partner.
_____I would want to be pleasant to my interaction partner.
_____I would make eye contact with my partner.
_____I would try hard to make him or her comfortable during the interaction.
_____I would want to share information about myself with my interaction partner.

Avoidance Strategies
_____I would concentrate on avoiding the use of stereotypes.
_____I would try not to make any statements that may come across as biased.
_____I would have to watch carefully what I say and do.
_____I would be careful about the topics of conversation that I brought up.
_____I would avoid talking about any sensitive topics.
_____I would actively avoid any behavior that I thought might come across as prejudiced.
_____I would probably keep the conversation short.

Notes

1. It is worth noting that the Internal Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (IMS) and External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice Scale (EMS) were uncorrelated in each of our studies; rs range from .15 to −.13, all ps > .16.
2. In this study, we also examined the results with ANOVA and the findings were virtually identical.
3. In this study, we assessed the quality of the interaction participants anticipated using a different method (open-ended responses to a scenario) than the goal and strategy questions (Likert-type responses to questions). In addition, we assessed anticipated quality before assessing the strategies. Because we were interested in whether the strategies that participants anticipated pursuing mediated the effect of motivation on quality of interracial interactions, we wanted to decrease demand characteristics that reporting strategies before the interaction quality may elicit.
4. It is also worth noting that in this study participants completed the IMS and EMS before the questions about the interracial interaction. Given that the findings were virtually identical to the findings in Study 2, where participants completed the IMS and EMS after the interaction measures, we suspect that completing the IMS and EMS after the interaction questionnaire in Studies 2 and 3 did not influence the IMS and EMS responses.
5. Given the tendency for high-IMS/low-EMS people to respond with low levels of both implicit and explicit racial bias, one may wonder how our findings relate to previous work where low levels of racial bias were associated poor performance in interracial settings (e.g., Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005; Vorauer & Turpie, 2004). The findings relating implicit prejudice to interracial interaction quality are inconsistent with some studies finding that low-bias Whites have higher quality interracial interactions than high-bias Whites and others finding the reverse pattern (see Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2000, for a review). In terms of explicit prejudice, Vorauer and Turpie (2004) found that low-prejudice people were typically more likely than high-prejudice people to engage in intimacy-building (i.e., approach-focused) behaviors toward an outgroup member except for when evaluative concerns were experimentally increased. Thus, the current

findings are consistent with Vorauer and Turpie in that participants high in IMS tend to be lower in explicit prejudice, and we did not manipulate evaluative concerns.

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