

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

# Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is: Effects of Racial Climate and Institutional Support on Black Americans' Perceptions of Anti-Racism Task Forces

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## ABSTRACT

Advancing the literature on diversity initiatives, the present research investigated Black Americans' perceptions of an organization's anti-racism task force. Across two studies ( $N = 1182$ ), when the organization's climate was racially hostile, compared with safe (Studies 1–2) and control (Study 1) climates, Black Americans perceived the organization as less genuinely motivated to combat racism, centering people of color's needs less, and centering White people's needs more. Furthermore, hostile climates resulted in less anticipated autonomy for a person of color who directs the task force, and less interest in selecting a person of color (Study 1) or themselves for the director position (Study 2). Such differences also emerged for an organization that had a high (compared with moderate) level of racial hostility (Study 2). The harmful effects of hostile climates were buffered by institutional support for the task force, though more effectively so when the hostility was moderate versus high (Study 2). These findings provide applications for diversity initiatives and anti-racism efforts.

Social psychology has revealed the cognitive, affective, and behavioral responses to organizational diversity initiatives, broadly defined as programs and policies intended to promote diversity, inclusion, and equity for marginalized group members (Dover et al. 2020). Examining several types of initiatives, such as diversity awards (i.e., awards for applicants from marginalized groups) and diversity trainings, this literature has documented mixed consequences for people of color (POC; e.g., Chaney et al. 2016; Dover et al. 2020). For instance, while diversity initiatives can increase feelings of safety and belonging for POC (e.g., Chaney et al. 2016; Chaney and Sanchez 2018), there are unintended consequences such as unrealistic expectations about the organization's actual levels of inclusion and reduced perceptions of one's own competence (e.g., Dover et al. 2021; Avery and McKay 2006; Wilton et al. 2020).

While research has frequently examined the effects of diversity statements, policies, and training programs, less is known about

POC's perceptions of, and responses to, organizational anti-racism task forces or committee.<sup>1</sup> Anti-racism task forces broadly refer to a specialized group aiming to address issues related to race and racism, which were increasingly common in organizations and institutions following the police killing of George Floyd in 2020 (e.g., Brenick et al. 2024; Mezuk et al. 2023). In establishing an anti-racism task force, organizations may seek POC to participate in and lead such efforts (e.g., Pham and Chaney 2025; Torrez et al. 2024). Indeed, having POC direct anti-racism task forces may confer several benefits. POC (vs. White people) have more expertise and are better positioned to advocate for racial issues (e.g., Thai et al. 2021; Wallace et al. 2024), which can produce positive organizational outcomes such as trust, belonging, and authenticity among POC (Pham and Chaney 2025; Thai and Grand'-Pierre 2026). Marginalized people reported greater collective action intentions with an organization whose leadership team

was predominantly POC (rather than predominantly White; Iyer and Achia 2021). Indeed, POC (vs. White) directors of anti-racism task forces may be less likely to be dismissed and elicit less skepticism because they have more psychological standing on speaking about racism (Miller and Effron 2010). That is, POC are deemed more trustworthy sources of information on race-related issues (Crosby and Monin 2013).

However, psychological research has yet to investigate POC's interest (for themselves or other POC) in directing an anti-racism task force. Indeed, POC who led such initiatives reported significant challenges, including but not limited to perceptions that the organization is not genuinely motivated to combat racial discrimination, and that the task force centered White people's needs and decentered POC needs in their efforts (e.g., Engram and Mayer 2023). These challenges lead to low feelings of autonomy for POC who lead anti-racism initiatives in organizations (e.g., Squire et al. 2018; Weeks et al. 2024; Williams et al. 2021). Psychological research, however, has not investigated how POC perceive and engage with an organizational anti-racism task force. Thus, the current research examined how an organization's racial climate and institutional support for the task force impact Black Americans' perceptions of an organizational anti-racism task force and interest in leading the task force.

## 1 | Effective Diversity Initiatives

The effectiveness of diversity initiatives may vary depending on the extent to which their efforts are meaningful and create actual benefits for marginalized people (e.g., Kutlaca and Radke 2023; Leslie 2019; Pietri et al. 2024). Past research on organizational diversity initiatives has examined (perceptions of) genuine motives, or motivation rooted in genuine care for marginalized communities, rather than performative or cost-avoidance motives, as a key characteristic of an effective initiative (e.g., Apfelbaum and Suh 2024; Chaney et al. 2025). For instance, among employees, perceptions of organization's genuine motivations for engaging in social advocacy lead to greater trust in the organization and greater motivation to engage in diversity initiatives (e.g., Lim and Young 2021; Yim 2021). In contrast, perceived inauthentic motivations resulted in greater identity threat concerns for marginalized employees (Kroeper et al. 2022; Ponce de Leon et al. 2024; Wilton et al. 2020). Thus, we contend that an effective anti-racism task force should be perceived as genuinely motivated to combat racism.

Further, effective diversity initiatives must center the perspectives and needs of POC (e.g., Laiduc et al. 2024; Pham and Chaney 2026). For instance, Black and Latinx women perceived a White woman leader as a more trustworthy ally to women of color when the White woman leader passed down the mic to a Black woman to address Black women's struggles, compared to when she spoke on the matter from her perspective (Pham and Chaney 2025). This act of centering POC needs and perspectives increased Black and Latinx women's feelings of identity safety and inclusion at the organization (Pham and Chaney 2025; see also Thai and Grand'Pierre 2026). Importantly, centering POC perspectives must go hand in hand with de-centering narratives of Whiteness (e.g., Engram and Mayer 2023; Lewis and Shah 2021), given the long history of organizations and

institutions in the US enacting policies and structures that privilege Whiteness (e.g., Bonilla-Silva 2019; Harris 1993; Southern 2025a, 2025b). That is, diversity initiatives sometimes center White people's needs and perspectives while claiming to support POC, which creates a sense of burden on diversity officers of color (Bonilla-Silva 2019; Engram and Mayer 2023). For example, when diversity statements center on the benefits of diversity for White people rather than the moral imperative of including POC, POC report more negative outcomes in the space (Chaney 2022; Georgeac and Rattan 2023; Starck et al. 2021). Thus, an effective anti-racism force centers POC needs and decenters White people's needs.

Last, prior research suggests that organizations often make diversity officers of color figureheads without affording them autonomy to implement changes (Engram and Mayer 2023; Southern 2025a). Indeed, allyship is (perceived) to be most effective when it offers autonomy-oriented support, allowing marginalized activists to identify and address the problems using their own approaches (Droogendyk et al. 2016; Pietri et al. 2024). Yet, a commonly reported issue with organizational diversity initiatives is the organization's lack of autonomy given to POC in charge of the initiatives (e.g., Engram and Mayer 2023; Weeks et al. 2024).

Notably, perceptions of *expressed* diversity efforts like diversity statements can vary significantly from perceptions of *evidenced* diversity efforts, such as having a racially diverse workforce (Kruk and Matsick 2021; Ragland and Sommers 2024; Wilton et al. 2020). While anti-racism task forces are likely to be perceived as more active, evidence-based diversity initiatives, their effectiveness may vary, such as by perceptions that these task forces are not genuinely motivated, often center on Whiteness, and minimize POC autonomy. In sum, while past research has demonstrated several criteria for effective diversity initiatives, less is known about how Black Americans anticipate these outcomes when considering a newly created anti-racism task force at an organization. In the present study, we examine this question, with two factors that we hypothesized would impact Black Americans' perceptions of an organizations' anti-racism task force as effective: racial climate and institutional support.

## 2 | Racial Climate

Racial climate refers to the extent to which an organization is hostile or safe to POC, determined by several factors such as racial attitudes of people within the organization and environmental cues such as minority representation (e.g., Nishii 2013; Schneider et al. 2013; Tausen et al. 2020). That is, an organization may differ on the extent to which its climate is inclusive (or not) of POC. Research on diversity initiatives emphasizes the influential role of climate. For instance, coworkers' level of support for diversity predicted greater employee efforts to champion diversity initiatives (Cunningham and Sartore 2010). Furthermore, a mismatch between an organization's hostile climate and stated goals of an organizational diversity statement may reduce marginalized people's feelings of organizational inclusion (e.g., Dover et al. 2020; Wilton et al. 2020). Less is known about how an organization's racial climate affects POC's perceptions of and interest in an anti-racism task force. While organizations with a highly hostile racial climate may be the

most in need of an anti-racism task force to improve the climate, might the hostility of the climate lead to negative perceptions of the task force (e.g., that the organization is not genuinely motivated)?

Indeed, research on attribution theories would suggest that a hostile climate and anti-racism task force signal highly distinctive behaviors, likely to result in attributions to ingenuine motives (Chaney et al. 2025; Kelley 1967, 1973). Specifically related to the psychology of POC, a racially hostile climate negatively impacts POC's psychosocial well-being, including academic performance, self-esteem, and health (e.g., Baysu et al. 2024; Bernard et al. 2025). In organizational contexts, a racially hostile climate led to greater job dissatisfaction and lower retention rates for Black and Latinx faculty (Price et al. 2005). Similarly, Black Americans who were exposed to lower minority representation cues and colorblind ideology were more likely to distrust the organization (Purdie-Vaughns et al. 2008; Shaheed and Kiang 2021). Specific to activism, higher perceptions of racially discriminatory climate predicted less social change behaviors among Asian people (Yi and Todd 2020). In the current research, we argue that a racially hostile climate will cause Black Americans to anticipate the organization to be less genuinely motivated and to center POC needs less and White people's needs more, compared to a less racially hostile climate. We further propose that a hostile climate will also make POC anticipate less autonomy for another POC or themselves who directs the task force, and less likely to select another POC or themselves for the director position.

### 3 | Institutional Support

While a racially hostile climate may have a negative impact, prior research shows that an organization can provide institutional support for the task force as a buffer (e.g., Engram and Mayer 2023; Weeks et al. 2024). According to organizational support theory, an organization's demonstrated care and value for their employees' contributions and well-being impact employees' engagement with organizational initiatives (e.g., Aselage and Eisenberger 2003; Eisenberger et al. 1986). Relying on the norm of reciprocity and self-enhancement processes, this theory posits that (1) employees feel obligated to reciprocate their organization's willingness to support employees and (2) the organization can fulfill employees' emotional needs through the provision of support (e.g., Kurtessis et al. 2017; Panaccio and Vandenberghe 2009).

Perceived organizational support has positive cognitive, behavioral, and well-being implications for employees (Eisenberger et al. 2020). For instance, employees who feel greater organizational support demonstrate more commitment and trust in organization, and engage more with their job (e.g., Chiaburu et al. 2013; Eisenberger and Stinglhamber 2011). In addition, organizational support was associated with positive well-being outcomes such as increased job satisfaction and reduced stress (e.g., Baran et al. 2012; Kurtessis et al. 2017). Not only having direct effects on psychosocial outcomes, but organizations also support through the socio-emotional need-fulfilling function, which can buffer the impact of various workplace stressors (e.g., Sonnentag and Frese 2003; Sonnentag and Fritz 2015). For example, organizational support buffered

the negative impact of an unfair academic justice climate (i.e., unfair treatment and resource allocation to researchers by research leaders) on job burnout (Song et al. 2024).

While organizational support can take interpersonal (e.g., support from leaders and supervisors) and institutional forms (e.g., organizational policies, practices, or structures; Kurtessis et al. 2017; Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002), the current research focuses on an organization's institutional support to heed the calls for institutional changes to promote sustainable organizational anti-racism efforts (e.g., Engram and Mayer 2023; Pham et al. 2024; Squire et al. 2018). Specifically, institutional support for anti-racism task forces comprises an implementation and/or revision of policies, practices, and structures to support effective task force operation (e.g., Society for Research in Child Development 2024; Weeks et al. 2024). Such institutional support can be monetary (e.g., resources for the task force), legal (e.g., legal support for the task force in response to backlash), or political (e.g., public commitment to cutting ties with partners and stakeholders who oppose the task force). Drawing from organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al. 2020), we argue that institutional support for an anti-racism task force should increase Black Americans' perceived effectiveness of, and interest in, leading an anti-racism task force, and buffer against the harm of a racially hostile climate on such outcomes.

### 4 | Current Research

Integrating prior work on organizational diversity initiatives (e.g., Chaney et al. 2016; Dover et al. 2020) and perceptions of POC advocates for racial justice (e.g., Thai et al. 2021; Wallace et al. 2024), the present work examines Black Americans' perceived effectiveness of an organizational anti-racism task force, with specific consideration of if Black Americans believe the task force is genuinely motivated to combat racism as well as willing to support POC needs, and ultimately their interest in leading the task force. Drawing from interdisciplinary research on ineffective diversity initiatives (e.g., Squire et al. 2018; Weeks et al. 2024) and effective allyship (e.g., Derricks et al. 2023; Pietri et al. 2024), we focus on a set of outcomes characterizing desired components of an effective anti-racism task force, addressing both Black Americans' perceptions of a task force (genuine motives, POC-centering goals, White-centering goals) and anticipated outcomes of directing the task force (autonomy, interest). The present research specified the role of a Black American (participants themselves or another Black employee) as the *director* of an anti-racism task for two main purposes: (1) to center in anti-racism activism the expertise of POC (Thai et al. 2021; Thai and Grand'Pierre 2026), and (2) to better test the effects of racial climate and institutional support on autonomy (i.e., a director role should grant the POC director autonomy, so specifying a non-director role for the POC would potentially create confounds).

In two experiments, we examined Black Americans' perceptions of a newly created anti-racism task force while imagining another POC (Study 1) or themselves (Study 2) serving as a director of an organization's anti-racism task force, under varying conditions of racial climate (Studies 1–2) and institutional support (Study 2). We hypothesized that both climate and

institutional support would have independent and interactive effects. Using the set of outcomes argued above, while a racially hostile climate would lead to lower perceptions of effectiveness, institutional support would lead to greater perceived effectiveness and buffer against the harm of a hostile climate. All data and materials are available: <https://osf.io/6jpvb>. All studies, conditions, measures, and exclusions are reported. All studies were IRB-approved.

## 5 | Study 1

Study 1 investigated the effects of racial climate on Black Americans' perceptions of an anti-racism task force created by an organization. Particularly, Study 1 asked Black participants to evaluate the organization's motives and goals, as well as the anticipated autonomy experienced by a POC who directs the task force, and participants' interest in selecting a POC as the director. The goals of having Black Americans imagine a POC (as opposed to themselves) as the director were twofold: (1) to minimize confounds related to participants' prior experience with diversity initiatives and leadership (i.e., not all Black Americans are familiar with the experience of directing an anti-racism task force); and (2) to increase generalizability with the identities of the director of color unspecified.

To experimentally study the climate effect, Study 1 featured an organization that was racially hostile, racially safe, or had no race-related information, comprising a three-cell between-subjects design. Via the control condition, we first sought to illuminate Black Americans' attitudes toward a newly created anti-racism task force at baseline (i.e., without any information about climate). Concurrently, we hypothesized a main effect of climate across all outcomes. In a racially hostile climate (vs. safe and control climates), Black participants would perceive the organization as less genuinely motivated to establish the task force, and to center POC perspectives less and White perspectives more. Similarly, Black participants in a hostile climate would anticipate less autonomy for the director of color and would be less likely to select a POC for the director position. We did not have a specific hypothesis regarding safe versus control climate conditions.

### 5.1 | Methods

#### 5.1.1 | Participants

Assuming a small to medium effect size ( $d = 0.40$ ), an a priori power analysis for a three-cell ANOVA indicated a sample size of 246 (80% power; G\*Power; Faul et al. 2007). To ensure data quality, we recruited 276 Black/African-American participants in Winter 2023 from Prolific. However, 6 did not identify as Black/African-American in the survey, leaving an analytic sample of 270 participants. To ensure data quality, all participants passed at least one of two attention checks. See Table 1 for demographic summaries.

### 5.2 | Procedure

Participants, upon consent, imagined working at an organization called CCG by first reading CCG's website (adapted

from Wilton et al. 2020). Participants then learned about CCG employees' attitudes toward various organizational policies. Here, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: hostile, control, or safe. The hostile versus safe condition was manipulated by the percentage of CCG employees endorsing two hypothetical policies related to Black Americans (see Table 2); all policies were unrelated to race in the control condition. After, participants learned, via an ostensible organization-wide email, that CCG was in the process of establishing an anti-racism task force and recruiting a director for the task force. Participants then completed measures about the anti-racism task force, and an imagined POC who directs the task force, in the order below. Finally, participants completed demographics and a debriefing.

**TABLE 1** | Demographic summary.

	Study 1 <i>n</i> (%)	Study 2 <i>n</i> (%)
Age ( <i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> )	41.93 (13.11)	40.95 (12.31)
Political orientation ( <i>M</i> , <i>SD</i> )	4.68 (1.84)	4.92 (1.77)
Gender		
Cisgender men	136 (50.4%)	328 (36.0%)
Transgender men	5 (1.9%)	17 (1.9%)
Cisgender women	126 (46.7%)	543 (59.5%)
Transgender women	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.7%)
Non-binary	1 (0.4%)	6 (0.7%)
Genderqueer	0 (0.0%)	2 (0.2%)
Self-identified	2 (0.7%)	10 (1.1%)
Race/ethnicity		
Monoracial Black	262 (97.0%)	886 (97.1%)
Multiracial	8 (3.0%)	26 (2.9%)
Multiracial Black/Asian	3 (1.1%)	2 (0.2%)
Multiracial Black/ Latinx	4 (1.5%)	8 (0.9%)
Multiracial Black/White	2 (0.7%)	9 (1.0%)
Multiracial Black/ Indigenous	0 (0.0%)	9 (1.0%)
Biracial/Multiracial	0 (0.0%)	6 (0.6%)
Sexual orientation		
Lesbian/gay	27 (10.0%)	51 (5.6%)
Bisexual	48 (17.8%)	170 (18.6%)
Pansexual	2 (0.7%)	21 (2.3%)
Queer	0 (0.0%)	7 (0.9%)
Questioning/not sure	2 (0.7%)	3 (0.3%)
Asexual	2 (0.8%)	6 (0.7%)
Heterosexual	191 (70.7%)	652 (71.5%)
Self-identified	0 (0.0%)	1 (0.1%)

*Note:* Political orientation was measured on a scale from 1 (very conservative) to 7 (very liberal). The total of Multiracial subgroups does not equal the number of Multiracial individuals because some participants identified with more than two races/ethnicities.

**TABLE 2** | Percentages of CCG employees voting yes on two race-related policies as manipulation of racial climate, by condition, Studies 1–2.

Policy	High safety	Moderate safety	Moderate hostility	High hostility
Ensuring racial equality in salaries such that Black employees and White employees in the same position are paid equally at CCG.	97%	774% <sup>a</sup>	474% <sup>a</sup>	17%
Banning hairstyles such as locs, braids, cornrows, and Afros at CCG.	4%	44% <sup>a</sup>	344% <sup>a</sup>	84%

<sup>a</sup>In Study 1, high safety and high hostility conditions were named safety and hostility conditions, and moderate safety and moderate hostility conditions were not present.

**TABLE 3** | Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables, Study 1.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Genuine motives	—					4.95	1.31
2. POC-centering goals	0.59**	—				5.64	1.29
3. White-centering goals	−0.15**	−0.18**	—			4.37	1.51
4. Autonomy	0.49*	0.64**	−0.03	—		4.89	1.48
5. POC-interest	0.12	0.18**	−0.17**	0.04	—	5.35	1.23

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$ .

## 5.3 | Measures

### 5.3.1 | Genuine Motives

Participants completed three items to report their perception of CCG's internal motives to support diversity and inclusion via the anti-racism task force ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ; e.g., “CCG holds diversity and equity at the core of its value”; adapted from Burns and Granz 2022), from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

### 5.3.2 | POC- and White-Centering Goals

Participants completed a six-item measure to report their estimated likelihood of CCG aiming the task force to achieve POC-centering goals ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ; e.g., “Meeting the expectations of Black, Indigenous, and POC employees”; adapted from Pham and Chaney 2026), using a scale from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*). Similarly, participants estimated the likelihood of CCG wanting the task force to achieve five White-centering goals ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ; e.g., “Centering the feelings of White people at CCG”; items created based on Engram and Mayer 2023) on a 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*) scale. As expected, items of these two measures emerged as two separate factors in an exploratory factor analysis (see Table S2).

### 5.3.3 | POC Director Autonomy

Participants completed five PI-developed items ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ; e.g., “They would have authority over how CCG operates”) to report their anticipated autonomy for a POC selected to direct the Anti-Racism Task Force, using a scale from 1 (*very unlikely*) to 7 (*very likely*).

### 5.3.4 | Interest in POC Director

Participants expressed their interest in selecting a POC to lead the anti-racism task force at CCG by responding to three PI-developed items ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ; e.g., “CCG should choose a person of

color to lead the Task Force”) on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

## 6 | Results

We first conducted zero-order correlations and descriptive statistics among variables of interest<sup>2</sup> (see Table 3).

Next, a series of ANOVAs demonstrated significant racial climate effects on all outcomes. LSD post hoc tests were employed to probe pairwise comparisons.<sup>3</sup> Table 4 presents descriptive statistics and omnibus tests; Table 5 presents post hoc comparisons.

Across all outcomes, there were no significant differences between the safe and the control climate. That is, Black Americans' perceptions by default (without any information about racial climate) resembled Black Americans' perceptions in a racially safe climate. In the control and safe climates, participants perceived CCG as having relatively genuine motivations for establishing the task force, relatively high in POC-centering goals and moderate in White-centering goals, anticipated moderately high levels of autonomy for an imagined POC task force director, and were relatively interested in selecting a POC to direct the task force.

Yet, the hostile condition significantly differed from both the control and safe conditions across all outcomes. Specifically, Black participants in the hostile (vs. safe and control) climate perceived the organization as holding significantly less genuine motives, and endorsing significantly less POC-centering goals and more White-centering goals. Further, compared with both safe and control climates, participants in the hostile climate anticipated that a POC task director would experience significantly less autonomy and were less interested in selecting a POC as the director, though the difference between hostile and safe conditions on interest was marginally significant.

**TABLE 4** | Study 1 ANOVA results and descriptive statistics by condition.

Outcome	Condition main effect			Hostility ( <i>n</i> = 87) <i>M</i> (SD)	Control ( <i>n</i> = 89) <i>M</i> (SD)	Safety ( <i>n</i> = 94) <i>M</i> (SD)
	<i>F</i> (2,267)	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>			
Genuine motives	26.64	< 0.001	0.89	4.19 (1.54) <sub>a</sub>	5.44 (0.92) <sub>b</sub>	5.18 (1.08) <sub>b</sub>
POC-center	20.89	< 0.001	0.79	4.96 (1.62) <sub>a</sub>	5.91 (0.97) <sub>b</sub>	6.02 (0.90) <sub>b</sub>
White-center	7.09	0.001	0.46	4.83 (1.29) <sub>a</sub>	4.29 (1.60) <sub>b</sub>	4.00 (1.50) <sub>b</sub>
Autonomy	16.77	< 0.001	0.71	4.31 (1.60) <sub>a</sub>	5.28 (1.07) <sub>b</sub>	5.34 (1.29) <sub>b</sub>
POC-interest	3.22	0.041	0.31	5.08 (1.40) <sub>a</sub>	5.52 (1.08) <sub>b</sub>	5.43 (1.16) <sub>ab</sub>

Note: The condition means that the subscripts do not share a significant difference,  $p < 0.05$ .

## 7 | Discussion

In Study 1, Black Americans' perspectives on an organization's task force were significantly influenced by the organization's racial climate. Specifically, in a climate hostile (vs. safe or control) toward Black Americans, Black participants perceived the organization as less genuinely motivated to combat racism in establishing the task force. In addition, Black participants anticipated the organization in a racially hostile climate to center POC needs less and to center White people's needs more compared to a safe or control climate. Finally, Black participants in a hostile climate anticipated the POC task force director to have less autonomy and were less interested in selecting a POC for the director position compared to a safe or control climate. Together, these findings demonstrate how a racially hostile climate can impact how Black Americans perceive and engage with an organizational anti-racism task force. That is, perhaps when an organization most needs a task force to combat racism (i.e., is hostile), Black Americans seem most suspicious of the task force and that the organization will offer a POC director to direct the task force in a truly autonomous manner.

Study 1 demonstrated that Black Americans positively evaluated an organization that establishes an anti-racism task force when the racial climate was unknown and when the climate was explicitly safe. It is presumably because an anti-racism task force, compared with a general diversity initiative, may be perceived as more targeted (i.e., less diluted) in addressing racial issues (Kirby et al. 2023; Zhang and Kirby 2024). Thus, the anti-racism task force itself, even without racially egalitarian employees, may serve as a promising identity-safety cue for POC. However, we note that Black participants in neither a racially safe nor a control climate anticipated the organization to decenter Whiteness (e.g., White people's perspectives and emotions such as guilt). These complex findings suggest that while Black Americans generally have a positive evaluation of an established anti-racism task force's effectiveness, they believed that the organization would *not* intend the anti-racism task force to decenter Whiteness regardless of the racial climate. This finding speaks to the deep-rooted White-centering nature of diversity initiatives as well as the foundation of the US historically built on Whiteness as a system of power (e.g., Bonilla-Silva 2019; Harris 1993).

## 8 | Study 2

Building on Study 1's findings on the negative impact of racial climate on Black people's perceived effectiveness of an

anti-racism task force, Study 2 had two main goals. First, both the safe and hostile climates in Study 1 were manipulated to a high degree (i.e., extremely high/low percentage of employees agreeing/disagreeing with race-related policies), which may have struck participants as unrealistic. Furthermore, organizations may vary in their levels of hostility or safety; that is, a moderately hostile organization is different from an extremely hostile organization (e.g., Baran et al. 2012; Baysu et al. 2024). Hence, aiming to examine such nuances in the effects of racial climate on Black Americans' perceptions of the anti-racism task force, Study 2 built in more incremental levels of racial climate, including high safety (safety condition in Study 1), moderate safety, moderate hostility, and high hostility (hostility condition in Study 1). Due to similar patterns between control versus safety conditions in Study 1, we dropped the control condition (which presented no information about climate) to conserve statistical power.

The second goal of Study 2 was to test the potential benefits of an organization's support for its newly established anti-racism task force. Integrating previous work on organizational support theory and institutional changes for anti-racism task forces (e.g., Eisenberger et al. 2020; Weeks et al. 2024), we aimed to evaluate how institutional support may improve Black Americans' perceived effectiveness of and engagement with the task force and particularly alleviate the negative effects of a racially hostile climate.

Study 2 thus employed a 4 (racial climate: high safety, moderate safety, moderate hostility, high hostility)  $\times$  2 (institutional support: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. Importantly, Study 2 specified that Black participants considered themselves (as opposed to an imagined POC in Study 1) as the director of the anti-racism task force to anticipate autonomy and interest in serving as director. That is, these outcomes about the task force director were modified to reflect participants' own positionality. Mirroring Study 1, we hypothesized a main effect of racial climate. Novel to Study 2, we hypothesized a main effect of institutional support, such that participants would have greater perceptions of effectiveness and greater interest in the task force with institutional support present versus absent. Most importantly, we hypothesized a significant interaction between climate and support. Following Study 1, we hypothesized that without institutional support, Black participants in the high hostility condition would report more negative perceptions than all three other conditions, and more negative perceptions in the moderate hostility condition than both safety conditions (we did not have a specific hypothesis regarding the two safety conditions). However, when institutional support was provided

TABLE 5 | Post hoc analyses of conditions on main outcomes, Studies 1–2.

Post hoc comparison	Support		Genuine motives		POC-centering		White-centering		Autonomy		POC-interest		
	d	p	d	p	d	p	d	p	d	p	d	p	
Study 1	Hostile vs. control	—	0.99	<0.001	0.71	<0.001	0.37	0.016	0.72	<0.001	0.35	0.016	
	Hostile vs. safe	—	0.75	<0.001	0.82	<0.001	0.59	<0.001	0.71	<0.001	0.27	0.057	
	Control vs. safe	—	0.26	0.149	0.12	0.566	0.19	0.179	0.05	0.770	0.08	0.629	
Study 2 (all)	High hostile vs. mod hostile	0.33	<0.001	0.27	<0.001	0.33	<0.001	0.37	<0.001	0.25	0.035	0.26	0.005
	High hostile vs. mod safe	0.52	<0.001	0.83	<0.001	0.50	<0.001	0.59	<0.001	0.38	0.006	0.30	0.001
	High hostile vs. high safe	0.79	<0.001	0.99	<0.001	0.73	<0.001	0.30	0.0002	0.64	<0.001	0.34	<0.001
	Mod hostile vs. mod safe	0.20	0.034	0.35	<0.001	0.18	0.069	0.19	0.029	0.13	0.520	0.04	0.657
	Mod hostile vs. mod safe	0.52	<0.001	0.51	<0.001	0.43	<0.001	0.09	0.362	0.40	<0.001	0.06	0.576
Study 2 (no support)	Mod safe vs. high safe	0.34	0.003	0.16	0.219	0.28	0.013	0.32	0.002	0.30	0.006	0.01	0.900
	High hostile vs. mod hostile	0.35	<0.001	0.37	<0.001	0.21	0.045	0.15	0.214	0.15	0.395	0.15	0.262
	High hostile vs. mod safe	0.73	<0.001	0.92	<0.001	0.65	<0.001	0.52	<0.001	0.50	<0.001	0.44	<0.001
	High hostile vs. high safe	1.01	<0.001	1.02	<0.001	0.86	<0.001	0.21	0.078	0.69	<0.001	0.36	0.008
	Mod hostile vs. mod safe	0.42	<0.001	0.57	<0.001	0.42	<0.001	0.40	0.002	0.36	0.018	0.30	0.019
Study 2 (support)	Mod hostile vs. high safe	0.76	<0.001	0.68	<0.001	0.62	<0.001	0.07	0.578	0.56	<0.001	0.21	0.118
	Mod safe vs. high safe	0.36	0.018	0.08	0.601	0.25	0.107	0.34	0.012	0.23	0.140	0.09	0.481
	High hostile vs. mod hostile	0.28	0.043	0.58	<0.001	0.46	<0.001	0.63	<0.001	0.43	0.035	0.50	0.005
	High hostile vs. mod safe	0.24	0.088	0.71	<0.001	0.37	0.005	0.61	<0.001	0.25	0.478	0.38	0.233
	High hostile vs. high safe	0.50	<0.001	0.93	<0.001	0.62	<0.001	0.36	0.007	0.49	0.002	0.31	0.041
Mod hostile vs. mod safe	0.05	0.747	0.12	0.421	0.12	0.455	0.01	0.944	0.22	0.148	0.21	0.089	
	Mod hostile vs. high safe	0.35	0.141	0.33	0.043	0.19	0.247	0.24	0.061	0.04	0.306	0.11	0.425
	Mod safe vs. high safe	0.31	0.075	0.23	0.222	0.31	0.059	0.23	0.073	0.28	0.014	0.12	0.374

Abbreviation: Mod, moderate.

for the task force, we hypothesized that these climate effects would be statistically non-significant or significantly reduced.

## 8.1 | Method

### 8.1.1 | Participants

An a priori power analysis based on Study 1's smallest effect size of post hoc comparisons ( $d = 0.26$ ) indicated a minimum sample size of 843 for a  $4 \times 2$  between-subjects ANOVA (90% power; G\*Power). To account for exclusions, a total of 944 Black/African-American participants were initially recruited from Prolific in Spring 2024. Thirteen were removed for not identifying as Black in the survey, and 19 for failing the assigned attention check, leaving a final sample of 912. See Table 1 for demographics.

## 8.2 | Procedure and Measures

Mirroring Study 1, participants first provided consent and viewed CCG's website and survey results on CCG employees' ratings of organizational policies. Here, climate was again manipulated by the percentages of employees agreeing or disagreeing with two race-related policies (see Table 2). Extending Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: high safety (safety condition in Study 1), moderate safety, moderate hostility, and high hostility (hostility condition in Study 1).

Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: institutional support or no institutional support (see Figure 1). Specifically, participants read an email from the CCG Board of Directors about establishing a new Anti-Racism Task Force titled "Call for Director of Anti-Racism Task Force Nominations." In both conditions, participants read a

paragraph inviting people to submit nominations for the Director position. Participants randomly assigned to the support condition read an additional paragraph in the email in which CCG pledged to "provide as much institutional support as possible for the Anti-Racism Task Force" with evidence-based actions (see Derricks et al. 2023).

Participants then completed a three-item PI-developed measure of perceived institutional support ( $\alpha = 0.94$ ; e.g., "CCG will provide the Task Force with lots of institutional support") on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*)-7 (*strongly agree*). The following were Study 1 measures of perceived genuine motives ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ), POC-centering goals ( $\alpha = 0.96$ ), White-centering goals ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), and autonomy ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ), which was adapted to be about participants themselves when imagining being selected as the task force director. Finally, participants completed a three-item measure of interest in serving as the task force director ( $\alpha = 0.95$ ; e.g., "I would be interested in serving as the Director of the Anti-Racism Task Force at CCG."), on a 1(*strongly disagree*)-7(*strongly agree*) scale, before demographic questions and debriefing.

## 9 | Results

Table 6 presents zero-order correlations and descriptive statistics among outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

A series of  $4 \times 2$  between-subjects ANOVAs was conducted on each outcome, using LSD post hoc tests as appropriate. Indicating successful manipulation of institutional support, participants in the institutional support condition perceived greater support for the task force than their counterparts in the no support condition,  $F(3,904) = 70.59$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.56$ . See Tables 7,8 for descriptive statistics by condition, and Table 5 for post hoc comparison statistics. Across outcomes, we probed significant interactions by institutional support condition.

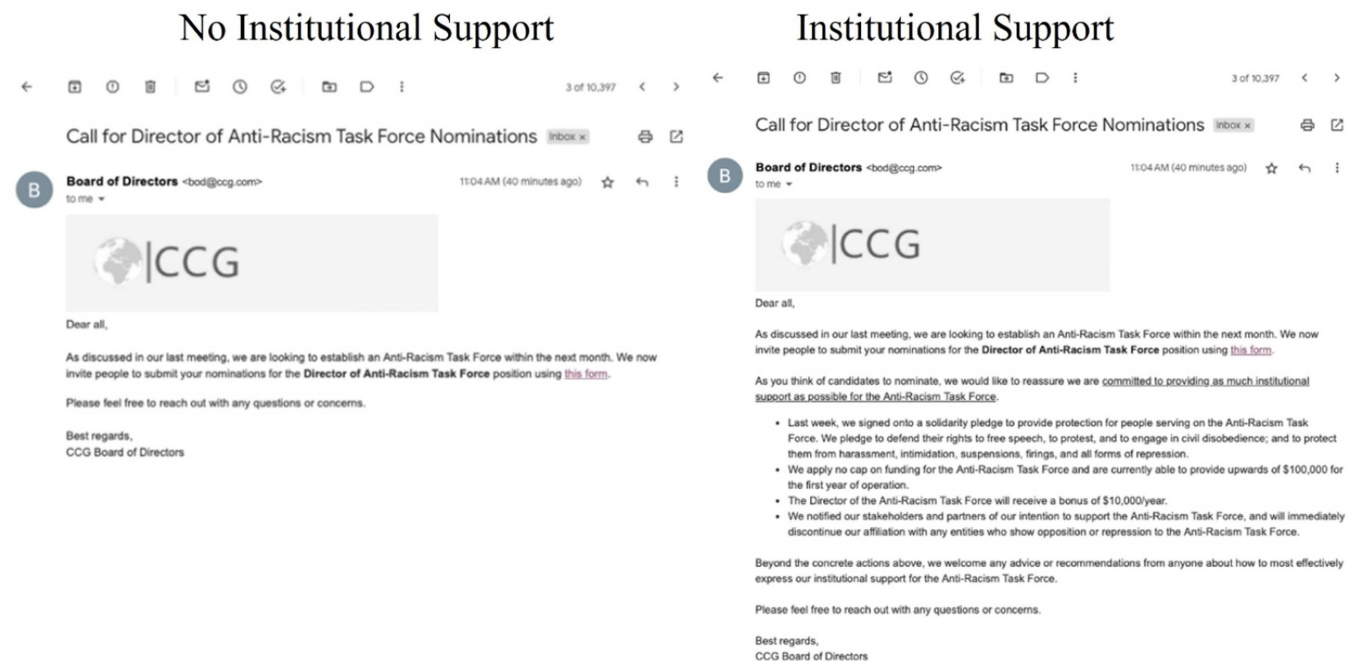


FIGURE 1 | Manipulation of institutional support, Study 2.

**TABLE 6** | Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables, Study 2.

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Institutional support	—						5.44	1.31
2. Genuine motives	0.71**	—					5.21	1.43
3. POC-centering goals	0.64**	0.66**	—				5.58	1.29
4. White-centering goals	0.22**	-0.21**	-0.25**	—			4.13	1.58
5. Autonomy	1.59**	0.63**	0.59**	-0.06	—		4.90	1.61
6. Interest	1.39**	0.46**	0.40**	0.02	0.55**	—	4.31	1.85

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.001$ .**TABLE 7** | Study 2 descriptive statistics by condition.

Outcome	Climate conditions			Support conditions		
	High safety ( <i>n</i> = 219) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate safety ( <i>n</i> = 238) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate hostility ( <i>n</i> = 237) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High hostility ( <i>n</i> = 218) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Support ( <i>n</i> = 449) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	No support ( <i>n</i> = 463) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Support	5.93 (0.92) <sub>a</sub>	5.59 (1.07) <sub>ab</sub>	5.36 (1.25) <sub>a</sub>	4.87 (1.67) <sub>b</sub>	5.79 (1.06)	5.10 (1.43)
GenMot	5.73 (0.90) <sub>a</sub>	5.57 (1.14) <sub>a</sub>	5.12 (1.42) <sub>b</sub>	4.37 (1.73) <sub>c</sub>	5.40 (1.30)	5.02 (1.52)
POC-center	6.01 (0.94) <sub>a</sub>	5.73 (1.06) <sub>b</sub>	5.52 (1.28) <sub>b</sub>	5.05 (1.60) <sub>c</sub>	5.74 (1.17)	5.43 (1.38)
White-center	4.17 (1.57) <sub>a</sub>	3.73 (1.53) <sub>b</sub>	4.04 (1.66) <sub>a</sub>	4.63 (1.52) <sub>c</sub>	4.20 (1.56)	4.05 (1.58)
Autonomy	5.49 (1.19) <sub>a</sub>	5.12 (1.29) <sub>b</sub>	4.94 (1.54) <sub>b</sub>	4.53 (1.74) <sub>c</sub>	5.19 (1.36)	4.86 (1.59)
Interest	4.48 (1.62) <sub>a</sub>	4.46 (1.90) <sub>a</sub>	4.38 (1.98) <sub>a</sub>	3.89 (2.83) <sub>b</sub>	4.37 (1.82)	4.25 (1.89)

Note: The condition means that the subscripts do not share a significant difference,  $p < 0.05$ .  
Abbreviation: GenMot, genuine motives.

**TABLE 8** | Study 2: Descriptive statistics by climate conditions by institutional support.

Outcome	Institutional support				No institutional support			
	High safe ( <i>n</i> = 114) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate safe ( <i>n</i> = 116) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate host ( <i>n</i> = 119) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High host ( <i>n</i> = 100) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High safe ( <i>n</i> = 105) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate safe ( <i>n</i> = 122) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	Moderate host ( <i>n</i> = 118) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	High host ( <i>n</i> = 118) <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Support	6.05 (0.85) <sub>a</sub>	5.77 (0.97) <sub>bc</sub>	5.82 (0.96) <sub>ab</sub>	5.49 (1.38) <sub>c</sub>	5.79 (0.98) <sub>a</sub>	5.41 (1.14) <sub>b</sub>	4.89 (1.34) <sub>c</sub>	4.35 (1.73) <sub>d</sub>
GenMot	5.82 (0.86) <sub>a</sub>	5.60 (1.07) <sub>ab</sub>	5.46 (1.26) <sub>b</sub>	4.62 (1.66) <sub>c</sub>	5.64 (0.93) <sub>a</sub>	5.55 (1.20) <sub>a</sub>	4.78 (1.50) <sub>b</sub>	4.17 (1.77) <sub>c</sub>
POC-C	6.04 (0.89) <sub>a</sub>	5.74 (1.04) <sub>a</sub>	5.86 (1.02) <sub>a</sub>	5.26 (1.57) <sub>b</sub>	5.98 (1.00) <sub>a</sub>	5.72 (1.09) <sub>a</sub>	5.19 (1.42) <sub>b</sub>	4.87 (1.62) <sub>c</sub>
White-C	4.12 (1.65) <sub>a</sub>	3.76 (1.49) <sub>a</sub>	3.74 (1.49) <sub>a</sub>	4.69 (1.55) <sub>b</sub>	4.22 (1.50) <sub>a</sub>	3.70 (1.57) <sub>b</sub>	4.33 (1.57) <sub>a</sub>	4.58 (1.49) <sub>a</sub>
Auton	5.44 (1.16) <sub>a</sub>	5.11 (1.24) <sub>bc</sub>	5.29 (1.33) <sub>ab</sub>	4.76 (1.59) <sub>c</sub>	5.42 (1.22) <sub>a</sub>	5.13 (1.34) <sub>a</sub>	4.59 (1.66) <sub>b</sub>	4.33 (1.84) <sub>b</sub>
Interest	4.49 (1.54) <sub>a</sub>	4.28 (1.94) <sub>ab</sub>	4.68 (1.90) <sub>a</sub>	3.98 (1.78) <sub>b</sub>	4.47 (1.71) <sub>ac</sub>	4.64 (1.85) <sub>a</sub>	4.08 (2.01) <sub>bc</sub>	3.82 (1.87) <sub>b</sub>

Note: The condition means that the subscripts do not share a significant difference,  $p < 0.05$ .  
Abbreviations: Auton, autonomy; GenMot, genuine motives; POC-C, POC-centering goals; White-C, White-centering goals.

## 9.1 | Perceived Genuine Motives

Main effects of racial climate  $F(3,904) = 45.49$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.78$ , and institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 15.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.26$ , were statistically significant, but were qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(3,904) = 2.69$ ,  $p = 0.045$ ,  $d = 0.20$ . We first examined simple effects by the institutional support condition. Simple effects of climate condition were significant in both the institutional support condition,  $F(3,904) = 16.58$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.46$ , and the no support condition,  $F(3,904) = 32.03$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.66$ , though in different ways. Without institutional support, Black Americans in the high

hostility condition perceived less genuine motives than those in other climate conditions. Similarly, participants also perceived significantly less genuine motives in the moderate hostility condition than in both safety conditions. There was no significant difference between moderate safety and high safety conditions.

In the presence of institutional support, participants in the high hostility condition still reported significantly less genuine motives than their counterparts in both safety conditions, and the difference between the high hostility and the moderate hostility conditions remained statistically

significant. Furthermore, participants in the moderate hostility condition still perceived significantly less genuine motives than their counterparts in the moderate safety condition, though significantly less so than without institutional support. However, the differences between the moderate hostility condition and moderate safety conditions became non-significant when the institution offered support for the anti-racism task force. Again, there was no significant difference between moderate safety and high safety conditions.

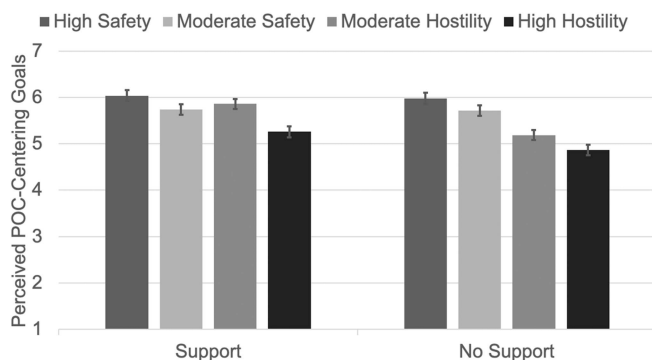
## 9.2 | POC-Centering Goals

Similarly, both main effects of racial climate,  $F(3,904) = 23.02$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.56$ , and institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 12.07$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.22$ , on POC-centering goals were significant and qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(3,904) = 3.61$ ,  $p = 0.013$ ,  $d = 0.22$ . Simple effects of climate condition were significant in both the institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 7.68$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.32$ , and no support,  $F(3,904) = 19.09$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.50$ , conditions. Without institutional support, Black Americans in the high hostility condition anticipated the organization to endorse POC-centering goals less than in all other conditions. Similarly, participants in the moderate hostility condition anticipated significantly fewer POC-centering goals than participants in both safety conditions. No significant difference emerged between moderate safety and high safety conditions.

As demonstrated in Figure 2, when institutional support was provided, perceptions of POC-centering goals in the moderate hostility condition no longer significantly differed from perceptions in both the moderate safety condition and the high safety condition. However, participants in the high hostility condition still reported significantly fewer POC-centering goals than both safety conditions. The difference between the high hostility and the moderate hostility conditions remained significant.

## 9.3 | White-Centering Goals

A significant main effect of racial climate emerged,  $F(3,904) = 13.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.42$ , but the effect of institutional support was not significant,  $F(3,904) = 1.66$ ,  $p = 0.198$ ,  $d = 0.08$ . However, as the interaction was approaching significance,



**FIGURE 2** | Anticipated POC-centering goals of anti-racism task force by condition, Study 2. Bars indicate standard errors.

$F(3,904) = 2.49$ ,  $p = 0.059$ ,  $d = 0.18$ , we opted to probe. Simple effects of climate condition were significant in both the institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 8.85$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.34$ , and no support,  $F(3,904) = 6.97$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.30$ , conditions. When there was no institutional support, relative to the moderate safety condition, Black Americans in the high hostility condition, the moderate hostility condition, and, surprisingly, in the high safety condition anticipated greater White-centering goals. No other significant differences emerged.

When the organization provided institutional support, the moderate hostility and the moderate safety conditions were not significantly different. Interestingly, in the presence of institutional support, participants in the high hostility condition anticipated significantly greater White-centering goals than in every other condition.

## 9.4 | Anticipated Autonomy

The ANOVA revealed significant main effects of racial climate,  $F(3,904) = 16.01$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.46$ , and institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 10.46$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.22$ , again qualified by a significant interaction,  $F(3,904) = 2.89$ ,  $p = 0.034$ ,  $d = 0.20$ . Simple effects of climate condition were significant in both the institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 5.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.28$ , and no support,  $F(3,904) = 13.32$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $d = 0.42$ , conditions. When no institutional support was provided, Black Americans in the high hostility condition anticipated less autonomy if they led the anti-racism task force than both the high safety and moderate safety conditions. Similarly, participants in the moderate hostility condition anticipated significantly less autonomy than participants in both safety conditions. No other significant differences emerged.

When institutional support was present, participants in the moderate hostility condition no longer anticipated significantly different levels of autonomy than both safety conditions. However, participants in the high hostility condition still anticipated significantly lower autonomy than participants in the high safety condition, but marginally so compared with the moderate safety condition. Finally, participants in the high hostility condition anticipated significantly less autonomy than those in the moderate hostility condition, and those in the high safety condition anticipated significantly greater autonomy than those in the moderate safety condition.

## 9.5 | Interest

For participants' interest in leading the anti-racism task force, although there was not a significant effect of institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 0.72$ ,  $p = 0.396$ ,  $d = 0.06$ , a significant main effect of climate,  $F(3,904) = 4.94$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ,  $d = 0.26$ , and a significant interaction,  $F(3,904) = 2.79$ ,  $p = 0.040$ ,  $d = 0.20$ , emerged. Simple effects of climate condition were significant in both the institutional support,  $F(3,904) = 2.95$ ,  $p = 0.032$ ,  $d = 0.20$ , and no support,  $F(3,904) = 4.87$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ,  $d = 0.26$ , conditions. Without institutional support, Black Americans in the high hostility condition were less interested in directing the task force than in both safety conditions, while participants in the moderate hostility condition reported significantly less interest than participants in the moderate safety condition (but not compared with

the high safety condition). No other significant differences emerged.

When institutional support was offered, the difference between the moderate hostility condition and the moderate safety condition was no longer significant, and the differences between the high hostility condition and both safety conditions were rendered non-significant and significantly smaller, respectively. Again, the differences between the high hostility and the moderate hostility conditions became significantly larger.

## 9.6 | Exploratory Analyses

We also probed significant interactions by racial climate condition to explore how institutional support impacted outcomes at each racial climate (see Table 9). Simple effects showed that for perceived genuine motives, POC-centering goals, and autonomy, the effect of institutional support was only significant for the two hostility conditions, but not for the safety conditions. While both were significant, the effect of support was significantly stronger for the moderate hostility condition than for the high hostility condition. The patterns were slightly different for White-centering goals and interest, where the effect of institutional support was only significant for the moderate hostility condition (but not for high hostility, moderate safety,

or high safety conditions). Across all outcomes, institutional support made the most difference when the organization's climate was moderate in hostility.

## 10 | Discussion

Study 2 provided a more nuanced understanding of how racial climate and institutional support shaped Black Americans' perceptions of an organization's anti-racism task force. Extending Study 1, when no institutional support was provided for the anti-racism task force, Black Americans in both a high and moderate hostility climate, compared with safer climates, perceived the organization as less genuinely motivated and as intending to center POC needs and perspectives more. Furthermore, when imagining themselves as the task force director, Black Americans in hostile climates anticipated less autonomy and were less interested in serving as the task force director compared to safer climates. The only exception is that Black Americans in hostile climates perceived more White-centering goals than only the moderate safety climate, but not the high safety climate.

In line with prior research (e.g., Baran et al. 2012; Baysu et al. 2024), Study 2 novelly demonstrated that the degree of racial hostility shaped Black Americans' expectations. Specifically,

**TABLE 9** | Study 2: Simple effects by climate condition.

Outcome	Climate condition	Inst. support effect		
		<i>F</i> (1,904)	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
Perceived support	High safety	2.60	0.107	0.11
	Moderate safety	40.28	0.021	0.16
	Moderate hostility	7.09	< 0.001	0.40
	High hostility	13.99	< 0.001	0.46
Genuine motives	High safety	0.99	0.319	0.06
	Moderate safety	0.11	0.739	0.00
	Moderate hostility	16.16	< 0.001	0.27
	High hostility	6.31	0.012	0.17
POC-centering goals	High safety	0.12	0.726	0.00
	Moderate safety	0.01	0.922	0.00
	Moderate hostility	17.38	< 0.001	0.28
	High hostility	5.56	0.019	0.16
White-centering goals	High safety	0.22	0.638	0.00
	Moderate safety	0.07	0.788	0.00
	Moderate hostility	7.73	0.003	0.20
	High hostility	0.27	0.603	0.00
Autonomy	High safety	0.84	0.359	0.06
	Moderate safety	0.00	0.985	0.00
	Moderate hostility	14.46	< 0.001	0.25
	High hostility	5.51	0.019	0.16
Interest	High safety	0.01	0.931	0.00
	Moderate safety	2.37	0.124	0.11
	Moderate hostility	6.30	0.012	0.17
	High hostility	0.41	0.521	0.00

without institutional support, Black Americans in a high hostility climate, compared to a moderate hostility climate, perceived less genuine motives and less POC-centering goals. In contrast, the safety conditions did not significantly differ, except for anticipated White-centering goals. Interestingly, a high safety climate signaled that the organization's anti-racism task force would center White perspectives more than a climate lower in safety.

Advancing the literature on organizational support and allyship (Eisenberger et al. 2020; Derricks et al. 2023), Study 2 demonstrated that institutional support for the task force not only improved Black Americans' perceived effectiveness of the task force in various aspects but also buffered some effects of a racially hostile climate. Overall, the protective effects of institutional support were stronger in a moderate hostility climate than in a high hostility climate. Specifically, institutional support bridged all differences between a moderate hostility climate and a safety climate (with the exception that the difference in perceived genuine motives from high safety conditions only became significantly smaller), while the high hostility climate condition remained significantly different from safety climates in many aspects, even in the presence of institutional support. Consistently, institutional support was more effective at buffering the harm of a moderate hostility climate than the harm of a climate high in hostility. Interestingly, with institutional support, the differences between moderate hostility and high hostility conditions became statistically significant or significantly larger across all outcomes than when no institutional support was indicated. Together, these findings demonstrate the effectiveness of institutional support in racially hostile climates while noting a boundary condition when the hostility level is high.

Finally, Black Americans held relatively positive perceptions of the anti-racism task force across varying conditions in two studies. Even in hostile climates and without institutional support, participants overall did not report a negative sentiment toward the task force. Such effectiveness may result from participants' impression of the anti-racism task force as an evidence-based, rather than expressed, cue (Wilton et al. 2020). Especially compared with previously examined cues such as diversity statements, an anti-racism task force may communicate two important features of allyship for POC: awareness of power/oppression and action orientation (Pietri et al. 2024). In sum, while improving racial climate and providing institutional support are ultimately required to promote behavioral changes such as POC stepping up to serve on the task force, establishing an anti-racism task force may afford an effective first step to facilitate a safe and supportive environment for employees of color.

## 11 | General Discussion

Incorporating the literature on diversity initiatives and organizational support (e.g., Dover et al. 2021; Eisenberger et al. 2020), the present research ( $N = 1,182$ ) examined Black Americans' perceptions of an organizational anti-racism task force as a function of an organization's racial climate and institutional support for the task force. At baseline (i.e., without any information about climate or support), Black Americans generally held positive perceptions of the organization and its newly created anti-racism task force, and were relatively interested in

selecting a POC to direct the task force, similar to when the climate was explicitly safe to Black Americans (Study 1). The only exception is that Black people were unsure about whether the task force would decenter White perspectives and feelings, even in a safe climate (Studies 1–2).

These mostly positive perceptions and engagement were significantly compromised when the organization's climate was hostile to Black Americans. That is, when the climate was hostile (either to a moderate or high degree) to Black Americans, compared with safe (Studies 1–2) or neutral (Study 1; i.e., no-information) climates, Black Americans perceived the organization as less genuinely motivated for establishing the anti-racism task force, and as intending the task force to center POC needs less and White people's needs more (Studies 1–2). When Black people imagined a POC (Study 1) or themselves (Study 2) as the director of the task force, Black participants in the hostile climates (compared with safer climates) also anticipated less autonomy from the organization and were more interested in selecting a POC or themselves as the director (Studies 1–2). Thus, when an organization was perhaps most in need of an anti-racism task force, Black Americans perceived a task force as less genuine and less likely to meet the needs of marginalized employees. Yet, these negative effects of a racially hostile climate were largely buffered when the organization offered institutional support for the anti-racism task force (Study 2). Specifically, the negative effects caused by a racially hostile climate were alleviated with institutional support, though the effectiveness of support was greater when the hostility level was moderate rather than high (Study 2). Collectively, these findings highlight the interlocking roles of racial climate and institutional support in shaping the psychological outcomes of Black Americans when engaging with an organizational anti-racism task force.

Previous research has mostly examined the consequences of diversity initiatives (e.g., Awad 2013; Krivoshechekov et al. 2024). Our findings on the impact of racial climate and institutional support on Black Americans' perceptions of the anti-racism task force contribute to the emerging research on how environmental factors shape how people engage with such initiatives (e.g., Dover et al. 2021; Pereira-Jorge et al. 2025). For instance, exposure to socioeconomic advantages and disadvantages mitigated people's perceived fairness of meritocracy and, in turn, boosted support for organizational diversity initiatives targeting lower-class people (Goya-Tocchetto et al. 2024). The present work advances prior research by focusing specifically on organizational factors while drawing from the work of and with diversity officers of color (e.g., Weeks et al. 2024). To help further understand how specific aspects of organizational climate influence the psychology of POC on diversity initiatives, we encourage future work to examine other indicators of climate such as hiring and retention practices, organizational history, and public building names (e.g., Dover et al. 2020; Wallace et al. 2024; Woods and Ruscher 2024).

Notably, expanding the literature on genuine motives in diversity efforts (e.g., Chaney et al. 2024; Thai and Nylund 2024), genuine motives may be shaped by environmental factors such as an organization's racial climate. Indeed, prior work has shown that organizational norms influenced perceived genuineness of pronoun-sharing, such that people sharing pronouns were perceived as less genuine allies to LGBT+ people when all

cisgender employees shared pronouns (Pereira-Jorge et al. 2025). Similarly, an organization's diversity statement was perceived as less genuine when diversity statements were the norm across organizations (Chaney et al. 2025). Building on these findings, the current research incorporates a structural perspective into the study of genuine motives, which is instrumental to effectively understanding social inequalities (see Kraus et al. 2025).

Further, this research extends emerging work on perceived motivations of organizational efforts to combat inequality (e.g., Ponce de Leon et al. 2024). While past research on organizational identity safety cues focuses on diversity statements, policies, awards, and employee representation (for review, see Kruk and Matsick 2021), the present research explored perceptions of an anti-racism task force. To our knowledge, the present findings offer the first demonstration of how employees' prejudiced or inclusive attitudes shape perceptions of an organization's identity safety cue. When the climate was more hostile, Black Americans perceived the organization as less genuinely motivated to combat inequality. That is, perceived motives of the organization were impacted by awareness of how the task force aligned with the general attitudes of the organization; high divergence from employee attitudes, and thus the racial climate of the organization, signaled to Black Americans that the organization's anti-racism task force was not truly motivated by a desire to create equality, but perhaps for ulterior reasons. For example, past research has demonstrated that organizations with diversity statements were perceived as less liable for discrimination (Kaiser et al. 2013), and thus an organizational identity safety cue, such as an anti-racism task force, may be motivated by a desire to avoid punishment or to protect the organization's image. Thus, the present research offers a novel examination of organizational identity safety cues and integrated considerations of motives.

Importantly, current findings reveal a need to facilitate *both* a positive racial climate and institutional support to sustainably support POC engaged in anti-racism work. While the formation of an anti-racism task force may appear to be only an expressed commitment to combating inequality, perhaps especially in a hostile climate, institutional support strengthens the impression that the anti-racism task force is evidence-based (i.e., showing *and* telling of the organization's support, Wilton et al. 2020). Moreover, consistent with theorizing on the importance, yet limitations of, organizational support (Baran et al. 2012), the protective effects of the present manipulated institutional support were sparse for an organization whose racial hostility was high (Study 2).

## 11.1 | Applications

The present work elucidates the challenges of relying on racialized labor, the undue burden placed on POC to educate others about racism and its associated negative psychological impact (e.g., Lerma et al. 2020). That is, when the climate is overtly hostile, POC may be unwilling or uninterested in taking on racialized labor, likely due to expectations of further backlash and, as indicated in Study 2, limited autonomy in *how* to combat the hostile climate, even when institutional support was afforded. Yet, our findings demonstrate a general interest in

engaging in this racialized labor in less hostile and safer climates, particularly when institutional support is afforded that may ensure protection from backlash and the opportunity to autonomously engage in meaningful work. How then should organizations combat an overtly hostile climate? We encourage future research to explore White people's perceptions of organizational anti-racism task forces, including when they perceive a greater need for themselves and other White people to engage in anti-racism labor. That is, it may be important for White people to initiate this labor in overtly hostile climates in order to create a climate that is more tenable for POC involvement.

Further, the effectiveness of evidence-based institutional support informs research on identity-safety cues and the superior impact of evidence-based over expressed cues (e.g., Ragland and Sommers 2024; Wilton et al. 2020). For instance, prior research has shown that an illustration of a racially diverse faculty signaled fit in a graduate program and increased belief in future success for prospective graduate students, but expressed cues such as diversity statements did not (Ragland and Sommers 2024). Making space for Black or Latinx women to speak about women of color's experiences (vs. speaking for Black or Latinx women on their behalf) also boosted women of color participants' identity-safety feelings (Pham and Chaney 2025). While past research has increasingly demonstrated the need for consistent, evidence-based efforts to promote inclusion (Ponce de Leon et al. 2024; Wilton et al. 2020), we suggest that institutional support may alleviate the unintended consequences of diversity initiatives on marginalized people demonstrated in past research. For instance, while marginalized people tended to select to apply to a less lucrative diversity award over a more lucrative unrestricted (non-diversity) award (Germano et al. 2021), this tendency can be tackled by providing marginalized applicants with evidence-based institutional support before they select the award to apply to. Similarly, while the mere presence (vs. absence) of diversity messages in recruitment materials caused marginalized participants to rate themselves as less deserving of an offered job (Dover et al. 2021), evidence-based institutional support could prevent this negative perception. Such support may even transfer to high-status group members, for example, decreasing the delegitimization of discrimination claims made by marginalized people or broader backlash to diversity initiatives, potentially by communicating a stronger anti-racist norm (e.g., Brady et al. 2015; Dover et al. 2016).

Last, we note that evidence-based cues and POC centering may not be sufficient to truly promote inclusion for POC. Decentering White people's needs and perspectives proves a critical site to implement long-term changes, given its association with POC's perceptions of genuine motives and interest. However, Black Americans did not perceive an anti-racism task force to decenter White perspectives under any examined circumstances. Thus, organizations should address this issue, for instance, by educating White employees about White-centering tendencies and their impact on POC employees, combined with the organization's efforts to acknowledge and repair their history of White-centering practices (Coleman et al. 2019; Nkomo and Al Ariss 2014). In addition, organizations can consider incorporating other positive features of allyship to maximize the benefits of institutional support, such as increasing cost and consistency of their engagement, centering an intersectional lens to promote equity for the most oppressed groups, and being

critical of one's own organizational structures (e.g., Pietri et al. 2024; Williams et al. 2021). For example, while the institutional support manipulated in this research was relatively high in cost and consistency, future research should investigate if support higher in cost and/or consistency would lead to more POC's positive engagement with diversity initiatives (Thai and Nylund 2024).

## 12 | Conclusion

Across two experiments, the present research demonstrated the impact of racial climate and institutional support on Black Americans' engagement with an organization's anti-racism task force. Findings underscore the importance of facilitating both a positive racial climate and institutional support, and open up promising avenues to maximize the effectiveness of diversity initiatives as well as anti-racist efforts to improve the lived experiences of POC.

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>We consider task forces and committees to be interchangeable to lay perceivers.
- <sup>2</sup>See Tables S1 and S3–S4 for results on Study 1 supplemental outcomes.
- <sup>3</sup>Across Studies 1–2, results did not significantly change using Tukey post hoc tests.
- <sup>4</sup>See Tables S1 and S5–S6 for results on Study 2 supplemental outcomes.

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### Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.

**Supporting File 1:** jasp70058-sup-0001-AntiRacismTaskForce\_Supplement\_R1