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White power on trial: Perceptions of antiracism organizations focusing on power versus discrimination

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Abstract

The present research integrates lay theories of activism and inequity-framing literatures to investigate how Black and White Americans perceive antiracism organizations with different expressed goals (i.e., tackling White power/privilege, tackling discrimination, or increasing people of color's strengths). White Americans perceived a power-focused (vs. discrimination-focused and strength-focused) organization as less valuable, expressed less interest in engaging the organization in their local community, and perceived the organization as less effective at responding to people of color's needs and reducing discrimination (Studies 1–2; $N = 799$). In contrast, Black Americans perceived nonsignificant or significantly smaller differences across organizational goals. When Black Americans' perceptions were communicated to White Americans, White people's perceptions of a power-focused organization were significantly improved (Study 3; $N = 471$). Findings highlight a need and a novel strategy to educate White people toward dismantling White power and privilege.

Keywords

activism, antiracism, critical race, identity, intervention, lay theories

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> "Are you ready to do what you have to do to create life?
>
> Are you ready to smash white things?"
>
> (Nina Simone in concert in Harlem, 1969)

In August 1969, Nina Simone passionately recited a poem at her concert in Harlem to call on her predominantly Black audience to "smash white things," dismantle White power and White supremacy to advance the Black liberation movement. Decades after, Whiteness as a system of power and privilege still serve as a critical target of antiracism organizations (i.e., organizations aiming to improve the lived experiences of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color [BIPOC]; Black Lives Matter, 2023). Yet, little is known about how people perceive an antiracism organization

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when the organization expresses the goal of tackling White power and privilege versus tackling discrimination against BIPOC or enhancing BIPOC's strengths (Black Lives Matter, 2023; Iyer & Achia, 2021). The present work integrates lay theories of activism literature (Oswald et al., 2025; Pham, Chaney, & Ramírez-Esparza, 2024) with the inequity-framing model (e.g., Chow et al., 2010) to examine people's perceptions of antiracism organizational goals. In an effort to address the roots of racism and all oppressive systems, we adopt a critical race approach that affords an identity-conscious lens and addresses White people's shortcomings in activism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Nelson et al., 2012). As such, the present research (a) examines how White and Black Americans may differently perceive an antiracism organization with different expressed goals, and (b) develops an informational intervention for White Americans accordingly, centering Black Americans' perspectives.

Critical Race Theory

Central to understanding and combating racism is critical race theory (CRT)—an interdisciplinary framework to transform relationships between race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT provides an identity-conscious lens to interrogate how racial power shapes psychological phenomena, and how psychological science commonly reproduces matrices of oppression (see Salter & Adams, 2013). Despite the applicability of CRT to antiracism activism, psychological research on inequity and activism has yet to employ CRT as the guiding framework. The current research thus centers CRT and its following tenets.

First, CRT emphasizes that racism is endemic and therefore repudiates the false linear racial progress narrative of the U.S. history of race relations (e.g., Dixson & Rousseau Anderson, 2018; Kraus, Hudson, & Richeson, 2022). Antiracism organizations are thus necessary for promoting racial equity. Second, *interest convergence* posits that BIPOC's interests toward racial equity are only achieved if they align with White people's interests (Bell, 1980). Third, *Whiteness as property* states that racial identity and property are intricately linked at the foundation of the US (Harris, 1995). Whiteness deriving from the systems of domination that historically dispossessed, enslaved, and murdered Black and Indigenous people evolved into a form of property and rights that is legitimized and protected by the American law (Harris, 1993). These tenets highlight the importance of correcting false narratives about antiracist change, including ignorance about dismantling White power and privilege. Finally, CRT rejects the dominant objective, race-neutral framework and leverages the counter-narrative tenet to embrace BIPOC's experiential knowledge as expertise (Crenshaw et al., 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Therefore, when White people's interests are not met, or when BIPOC and White perspectives on antiracism activism (goals) misalign, CRT centers BIPOC expertise for solutions.

Notably, prior work on critical race psychology has introduced an *epistemologies of ignorance* framework to account for White people's denial of and inaction regarding racism (e.g., Adams & Markus, 2004; Mills, 2007). Specifically, the Marley hypothesis posits that White people's denial of racism partly stems from their lack of critical knowledge about historical racism in the US (Nelson et al., 2012). Because Black (vs. White) people have a more accurate understanding of racism, there will be differences in how Black versus White people perceive and address racism (Bonam et al., 2019). Integrating this theory with a particular focus on the Whiteness as property principle, the current study operates in the landscape where White people's ignorance about (effective) antiracism activism may partly result from their (ignorant) beliefs that White power and privilege are problems of the past and thus have minimal impact on contemporary racial relations. Therefore, we argue that there will be racial differences in how lay Black versus White people perceive antiracism organizational goals.

Lay Theories of Antiracism Activism Goals

Social psychology has incorporated a lay theories approach to examining beliefs held by everyday people (e.g., Hong et al., 2001; Levy et al., 2005) about various social issues, such as prejudice (e.g., Pham, Chaney, & Lin, 2024; Pham et al., 2023), collective power (e.g., Belmi & Laurin, 2016; Twali et al., 2023), and intergroup relations (e.g., Shuman et al., 2016; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2019). This literature has expanded our understanding of the cognitive, affective, and health experiences of both privileged and marginalized people across different identity dimensions and in myriad intergroup, cultural contexts (e.g., Chaney et al., 2021, 2024; Uluğ & Cohrs, 2019). Integrating lay people's experiential knowledge into psychological research is necessary to create social change (Cornish et al., 2023). Leveraging this approach, recent work has advocated examining lay theories of activism considering the grassroots nature of activism efforts (Pham, Chaney, & Ramírez-Esparza, 2024).

In a qualitative study, Pham, Chaney, and Ramírez-Esparza (2024) investigated how people understand antiracism activism. Specifically, lay people perceive six goals of antiracism activism: challenging the status quo, tackling systemic racism, reducing interpersonal racism, addressing police brutality, promoting equality, and raising awareness (Pham, Chaney, & Ramírez-Esparza, 2024). While most themes address discrimination against BIPOC, central to the theme of tackling systemic racism and police brutality is the need to address White privilege and power as fundamental causes of racism (see Oswald et al., 2024). These lay theories mirror prior work suggesting that activism actions may (be framed to) focus on advantaged people (e.g., White people) or on marginalized people (BIPOC; e.g., De Souza & Schmader, 2024; Dietze & Craig, 2021). For example, efforts to address economic inequality can be framed as reducing disadvantages of lower socioeconomic status (SES) people or as reducing advantages of upper SES people (Dietze & Craig, 2021). Similarly, a multidimensional typology of allyship action reveals that allyship can be directed at supporting the marginalized or low-power group or at undermining the privileged or high-power group (Uluğ et al., 2024). We sought to apply this research to examine lay theories of antiracism in an organizational context, specifically, how people perceive antiracism organizations.

Antiracism organizations have one or more expressed goals that guide their work and are often communicated to the public (Kraus, Hudson, & Richeson, 2022). Importantly, these organizational goals largely overlap with the goals identified by lay people (Pham, Chaney, & Ramírez-Esparza, 2024). For instance, grounding this research in Black expertise, we look to the Black community leaders on the ground, specifically, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement's mission statement (Black Lives Matter, 2023) as a starting point. This statement includes three major antiracism goals that focus on Whiteness and BIPOC's needs. Goal 1 is to target White power and privilege (e.g., "eradicate White supremacy"). This power-focused goal aligns with the Whiteness as property tenet and empirical evidence indicating the advantaged or high-power grou people's strengths p as a critical activism target (e.g., De Souza & Schmader, 2024; Harris, 1993; Uluğ et al., 2024). Goal 2 is to target discrimination experienced by BIPOC (e.g., "intervene in violence inflicted on Black communities"). Finally, amplifying a call to uplift marginalized people's strengths (Silverman et al., 2023; see also Pham et al., 2025), Goal 3 is to increase the strength of BIPOC (e.g., "creating space for Black imagination and innovation"). While BLM expresses three goals in their mission statement, other antiracism organizations may focus on one main goal. Advancing previous research on lay theories of antiracism goals (Pham, Chaney, & Ramírez-Esparza, 2024) while centering BLM's stated goals, the current research sought to examine perceptions of a power-focused, a discrimination-focused, and a strength-focused organization from the perspectives of Black and White Americans.

Inequity Framing

Framing can have a powerful effect on social judgments, including people's attitudes and perceptions regarding social issues (e.g., Cundiff et al., 2018; Iyer et al., 2003). For instance, the framing of a question about the Black–White wealth gap influenced people's estimates of the gap (Kraus, Torrez, & Hollie, 2022). Specifically, the current wealth gap was overestimated the most when it was asked about both past and present time points (vs. other framings such as being given a past anchor or being asked about the present only). Moving from perception to action, highlighting health (vs. economic or belonging) consequences of racial disparities prompted greater support for policies to reduce racial disparities among U.S. participants (R. M. Brown et al., 2023).

Notably, the inequity-framing literature often tests the effects of framings that focus on disadvantaged groups versus advantaged ones (e.g., Chow et al., 2010; Powell et al., 2005). For instance, framing efforts to mitigate economic inequalities as removing lower class disadvantages (as opposed to reducing upper class advantages) led to greater support for inequality-reduction action, partly due to perceptions of economic inequalities as more unjust (Dietze & Craig, 2021). Specifically examining a privileged group, when White Americans were exposed to racial inequity framed as White privileges (vs. Black disadvantages), they reported lower group-based self-esteem and greater collective guilt (e.g., Iyer et al., 2003; Lowery et al., 2012; Powell et al., 2005). Because racial inequity framed as White privilege can threaten White people's self-image (Lowery et al., 2007), they may seek to restore their group esteem by demonstrating stronger support for policies reducing White people's economic resources (but not policies increasing BIPOC's resources; Lowery et al., 2012). Alternatively, this egalitarian resource redistribution could be driven by an increased consciousness about White privilege and power as critical to antiracist efforts in the US (e.g., Bonam et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2012).

While framings focusing on disadvantaged versus advantaged groups may mobilize people into action against inequities via different mechanisms, we argue that perceiver identity may determine the effectiveness of framing. Indeed, past research on equity-framing has primarily focused on (predominantly) White samples; we thus aim to evaluate the role of perceiver race. Further, the present research seeks to advance beyond framings as group advantages versus group disadvantages to consider the additional goal of BIPOC's strengths, in line with BLM's stated goals (Black Lives Matter, 2023) and a strength-based approach to study marginalized experiences (Silverman et al., 2023). Together, we integrate research on equity-framing to examine how Black and White Americans differentially perceive antiracism organizations that focus on White power/privilege, discrimination against BIPOC, or BIPOC's strengths, specifically regarding their value and effectiveness.

Racial Differences

Perceiver race plays an important role in examining racism. For example, while people generally overestimate racial progress, White (vs. Black) people overestimate it more (Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). This is partly because White Americans are more likely to reference the past (vs. ideal standards; Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006). Further, White Americans are more likely to perceive racism as a zero-sum game than Black Americans, such that decreases in anti-Black bias are equated with increases in anti-White bias (e.g., Norton & Sommers, 2011; Rasmussen et al., 2022). More directly, White people (vs. Black people) perceived less racism in both isolated incidents and systemic manifestations of racism (Nelson et al., 2012). Going beyond perception, White (vs. Black) Americans support race-conscious policies less (e.g., affirmative action, school desegregation policy; Hughes & Bigler, 2011; Oswald et al., 2024). According to the Marley hypothesis, these deficits in White people's perception of racism and support for

racial equity partly come from their lack of knowledge about historical and structural racism, especially compared with Black people's expert knowledge (Nelson et al., 2012). On this basis, we propose that White Americans will perceive antiracism organizations less positively than Black Americans, regardless of the organization's stated goal.

Moreover, prior work suggests that the goal to address White power and privilege may not be championed among White Americans. On one hand, the Marley hypothesis demonstrates that White people's ignorance about White supremacy as a relic of the past renders White supremacy a legitimate target to improve contemporary race relations in the US (e.g., Bonam et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2012). On the other hand, White Americans express resistance to discussions of White privilege (e.g., Branscombe et al., 2007; Lowery et al., 2007) and feel negative emotions (e.g., sadness, guilt, exhaustion) during discussions of racism and White privilege (e.g., Ford et al., 2022; Langrehr et al., 2021). Indeed, White people prefer denying and distancing from White privilege (vs. dismantling it) as strategies to protect themselves from psychological threats (Knowles et al., 2014). These findings align with the interest convergence tenet of CRT, such that White people only engage with antiracism efforts from which they benefit and by which they do not feel threatened (Bell, 1980). We thus proposed that White Americans would view antiracism organizations that focus on reducing White privilege and power more negatively than they would organizations with other goals.

While Black Americans are cognizant of a need to address White supremacy that is often lacking in White allyship (e.g., Coleman & Yantis, 2024; Mathew et al., 2023), there is a paucity of empirical work directly comparing how Black Americans perceive power-focused, discrimination-focused, and strength-focused goals. Thus, although we did not have a specific hypothesis for Black Americans, we argue that differences between power-focused and other goals would be significantly larger for White (vs. Black) Americans.

Current Research

Taking a CRT approach, the present research ingrates the inequity-framing model to examine how perceiver race and organizational goal may influence how an antiracism organization is perceived. Grounded in the counter-narrative principle of CRT, we center Black Americans' perspectives as the starting point and draw on three antiracism organizational goals from BLM's mission statement, focusing on White power/privilege, BIPOC discrimination, and BIPOC strength. Using this goal framework allows us to investigate the implications of a novel goal identified in BLM's mission and advance a strength-based approach in social psychology (Silverman et al., 2023), focusing on BIPOC strengths.

Extending prior research on lay theories of antiracism activism goals (Pham, Chaney, & Ramírez-Esparza, 2024) and the epistemologies of ignorance framework (Nelson et al., 2012), the present research focuses on how people recognize the need for the above-mentioned goals in antiracism efforts. Given that people engage in activism in different ways (Brown & Ostrove, 2013), we examine a wide range of outcomes: participants' attitudes, interest in local engagement, and perception of organization's value and effectiveness. While all aim to capture the perceived importance of different antiracism organizational goals, each outcome draws from a distinct dimension (e.g., one may endorse the value of a power-focused organization but is not necessarily interested in engaging it in their own local community) that is instrumental to the psychology of social change. First, given the importance of engagement with local community in organizational operation (e.g., Burns et al., 2020; Maya Jariego et al., 2023), we aimed to capture participants' interest in engaging the antiracism organization in their local community. Further, integrating previous work examining perceptions of the value of equity-promoting efforts (e.g.,

N. D. Brown & Jacoby-Senghor, 2022; Thai et al., 2021), we examined the extent to which participants perceived an antiracism organization as valuable and worthy of funding. Finally, as perceived efficacy, or belief in a group's or organization's capacity to enact change, is an important motivator of activism (van Zomeren et al., 2008), we examined perceptions of the antiracism organization's effectiveness, mirroring previous work on equity-framing and activism (e.g., R. M. Brown et al., 2023; Wallace et al., 2024).

In Studies 1–2, we investigated how Black versus White Americans may perceive and engage with an antiracism organization with different expressed goals. We hypothesized an effect of perceiver race: Black Americans would report more positive outcomes than White Americans, regardless of organization goal. Importantly, we hypothesized an interaction between perceiver race and organization goal: White participants would perceive and engage with a power-focused organization less positively than with discrimination-focused and strength-focused organizations, while Black participants would show significantly smaller or no differences.

We position Black Americans' knowledge as the expertise to guide this research. Thus, Studies 1–2 examined how White Americans' perceptions of antiracism organizations with different goals may align with Black Americans' (accurate) perceptions. Based on such insights, Study 3 developed an informational intervention to correct White Americans' (mis)perceptions about antiracism organizations. Data, syntax, supplemental materials, and research materials are available on the Open Science Framework (OSF; https://osf.io/ca4hk/). All studies, conditions, measures, and exclusions are reported. All studies were approved by University of Connecticut's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Study 3 was preregistered.

Study 1

Study 1 examined how Black and White Americans perceive antiracism organizations differently depending on the organization's expressed goal. Mirroring previous work on inequity-framing (e.g., Dietze & Craig, 2021; Lowery et al., 2012), and addressing a call to integrate a strength-based lens in examining marginalized experiences (Silverman et al., 2023), we designed three conditions corresponding to three goals—power/privilege, discrimination, and strength—and examined perceptions of organization's value and effectiveness. We hypothesized that (H1) Black Americans would report more positive outcomes than White Americans across all goal conditions; (H2) White participants would perceive the power-focused[1] organization more negatively than the discrimination- and strength-focused organizations, while these condition differences would be significantly smaller or not significant among Black participants.

Method

Participants. Assuming a medium effect size ($d = 0.35$), an a priori power analysis indicated a sample size of 360 for a 3×2 between-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA; 85% power; G*Power; Faul et al., 2007). We recruited 362 U.S. participants from Prolific; three did not report their race/ethnicity as Black/African American or White, and five did not pass the two assigned attention checks, leaving an analytic sample of 354 participants (175 Black, 179 White). See Table 1 for demographic summaries.

Procedure. Upon providing consent, participants read about an antiracism organization called Toward Racial Equality Initiative (TREI), whose website was crafted to manipulate the organization's stated goal. Based on random assignment, participants read that the organization's goal focused on tackling White power/privilege, tackling BIPOC discrimination, or enhancing BIPOC strength. The wording was based on Black Lives Matter's mission statement (see Figure 1; Black Lives Matter, 2023). After reading the organization's mission statement, participants completed an attention check question: "Which of the

Table 1. ANOVA results and descriptive statistics by condition: Study 1.

Outcome	Goal main effect						Race main effect					Interaction effect		
	F(2, 348)	*p*	*d*	Power (*n* = 119) *M* (*SD*)	Discrimination (*n* = 116) *M* (*SD*)	Strength (*n* = 119) *M* (*SD*)	*F*(1, 348)	*p*	*d*	Black (*n* = 175) *M* (*SD*)	White (*n* = 179) *M* (*SD*)	*F*(2, 522)	*p*	*d*
PowGoal	126.53	< .001	1.70	6.19 (1.02)$_a$	3.73 (1.78)$_b$	3.21 (1.71)$_c$	1.89	.170	0.14	4.26 (2.06)	4.50 (1.97)	0.04	.962	0.00
DiscrGoal	15.82	< .001	0.60	5.45 (1.53)$_b$	6.26 (0.92)$_a$	5.48 (1.18)$_b$	9.54	.002	0.33	5.93 (1.07)	5.52 (1.50)	9.67	< .001	0.47
StrGoal	32.78	< .001	0.87	5.11 (1.60)$_a$	5.88 (0.99)$_b$	6.34 (0.87)$_c$	9.95	.002	0.34	5.98 (1.03)	5.58 (1.49)	8.06	< .001	0.43
Attitude	11.40	< .001	0.51	64.96 (33.10)$_a$	80.80 (22.14)$_b$	76.19 (25.75)$_b$	35.90	< .001	0.64	82.27 (19.39)	65.77 (32.67)	7.53	< .001	0.42
Engage	2.77	.064	0.26	4.64 (2.24)$_a$	5.22 (1.86)$_b$	5.07 (1.83)$_b$	32.14	< .001	0.61	5.55 (1.52)	4.41 (2.24)	4.49	.012	0.32
Value	8.19	.005	0.35	4.96 (2.00)$_a$	5.68 (1.49)$_b$	5.34 (1.72)$_{a,b}$	27.29	.001	0.56	5.80 (1.27)	4.89 (1.97)	3.68	.026	0.29
POCNeed	1.32	.269	0.18	4.83 (1.61)$_a$	5.11 (1.28)$_a$	5.08 (1.33)$_a$	24.41	< .001	0.53	5.37 (1.25)	4.65 (1.48)	5.19	.006	0.34

Note. For goal conditions, condition means that do not share a subscript significantly differ ($p < .05$); *df* error is different for attitude = 347. PowGoal = power goal; DiscrGoal = discrimination goal; StrGoal = strength goal; POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

following is the mission of the organization you read about?" With three options: "decreasing racial prejudice and discrimination," "dismantling White privilege and White supremacy," or "helping people of color embrace their strengths and thrive." An incorrect answer prompted participants to review the organization's website again and answer the same attention check again. Then, participants completed measures, in the below order, to report their perceptions of the organization before completing demographic questions and being debriefed.

Measures. Across all studies, Cronbach's αs > .80 for all measures (see Table S2, Supplemental Material).

Perceived goals. To measure perception of TREI's goals (i.e., a manipulation check), participants completed three subscales of goals (three items each): power and privilege (e.g., "Take away White privilege), discrimination (e.g., "Reduce oppression"), and strength (e.g., "Help people of color embrace their strengths"), using a 7-point scale (1= *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

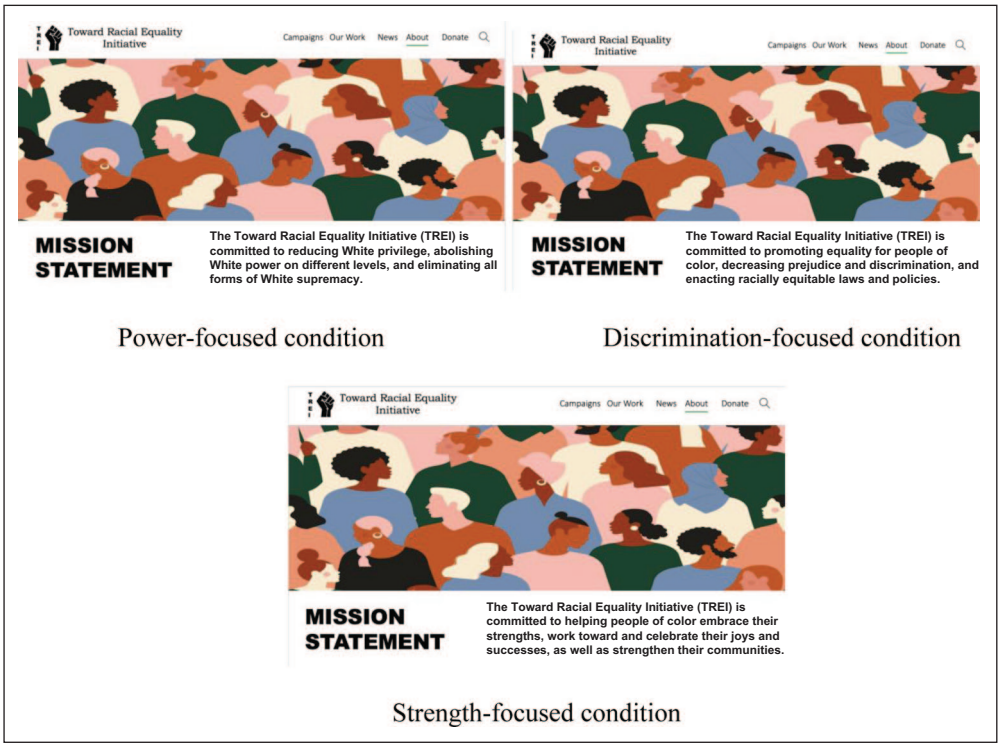
Attitude. Participants completed a feeling thermometer about the organization from 0 (*cold/negative*) to 100 (*warm/positive*).

Local engagement. Participants completed a single item about their interest in having TREI get involved in their local community using a 7-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).

Value and fundworthiness Participants completed six items (e.g., "To what extent do you believe the work TREI is doing is valuable?"; adapted from Thai et al., 2021) about TREI's value and fund worthiness[2] on a 7-point scale.

BIPOC-need effectiveness. Participants reported their perception of TREI's effectiveness at responding to BIPOC's needs (nine items; e.g., "Meeting BIPOC's expectations") on a 7-point scale (1= *very ineffective*, 7 = *very effective*).

Figure 1. Organizational goal condition: Study 1.



Results

A series of 2 × 3 between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted, followed by least significant difference (LSD) post hoc tests for significant interactions (see Tables 2–3).

Perceived goals

Power goal. A significant effect of condition revealed that participants perceived the power-focused organization as holding more power-focused goals than the discrimination-focused and strength-focused organizations. Participants also perceived the discrimination-focused organization as higher in power-focused goals than the strength-focused organization. There was no significant participant race effect nor significant interaction.

Discrimination goal. A significant condition effect showed that participants perceived the discrimination-focused organization as holding more discrimination-focused goals than the other two organizations. There was also a main effect of race: Black (vs. White) participants scored higher across organizations. Finally, a significant interaction indicated that while Black participants perceived both power-focused and discrimination-focused organizations (vs. strength-focused organization) as higher in discrimination-focused goals, White participants perceived the discrimination-focused organization as highest in discrimination-focused goals, followed by the strength-focused organization and finally the power-focused organization.

Strength goal. A condition effect indicated that participants perceived the strength-focused organization as highest in strength-focused goals, followed by the discrimination-focused organization and finally the power-focused organization.

Table 2. Interaction probing, simple effects by participant race: Study 1.

Participant race outcome	Black						White					
	Goal simple effect						Goal simple effect					
	$F(2, 348)$	p	d	Power ($n = 58$) M (SD)	Discrim. ($n = 58$) M (SD)	Strength ($n = 59$) M (SD)	$F(2, 348)$	p	d	Power ($n = 61$) M (SD)	Discrim. ($n = 58$) M (SD)	Strength ($n = 60$) M (SD)
DiscrGoal	10.32	< .001	0.69	$6.07\ (0.91)_a$	$6.28\ (0.75)_a$	$5.46\ (1.30)_b$	14.22	< .001	0.80	$4.86\ (1.76)_a$	$6.24\ (1.07)_c$	$5.50\ (1.27)_b$
StrGoal	6.80	.001	0.56	$5.67\ (1.11)_b$	$5.90\ (1.00)_b$	$6.34\ (0.89)_a$	29.10	< .001	0.15	$4.58\ (1.81)_a$	$5.84\ (0.98)_b$	$6.33\ (1.86)_c$
Attitude	0.46	.633	0.11	$80.91\ (18.05)_a$	$84.91\ (16.15)_a$	$81.01\ (23.24)_a$	18.68	< .001	0.66	$49.53\ (36.96)_a$	$76.69\ (26.33)_b$	$71.45\ (27.36)_b$
Engage	0.34	.710	0.09	$5.66\ (1.56)_a$	$5.62\ (1.39)_a$	$5.39\ (1.61)_a$	7.04	.001	0.40	$3.67\ (2.37)_a$	$4.83\ (2.19)_b$	$4.75\ (1.99)_b$
Value	0.95	.388	0.14	$5.76\ (1.24)_a$	$6.02\ (1.06)_a$	$5.62\ (1.47)_a$	8.22	< .001	0.43	$4.21\ (2.28)_a$	$5.33\ (1.76)_b$	$5.15\ (1.63)_b$
POCNeed	0.90	.406	0.14	$5.48\ (1.14)_a$	$5.45\ (1.19)_a$	$5.18\ (1.41)_a$	5.16	.006	0.34	$4.75\ (0.97)_a$	$4.52\ (1.06)_b$	$4.52\ (1.06)_b$

Note. For goal conditions, condition means that do not share a subscript significantly differ ($p < .05$); *df* error is different for attitude = 347. DiscrGoal = discrimination goal; StrGoal = strength goal; POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color.

Table 3. ANOVA results and descriptive statistics by condition: Study 2.

Outcome	Goal main effect					Race main effect					Interaction effect		
	$F(1, 441)$	p	d	Power ($n = 226$) M (SD)	Discrimination ($n = 219$) M (SD)	$F(1, 441)$	p	d	Black ($n = 175$) M (SD)	White ($n = 179$) M (SD)	$F(1, 441)$	p	d
PowGoal	335.74	< .001	1.74	6.13 (0.97)	3.70 (1.73)	0.01	.905	0.00	4.90 (1.84)	4.97 (1.87)	0.73	.394	0.09
DiscrGoal	107.17	< .001	0.99	5.17 (1.68)	6.41 (0.92)	42.04	< .001	0.62	6.17 (1.10)	5.41 (1.71)	28.89	< .001	0.51
Attitude	41.42	< .001	0.61	58.38 (33.31)	75.55 (28.33)	70.92	< .001	0.80	78.47 (23.12)	55.86 (35.39)	6.74	.010	0.25
Engage	31.35	< .001	0.53	3.99 (2.23)	4.98 (1.91)	75.78	< .001	0.83	5.28 (1.81)	3.72 (2.14)	3.85	.050	0.19
Value	8.19	.005	0.35	4.57 (2.19)	5.69 (1.75)	27.29	.001	0.56	5.84 (1.52)	4.44 (2.27)	3.68	.026	0.29
POCNeed	18.75	< .001	0.41	4.63 (1.72)	5.23 (1.46)	52.18	< .001	0.69	5.45 (1.33)	4.43 (1.71)	5.50	.020	0.22
DiscrRed	5.42	.020	0.22	4.12 (1.86)	4.49 (1.65)	23.83	< .001	0.46	4.71 (1.77)	3.92 (1.68)	6.34	.012	0.24

Note. df error is different for attitude = 440. PowGoal = power goal; DiscrGoal = discrimination goal; POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; DiscrRed = perceived effectiveness at reducing discrimination.

Black participants again scored higher than White participants across all organizations. A significant interaction revealed that Black participants perceived the strength-focused organization as holding more strength-focused goals than the other two organizations, while White people perceived the strength-focused organization as the highest in strength-focused goals, followed by the discrimination-focused organization and then the power-focused organization.

Overall, despite the occurrence of goal transfers, the organizations' stated goals increased the intended goals in participants' perception.

Primary outcomes. As hypothesized, there was a significant effect of participant race on all outcomes, such that Black, compared to White, participants (a) expressed more positive attitudes toward the organization, (b) indicated greater interest in engaging the organization in their local community, (c) perceived the organization as more valuable and fund worthy, and (d) perceived the organization as more effective at responding to BIPOC's needs. Further, there was a significant effect of organization goal on attitude and value, but not on local engagement and perceived effectiveness.

As hypothesized, there were significant interactions between organizational goal and participant race across all outcomes. Using LSD post hoc tests,[3] simple effects of organizational goal were significant for White, but not for Black, participants. Compared with their counterparts in the discrimination-focused and strength-focused conditions, White participants in the power-focused condition (a) expressed less positive attitudes toward the organization, (b) reported less interest in engaging the organization in their local community, (c) perceived less value and fund worthiness associated with the organization, and (d) perceived the organization as less effective at responding to BIPOC's needs. There were no significant differences between the discrimination-focused and strength-focused organizations for White Americans. There were no significant differences in any outcomes among Black participants; Black participants evaluated three organizational goals equally positively along all four dimensions.

Discussion

Study 1 provided initial evidence that perceiver race and organization goal jointly influenced perceptions of an antiracism organization. That is, while White Americans overall perceived antiracism organizations less positively than Black Americans, there were distinct racialized patterns in perceptions of antiracism activism goals, consistent with the Marley hypothesis (Nelson et al., 2012). Specifically, White Americans perceived the power-focused organization as more valuable and effective than the discrimination-focused and strength-focused organizations, while Black participants perceived these organizational goals as equally positive. Similarly, Black participants were equally interested in including all three organizational efforts in their own community, while White participants did not desire to locally engage a power-focused organization. Centering Black people's perceptions and desire as the accuracy point, Study 1 suggests that White Americans may falsely devalue and disengage from antiracism organizations that tackle White power/privilege. Finally, Black participants perceived the organization with a stated goal of targeting White power/privilege as high in both power-focused and discrimination-focused goals. This corroborates our primary findings that Black people (but not White people) evaluated the power-focused and discrimination-focused organizations equally positively, while simultaneously presenting a potential limitation in manipulating antiracism organizational goals. We argue this complexity may have occurred because the power-focused organization, compared with the other organizations, had a stronger tone with words such as "abolish" and "eliminate," which we sought to address in Study 2.

Study 2

Study 2 aimed to replicate Study 1, adjusting the language of the power-focused organization to equalize its tone with that of the discrimination-focused organization. While Study 1 drew from BLM language and thus achieved high external

Figure 2. Organizational goal condition: Study 2.

validity, the matching of valence across organizational goals would afford a stricter test of organizational goal, ensuring goal effects are not driven by valence. Further, given the absence of differences between discrimination-focused and strength-focused organizations, we opted to drop the strength-focused condition to conserve statistical power and focus on two goals perceived as directly related to racial inequality. Hypotheses mirrored Study 1.

Method

Participants. Based on Study 1's smallest interaction effect ($d = 0.29$), an a priori power analysis suggested a sample size of 429 for a 2 × 2 ANOVA (85% power; G*Power). We recruited 467 U.S. participants from Prolific, but nine did not identify as Black or White and 13 did not pass both attention checks, leaving a final sample of 445 (216 Black, 229 White).

Procedure. Study 2's procedure was similar to that of Study 1 except for three main differences. First, with the strength-focused condition dropped, participants were randomly assigned to two conditions. Second, we toned down the language in the power-focused condition to equalize the tone between the two conditions (see Figure 2). Finally, we added a measure (developed by the principal investigator [PI]) of discrimination-reduction effectiveness, asking participants to estimate the likelihood of three material changes (e.g., "Reduction in racial biases among White residents") if TREI were involved in a community, using a 7-point scale (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*).

Results

We conducted 2 × 2 ANOVAs to test our hypotheses (see Tables 3 and 4).

Perceived goals. Regarding power-focused goals, a significant condition effect showed that participants perceived the power-focused organization as holding more power-focused goals than the discrimination-focused organization. There was no significant participant race effect nor significant interaction. Regarding discrimination-focused goals, a condition effect showed that participants perceived the discrimination-focused organization as higher in discrimination-focused goals than the power-focused organization. A significant interaction indicated that both Black and White participants perceived higher discrimination-focused goals for the discrimination-focused organization, but the effect was stronger for Black participants.

Thus, Study 2's organizational mission statements successfully increased perceptions of organizational goals in line with those stated by the organization for both Black and White people, addressing Study 1's limitation.

Table 4. Interaction probing by simple effects: Study 2.

Race/ outcome	Black					White				
	Goal simple effect					Goal simple effect				
	$F(1, 441)$	p	d	Power ($n = 112$) M (SD)	Discrimination ($n = 104$) M (SD)	$F(1, 441)$	p	d	Power ($n = 114$) M (SD)	Discrim. ($n = 115$) M (SD)
DiscrGoal	12.03	< .001	0.33	5.88 (1.30)	6.48 (0.71)	127.48	< .001	1.07	4.46 (1.72)	6.34 (1.07)
Attitude	7.14	.007	0.25	73.47 (25.39)	83.90 (19.06)	42.15	< .001	0.62	43.54 (33.60)	58.38 (33.31)
Engage	6.42	.012	0.24	4.96 (1.99)	5.63 (1.53)	29.47	< .001	0.52	3.03 (2.02)	4.40 (2.03)
Value	5.98	.015	0.23	5.44 (1.75)	6.16 (1.16)	46.54	< .001	0.65	3.60 (2.16)	5.26 (2.06)
POCNeed	4.31	.167	0.13	5.31 (1.42)	5.60 (1.22)	22.96	< .001	0.45	3.95 (1.72)	4.90 (1.57)
DiscrRed	0.02	.894	0.00	4.72 (1.80)	4.69 (1.75)	12.11	< .001	0.33	3.53 (1.73)	4.31 (1.53)

Note. df error is different for attitude = 440. DiscrGoal = discrimination goal; POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; DiscrRed = perceived effectiveness at reducing discrimination.

Primary outcomes. There were significant main effects of organization goal and participant race on all outcomes. Replicating Study 1, Black participants were higher in all outcomes than White Americans, indicating that White Americans did not evaluate antiracism organizations as positively as Black Americans did. Specifically, White Americans expressed neutral perceptions of these organizations, while Black Americans expressed moderately positive perceptions.

As hypothesized, ANOVAs revealed significant interactions for all outcomes. Replicating Study 1, White Americans reported a more positive attitude, greater local engagement, and greater value and fund worthiness for the discrimination-focused than for the power-focused organization. While Black Americans also reported higher scores on these outcomes for the discrimination-focused than for the power-focused organization, these organizational goal differences were significantly larger for White participants than for Black participants, as predicted.

Regarding organizational effectiveness, mirroring Study 1, only White participants perceived the discrimination-focused organization as more effective at responding to BIPOC's needs relative to the power-focused organization, while this difference was statistically nonsignificant for Black participants. This pattern also replicated in a novel outcome of effectiveness at reducing racism, such that only White participants perceived the discrimination-focused (vs. power-focused) organization as more effective. Black participants anticipated moderately high racism-reduction effectiveness for both organizational goals.

Discussion

Replicating Study 1, Study 2 demonstrated that White Americans evaluated antiracism organizations less positively than Black Americans did, consistent with prior work demonstrating White Americans' overestimations of racial progress and resistance to racial equity efforts (e.g., Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006; Iyer et al., 2003). Importantly, perceiver race influenced how people perceived antiracism organizations focusing on power versus discrimination, with a novel outcome of perceived effectiveness at mitigating racism. While Black participants expressed more positivity and greater desire to locally engage the discrimination-focused than the power-focused organization, they perceived no significant differences between these organizations in effectiveness at responding to BIPOC's needs and reducing discrimination. Notably, even for discrimination-reduction effectiveness, which is more directly related to the discrimination-focused organization, Black Americans still perceived both power-focused and discrimination-focused organizational efforts as equally effective. Considering this pattern and the equivalent valence across

two organizational goal conditions, Study 2 further underscores Black Americans' desire to target White power and privilege in antiracism activism.

Across Studies 1–2, considering Black Americans' perceptions as the accuracy point, White Americans consistently underestimated the need for power-focused antiracism organizations. This underestimation is worth addressing given the importance of dismantling White power/privilege in promoting racial equity (e.g., Bonam et al., 2019; Coleman & Yantis, 2024). Interdisciplinary scholars argue that achieving racial equity requires White people to give up their power to make way for redistribution of social and economic resources to BIPOC communities (e.g., Knowles et al., 2014; P. Perry, 2002; Roediger, 1991). Thus, White Americans' negative or lukewarm responses to power-dismantling efforts are alarming as they can serve as a barrier to racial equity (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997).

Study 3

Studies 1–2 thus far revealed White people's underestimation of antiracism organizations, particularly power-focused ones. This gap in knowledge warrants further investigation not only because it misaligns with Black people's vision for racial equity but also because of the benefits of educating White people about White privilege and supremacy demonstrated in past research (e.g., Coleman & Yantis, 2024; Lowery et al., 2007). For example, White people who rejected White power and were aware of White privilege engaged more in antiracist practices (Collins & Walsh, 2024). In this landscape, Study 3 attempts to improve White Americans' perceptions of antiracism organizations, particularly when the organization targets White power and privilege.

Study 3 used an informational intervention approach, educating lay people on social issues where perception and reality differ (e.g., Kraus et al., 2017, 2019; Kraus & Vinluan, 2023). This approach has been employed to improve people's underestimations of Black–White racial disparities and, broadly, areas where ignorance occurs due to cultural narratives (e.g., Kraus et al., 2019; Onyeador et al., 2021). In this case, the underappreciation of targeting White power and privilege partly comes from mainstream American culture's omission of Whiteness as property as a predominant principle in the U.S. racial relations (e.g., Harris, 1995; Salter & Adams, 2013). That is, avoidance of confronting White power and privilege is rooted in dominant U.S. narratives (see Adams & Omar, 2024). Because White people's limited understanding of racial equity partly comes from their lack of knowledge about structural racism, a data-based intervention incorporating Black people's expert knowledge serves as a form of consciousness-raising effort for White people to recalibrate their understanding of antiracism activism to align with more accurate, equitable strategies (Callaghan et al., 2021). Indeed, compared with a control group, people who learned information about policies segregating Black people into ghettos were more likely to acknowledge systemic racism (Bonam et al., 2019). Similarly, accurate information about racial economic disparities reduced people's underestimation of such disparities (Kraus, Hudson, & Richardson, 2022).

Based on this literature, in the preregistered Study 3 (https://osf.io/ynx2k), we sought to inform White Americans of the importance of power-focused (along with discrimination-focused) antiracism organizational efforts, drawing from Black Americans' insights in Study 2. Building on the epistemologies of ignorance framework, we recognize individual ignorance as a function of cultural ignorance (Adams & Markus, 2004). Thus, combining data-based and (counter)narrative approaches (see Callaghan et al., 2021), our intervention sought to educate White people about Black people's perspectives while signaling broader trends to shift White people's understanding of cultural narratives around antiracism activism.

Across all outcomes, we hypothesized main effects of both intervention and organizational goal. Compared with their control counterparts, White Americans in the intervention condition would perceive both organizations more positively,

Table 5. ANOVA results and descriptive statistics by condition: Study 3.

Outcome	Goal main effect					Intervention main effect					Interaction effect		
	$F(1, 467)$	p	d	Power goal ($n = 234$) M (SD)	Discrimination goal ($n = 237$) M (SD)	$F(1, 467)$	p	d	Intervention ($n = 235$) M (SD)	Control ($n = 236$) M (SD)	$F(1, 467)$	p	d
PowGoal	431.97	< .001	1.92	6.37 (0.88)	3.77 (1.70)	0.45	.503	0.06	5.10 (1.87)	5.03 (1.89)	0.52	.470	0.06
DiscrGoal	211.20	< .001	1.34	4.48 (1.81)	6.38 (0.88)	3.54	.061	0.18	5.56 (1.54)	5.31 (1.85)	3.80	.052	0.18
Attitude	69.02	< .001	0.77	47.76 (33.00)	70.54 (26.95)	12.89	< .001	0.33	64.19 (30.65)	54.27 (32.93)	3.57	.059	0.18
Engage	43.22	< .001	0.61	3.30 (2.06)	4.52 (1.98)	6.16	.013	0.23	4.15 (2.02)	3.68 (2.17)	2.31	.130	0.14
Value	58.27	< .001	0.71	3.81 (2.04)	5.11 (1.66)	9.44	.002	0.28	4.73 (1.86)	4.20 (2.03)	6.86	.009	0.24
POCNeed	32.96	< .001	0.53	4.62 (1.60)	5.36 (1.20)	3.39	.066	0.17	5.12 (1.36)	4.87 (1.55)	6.12	.014	0.23
DiscrRed	39.49	< .001	0.38	3.58 (1.82)	4.51 (1.40)	16.28	< .001	0.38	4.35 (1.56)	3.75 (1.76)	3.53	.061	0.17

Note. PowGoal = power goal; DiscrGoal = discrimination goal; POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; DiscrRed = perceived effectiveness at reducing discrimination.

and would perceive the power-focused organization more negatively than the discrimination-focused organization. Importantly, we hypothesized a significant interaction between intervention and organization goal, such that the less positive perceptions of power-focused organizations (vs. discrimination-focused organizations) would be reduced in the intervention condition.

Method

Participants. An a priori power analysis for a 2 × 2 between-subjects ANOVA assuming a small–medium effect ($d = 0.30$) indicated a sample size of 469 (90% power; G*Power). We recruited 488 White U.S. participants from Prolific, but 15 participants failed to pass both attention checks and two did not identify as White in the survey, resulting in an analytic sample of 471.

Procedure. Upon consent, participants were randomly assigned to the informational intervention or control article condition. The intervention article discussed that antiracism activism requires addressing both White power/privilege and discrimination issues for BIPOC, and was based on Black Americans' perceptions in Study 2 (see Appendix). The control article discussed an environmental pollution lawsuit against a company (Chaney et al., 2018). Then, participants were randomly assigned to the Study 2 power-focused or discrimination-focused organization. All subsequent measures resembled Study 2, except for the expanded three-item measure of local engagement with two additional items: "organize in your local community" and "start community-led initiatives in your local community." Finally, participants provided demographic information and received debriefing.

Results

Preliminary ANOVAs on perceived goals showed significant condition effects of stated goal manipulation on perceived goals. There was neither a significant effect of intervention nor a significant interaction on perceived goals (see Tables 5 and 6).

Table 6. Simple effects by intervention condition: Study 3.

Intervention condition outcome	Intervention					Control				
	Goal simple effect					Goal simple effect				
	$F(1, 467)$	p	d	Power goal ($n = 116$) M (SD)	Discrimination goal ($n = 119$) M (SD)	$F(1, 467)$	p	d	Power goal ($n = 118$) M (SD)	Discrimination goal ($n = 118$) M (SD)
Attitude	20.54	< .001	0.42	64.96 (33.10)	80.80 (22.14)	52.12	< .001	0.67	40.33 (32.11)	68.20 (27.47)
Engage	12.75	< .001	0.33	3.68 (2.07)	4.61 (1.88)	32.82	< .001	0.53	2.94 (2.00)	4.43 (2.08)
Value	12.54	< .001	0.33	4.30 (1.98)	5.14 (1.64)	52.68	< .001	0.67	3.34 (2.00)	5.07 (1.68)
POCNeed	5.32	.021	0.21	4.90 (1.52)	5.32 (1.16)	33.83	< .001	0.54	4.34 (1.64)	5.40 (1.24)
DiscrRed	9.69	.002	0.29	4.02 (1.79)	4.67 (1.21)	33.39	< .001	0.54	3.15 (1.74)	4.35 (1.56)

Note. POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; DiscrRed = perceived effectiveness at reducing discrimination.

Table 7. Simple effects by organizational goal: Study 3.

Intervention condition outcome	Power goal					Discrimination goal				
	Intervention simple effect					Intervention simple effect				
	$F(1, 467)$	p	d	Intervention ($n = 116$) M (SD)	Control ($n = 118$) M (SD)	$F(1, 467)$	p	d	Intervention ($n = 119$) M (SD)	Control ($n = 118$) M (SD)
Attitude	14.93	< .001	0.42	64.96 (33.10)	40.33 (32.11)	1.45	.229	0.67	80.80 (22.14)	68.20 (27.47)
Engage	7.96	.005	0.33	3.68 (2.07)	2.94 (2.00)	0.47	.494	0.53	4.61 (1.88)	4.43 (2.08)
Value	16.10	< .001	0.33	4.30 (1.98)	3.34 (2.00)	0.10	.748	0.67	5.14 (1.64)	5.07 (1.68)
POCNeed	9.26	.002	0.21	4.90 (1.52)	4.34 (1.64)	0.20	.654	0.54	5.32 (1.16)	5.40 (1.24)
DiscrRed	17.37	< .001	0.28	4.02 (1.79)	3.15 (1.74)	2.34	.127	0.54	4.67 (1.21)	4.35 (1.56)

Note. POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; DiscrRed = perceived effectiveness at reducing discrimination.

Primary analyses. A series of 2 × 2 ANOVAs showed, across all outcomes, significant effects of intervention (except for BIPOC-need effectiveness) and organization goal. Specifically, the intervention condition, compared to the control one, reported more positive attitudes, greater local engagement, greater value and fund worthiness, and greater discrimination-reduction effectiveness. Replicating Studies 1–2, White participants perceived the power-focused organization less positively than the discrimination-focused organization on all dimensions.

As hypothesized, these main effects were qualified by significant interactions on value and fund worthiness, and BIPOC-need effectiveness. The interactions approached significance for attitude and discrimination-reduction effectiveness. Following preregistration, we probed these interactions focusing on simple effects by intervention condition. Specifically, in the control condition, White participants perceived the power-focused organization, compared to the discrimination-focused one, less positively, perceived it as less valuable and fund worthy, and anticipated less effectiveness at responding to BIPOC's needs; but the intervention significantly weakened these goal effects.

Exploratory analyses. Significant interactions were also probed via simple effects of intervention by organization. We found that the intervention effects on all outcomes were only significant for the power-focused organization, but not for the discrimination-focused one (see Table 7).

Table 8. Comparing perceptions of power-focused organization between White people's intervention condition (Study 3) and Black people's knowledge as accuracy point: Study 2.

Outcome	$t(226)$	p	95% CI	d
Attitude	5.71	< .001	[10.59, 25.73]	0.62
Engage	4.79	< .001	[0.76, 1.82]	0.64
Value	4.45	< .001	[0.61, 1.57]	0.59
POCNeed	2.11	.036	[0.03, 0.80]	0.28
DiscrRed	2.96	.003	[0.24, 1.17]	0.39

Note. POCNeed = perceived effectiveness at responding to the needs of Black, Indigenous, and people of color; DiscrRed = perceived effectiveness at reducing discrimination.

Finally, we conducted independent t tests to assess our intervention's effectiveness in relation to Black people's perception of the power-focused organization as the accuracy point (see Table 8). Compared with Black people's evaluation in Study 2 (n = 112), White people after exposure to the Study 3 intervention (n = 116) still expressed significantly less positive attitudes toward the power-focused organization, were significantly less interested in engaging it in their local community, assigned it less value and fund worthiness, and anticipated less effectiveness at responding to BIPOC's needs and at reducing discrimination.

Discussion

Study 3 demonstrated the effects of providing White participants with knowledge about Black Americans' desire for both power-focused and discrimination-focused antiracism efforts. Study 3 replicated Studies 1–2 in relation to White people's strong inclination to underestimate the importance of a power-focused antiracism organization compared with a discrimination-focused organization. Novel to Study 3, we demonstrated that this underestimation was reduced when White participants received the informational intervention. As hypothesized, White people's less positive evaluation of a power-focused organization than a discrimination-focused one was smaller for those exposed to Black Americans' knowledge, significantly so for organizational value and effectiveness, and trending in the hypothesized direction for general attitude and discrimination-reduction effectiveness. Specifically, White people's evaluations of the power-focused organization were improved. The impact of our informational intervention on shifting perceptions of a power-focused (but not discrimination-focused) organization supports the Marley hypothesis that White people are normally unsupportive of efforts to target White power/privilege due to their own ignorance, perpetuated by neoliberal cultural narratives, about its critical role in antiracism activism (e.g., Bonam et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2012). In sum, the intervention was relatively effective at encouraging White people to tackle White power and privilege in the context of antiracism organizations.

However, the improvement afforded by the intervention did not bring White people's evaluation of the power-focused organization to the desired level of Black people's evaluation. This finding, along with the overall small size of interaction effects (average d = 0.19), reveals other factors at play other than individual and cultural ignorance. Concretely, local engagement revealed a nonsignificant interaction and the largest discrepancy from Black people's expert knowledge, compared with other outcomes. We argue that a desire to engage a power-focused organization in one's local community requires both recognizing a need for it in antiracism activism and wanting it more proximal to one's personal life. Prior work has revealed a distinction between antiracist awareness versus action (see Pietri et al., 2024), so

our intervention may be more effective to increase the former than the latter.

Broadly, the intervention article in Study 3 primarily focuses on contemporary Black people's perspectives, but integrating a more historical approach, such as highlighting successful efforts to eliminate White power and privilege as part of the Civil Rights Movement, could improve the intervention's effectiveness (Bonam et al., 2019; Kraus & Vinluan, 2023). Conceptually, besides ignorance, identity processes may play a role such that invoking a need to tackle White power and privilege may threaten White Americans' racial identity (Knowles et al., 2014). We encourage future interventions to prioritize strategies conscious of CRT tenets (e.g., interest convergence), rather than race-neutral approaches (e.g., social belonging intervention), to empower White people to overcome threats to their identity (Laiduc et al., 2024).

General Discussion

Integrating the inequity-framing and lay theories of activism literatures, the present research took a CRT approach to examine how Black and White Americans may distinctively perceive and engage with antiracism organizations that express different goals. Compared with Black Americans, White Americans reported less positive perceptions of and engagement with antiracism organizations, regardless of organizational goal (Studies 1–2). Extending inequity-framing work (e.g., Chow et al., 2010; Lowery et al., 2007), compared with the discrimination-focused (Studies 1–2) and the strength-focused organizations (Study 1), White Americans expressed less positive attitudes toward the power-focused organization and less interest in engaging this organization in their local communities (Studies 1–3). White Americans perceived the power-focused organization as less valuable and less effective at responding to BIPOC's needs (Studies 1–3) and at reducing discrimination (Studies 2–3). These White Americans' more negative perceptions of power-focused antiracism organizations significantly differed from the perceptions of Black Americans, who perceived no or significantly smaller differences between the power-focused organization and other organizational goals (Studies 1–2).

These findings novelly extend the Marley hypothesis in an antiracism activism context, such that White people, compared with Black people, were less likely to support efforts to address White power and privilege due to their lack of knowledge about its role in antiracism activism (Bonam et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2012). In other words, centering Black Americans as the experts in antiracism activism, these racial discrepancies highlight how White people fell short of supporting antiracism organizations, and lacked a critical understanding of the need to target White power and privilege to achieve racial equity (e.g., Laiduc et al., 2024; Mathew et al., 2023). Evidencing interest convergence in the antiracism organizational context, our findings show that White Americans define and fight racism in ways that preserve their interests (e.g., Adams et al., 2006; Trawalter et al., 2024).

To address this shortcoming, we developed an effective informational intervention informed by the epistemologies of ignorance framework to promote White Americans' endorsements of an antiracism organization that targets White power/privilege. When provided with accurate information about Black Americans' desire to target both White power/privilege and discrimination against BIPOC in efforts toward racial equity, White Americans responded more positively to the power-focused organization (Study 3). The more negative perceptions and less desired engagement with power-focused (over discrimination-focused) organizations in Studies 1–2 were mitigated. Findings revealed a promising strategy to educate White Americans toward dismantling Whiteness as a system of power and domination. This effectiveness also lends support for the Marley hypothesis (Bonam et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2012) such that the lackluster support for power-focused efforts was indeed partly attributable to a knowledge gap that is perpetuated by cultural narratives.

Building on prior inequity-framing work (e.g., Dietze & Craig, 2021; Lowery et al., 2012), we demonstrate, for the first time, how the goals of an antiracism organization impact organizational perceptions. In doing so, we harnessed the inequity-framing model to expand our understanding of lay theories of antiracism activism. Our findings, along with other work showing the role of identity in attitudes toward equity initiatives (e.g., Oswald et al., 2024; Pham et al., 2023), demonstrate that people of varying identities perceive activism goals differently. Going beyond the dominant White focus and a colorblind approach (e.g., Lowery et al., 2007; Trawalter et al., 2024), we novelly evaluated the role of perceiver race in inequity-framing and how people understand and support antiracism efforts. By taking a critical approach to explicitly compare Black versus White perspectives to demonstrate the extent to which White people's perceptions of antiracism efforts misalign with Black Americans', we interrogated potential gaps in White people's efforts toward antiracism activism.

In developing the informational intervention, the current research centered the Marley hypothesis; yet, White people's inaction regarding racial equity may also be influenced by their racial identity (e.g., Bonam et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2012). For instance, prior work has shown that among White people, identification with Whiteness moderated the racial Black–White differences in perception of systemic racism, such that racial differences were stronger for White people high in racial identity (Nelson et al., 2012). In the context of interventions, the effects of education about historical housing discrimination on acknowledgement of systemic racism were stronger for White people with lower (vs. higher) White identification (Bonam et al., 2019). Thus, the effectiveness of our intervention may be stronger for White people low in White identification, which may partly account for the modest effect sizes in Study 3. To increase effectiveness, future interventions may integrate exercises for White people to critically examine their relationship with Whiteness (Coleman et al., 2019, 2021).

Our intervention novelly treats Black people's expert knowledge (which is often treated as subjective) as the accuracy point (for a similar approach, see Laiduc et al., 2024). Prior work focused on historical knowledge, such as actual economic disparities between White and Black people (Kraus, Hudson, & Richardson, 2022) and a history of racially discriminatory housing practices (Bonam et al., 2019), as the information on which to build an intervention. In relying on marginalized people's knowledge as the accuracy point, we interrogate the gold standard of objectivity in psychological science (Abo-Zena et al., 2022; Rogers et al., 2024). Such a centering of marginalized perspectives in intervention science can help mitigate objectivity interrogations experienced by BIPOC, where they receive questioning and punishment for their works in various realms such as academia, journalism, and activism (Torrez et al., 2024a, 2024b). Therefore, our study not only highlights a novel method of informational intervention for social issues that do not have a fixed roadmap and require continuous experimentation (e.g., how to address state-sanctioned violence; Oswald et al., 2024), but also underscores the importance of intentionally prioritizing marginalized over privileged perspectives in intervention design.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

By centering Black perspectives as both the starting point and a guiding principle, this work counters the myriad ways in which psychological science has historically treated White perspectives as natural and objective (e.g., Hakim et al., 2023; Salter & Adams, 2013). Our intervention is distinctive for shifting White people's perceptions without pandering to White interests (e.g., demonstrating benefits to White people or affirming them; Lowery et al., 2007, 2012). This Black-centering approach can help investigate White people's attitudes in other arenas (e.g., support for police) that may hinder racial equity efforts. Such BIPOC-centering methods will center the oppressed as the primary agents of change and help transform social psychology

into an emancipatory science (Gampa & Sawyer, 2024).

The current findings offer tangible insights for antiracism organizations. Specifically, organizations can consider how they frame their goals depending on their target audience. If an organization aims for maximal involvement and support from White people, a discrimination framing will likely attract more people than a power framing. However, after drawing White people in, it is imperative the organization educate White members about Black Americans' desire to address both White power/privilege and discrimination. For instance, mirroring the information in our intervention, organizations can expose White allies to video informational interventions (e.g., interviews of Black activists and community members about antiracism goals; Moss-Racusin et al., 2018; Pietri et al., 2019).

Despite the significant shifts in perceived value, effectiveness, and engagement achieved by Study 3's brief informational intervention, long-lasting changes and proactive action require addressing the persistence of White interests and psychological threats underlying White defensiveness (e.g., Knowles et al., 2014). Thus, brief interventions should ideally be paired with long-term critical educational programs for White people to confront White power and privilege. For instance, White students and teachers can engage in critical reflective writing about systemic racism, where they learn about Black people's perspective as shown in this study, then integrate this knowledge with their own racialized lived experiences, historical processes, and contemporary symptoms of systemic racism (Coleman & Yantis, 2024). Alternatively, knowledge about Black Americans' perspectives should be accompanied with deeper education such as critical race history (e.g., lessons about the history of Whiteness in the US; Bonam et al., 2019). Interventions need to take place early. Just as White children can be socialized to talk about race, gender, and LGBTQ+ issues (Rogers et al., 2024), the need to confront White supremacy as the fundamental root of the US (Harris, 1993) must be included in early education (S. Perry et al., 2024). Broadly, our methodology challenges educators to critically reassess neutral educational programs that often equalize the viewpoints of privileged and marginalized people, instead of prioritizing marginalized people's desire for dismantling White supremacy.

Conclusion

The present research critically centers Black Americans as the experts and demonstrates that White Americans underestimate the value of antiracism organizations, especially when the organization targets White power and privilege. An intervention educating White Americans about Black Americans' perceptions can improve their views on power-focused organizations. Collectively, these studies "draw upon the epistemological perspective of the oppressed to reveal and (eventually) dismantle the structures of privilege that systematically confer racial advantage to White Americans" (Salter & Adams, 2013, p. 789), and underscore the need to implement changes to divest society of White power and privilege.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. White power and privilege are intricately linked (Bhopal, 2023; Liu, 2017) and thus tackled in the same experimental condition through Studies 1–3. For sake of concision, antiracism organizations that target White power/privilege are referred to as power-focused organization.
2. This measure was comprised of two different measures (using different 7-point scales; 1 =

not at all, 7 = *very much*; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*) that were originally expected to be conceptually different—value versus fund worthiness—but six items across two scales loaded onto one factor, and hence were collapsed into one scale named "value and fund worthiness."

3. We decided on LSD post hoc tests a priori to afford greater statistical power, specifically an ability to detect the smallest significant differences (e.g., Agbangba et al., 2024; Williams & Abdi, 2010), which we considered a priority given the novel nature of this work on antiracism organizational goals. Results did not significantly change using the Bonferroni method, one of the most conservative post hoc comparison procedures (see Table S4, Supplemental Material).

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Appendix

Informational Intervention Article (Study 3)

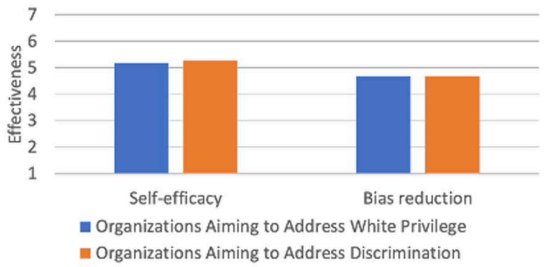
The New York Times

Anti-Racism Activism Requires Addressing Both White Privilege and Discrimination Issues for People of Color

Oct 31, 2023

New York, NY. According to a recent study conducted by a group of psychologists and sociologists at Harvard University, Black Americans perceived anti-racism organizations that aim to reduce White privilege just as effective as anti-racism organizations that aim to address discrimination issues for people of color. Results from 5,000 Black people across the country revealed that Black Americans perceived no difference in effectiveness of these two types of anti-racism organizations. That is, they are believed to be equally effective at responding to needs, elevating visibility, and improving quality of life for people of color.

Specifically, for Black Americans, anti-racism organizations that state a goal of reducing White privilege and anti-racism organizations that state a goal of reducing discrimination for people of color are equally effective at helping nurture a strong sense of belonging and self-efficacy for people of color. Moreover, these two types of anti-racism organizations are believed to be equally effective at reducing bias in local communities.



Dr. Jennifer Kim, Head of the Sociology Department at Harvard, summarized: "Our results clearly show that we need both anti-racism organizations that tackle White privilege and anti-racism organizations that address discrimination issues for people of color." To add, Dr. Julian Williams, the leading researcher on this project, emphasized that integrating the perspectives of people of color is key to the success of anti-racism organizations. He explained that anti-racism organizations would have a greater chance of creating positive changes if they take into account the opinions of people of color.

In sum, Black Americans believe that anti-racism organizations aiming to reduce White privilege and anti-racism organizations aiming to address discrimination against people of color are equally effective at creating positive changes for people of color.