Original Article

Examining the Effects of I-Sharing for Future White-Black Interactions

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Abstract: Research shows that *I-sharing*, or sharing subjective experiences with an outgroup member, positively shapes attitudes toward that outgroup member. We investigated whether this type of social experience would also promote a positive interracial interaction with a novel outgroup member. Results showed that White and Black participants who I-shared with a racial outgroup member (vs. I-sharing with a racial ingroup member) expressed more liking toward that outgroup member. However, I-sharing with an outgroup member did not reduce anxious behavior in a future social interaction with a novel racial outgroup member. Therefore, although sharing subjective experiences may increase liking toward one individual from a racial outgroup, it remains to be seen whether this positive experience can influence behaviors in future interactions with other racial outgroup members. Future directions are discussed.

Keywords: I-sharing, interracial interactions, intergroup relations, intergroup contact

Intergroup contact between members of racial groups is one way to address racial prejudice and discrimination in our society. People who interact with members of racial outgroups subsequently express less prejudice toward those groups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, people habitually avoid interracial contact because interacting with people from different racial groups can increase anxiety and stress (e.g., Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Richeson & Shelton, 2003; Toosi, Babbitt, Ambady, & Sommers, 2012). Further complicating matters, cross-race interactions that specifically address race-related issues can be even more difficult than interactions that do not (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008). Considering these complexities, what can be done to make interracial interactions more positive experiences?

One form of contact known as *I-sharing* may bridge intergroup differences, thus bypassing salient characteristics such as racial and status differences which may improve intergroup relations (Pinel & Long, 2012; Pinel, Long, Landau, Alexander, & Pyszczynski, 2006; Pinel, Long, Landau, & Pyszczynski, 2004). I-sharing occurs when two individuals share a momentary, subjective experience. For example, two individuals who spontaneously laugh at the same joke may feel that they have shared a state of consciousness (the *I*) that transcends aspects of the visible self that are available to other people (the *Me*; Pinel et al., 2006). In other words, it feels as though someone who simultaneously has the same reaction as you must share your view of the world – clearly, a positive social experience.

I-sharing differs from perceived interpersonal similarity (or *Me*-sharing) because I-sharing occurs when individuals experience the same subjective state of consciousness, creating an existential connection between those individuals, whereas Me-sharing involves sharing objective, outwardly-expressed values or traits with others (Pinel & Long, 2012). Individuals who I-share with another person may assume that they will also Me-share with that person; however, when these techniques were pitted against each other in an experiment, individuals who were high in feelings of existential isolation preferred others with whom they I-shared over those with whom they shared similar values (Pinel & Long, 2012). Indeed, shared subjective experiences satisfy a need for affiliation in a distinctive way-by connecting people who share the core of what makes them unique (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Fulfillment of this need to connect with others promotes liking expressed by individuals toward their I-sharing partners (Pinel et al., 2006). However, despite evidence that I-sharing through online chatting sessions leads to intergroup liking across demographic boundaries of gender, sexual orientation, and race (Pinel & Long, 2012), no published studies have examined the effectiveness of I-sharing as a method for decreasing anxiety and increasing positivity in face-to-face intergroup interactions (although see Pinel, Bernecker, & Rampy, 2015, for some possibilities). The present study sought to answer that exact question: Can I-sharing with a racial outgroup member promote more positive interracial interaction outcomes?

DOI: 10.1027/1864-9335/a000264

Past research has suggested that encouraging specific conditions for interracial contact may actually prepare individuals to better cope with anxiety in future interracial settings. For example: the creation of intergroup settings that convey equal status to both individuals involved under circumstances that allow individuals to work together to solve problems of mutual interest (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). Furthermore, in the classic Robbers Cave study, researchers created intergroup conflict in minimal groups by separating campers into two groups that competed in various competitions. The researchers were subsequently able to restore intergroup positivity by requiring the groups to work together on tasks that required cooperation (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). A similar outcome was also obtained by the "jigsaw classroom" method, where students who were organized into small groups and worked interdependently to learn course material developed higher self-esteem and more empathy in intergroup settings (Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979). Accordingly, because working on a task together might create an experience similar to I-sharing, it is possible that I-sharing may also positively affect subsequent intergroup relations.

I-Sharing and Interracial Interactions

Based on previous research, I-sharing could represent a foundation for developing close interracial friendships – relationships that are critical for achieving more interracial harmony in society. By creating a common subjective experience between partners, I-sharing resembles previous empirical efforts to reduce stereotyping and prejudice: for example, creating a common identity between majority and minority group members (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009; Insko & Robinson, 1966). Indeed, across several intergroup studies, women, heterosexual men, and White participants who I-shared with their partners liked them more than those who did not I-share, regardless of group membership (Pinel & Long, 2012; Pinel, Long, & Crimin, 2008).

An important, yet unexplored, aspect of I-sharing is the extent to which the benefits of I-sharing for cross-group liking extend to positive behaviors in future intergroup interactions with yet a different outgroup member. Models of intergroup contact suggest several criteria that must be met in order for intergroup experiences to positively affect future intergroup interactions and social behavioral tendencies. According to Watson (1947), contact is most effective if it occurs between counter-stereotypical individuals of equal status who work together, thereby allowing development of a common ingroup identity. The common ingroup identity model states that people who have more inclusive representations of the ingroup treat people formerly viewed as outgroup members with the favoritism usually reserved for the ingroup (Gaertner et al., 1999). Furthermore, the mutual intergroup differentiation model articulates the need for group identities to also be salient during cross-group interactions (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Lastly, deprovincialization theory (Pettigrew, 1997, 1998) also proposes that intergroup contact not only changes attitudes toward outgroups, but also causes individuals to reappraise ingroups, leading to less "ingroup centrism."

Therefore, recognition and appreciation of racial differences may be central for initial contact to improve outcomes in subsequent intergroup settings, but these studies also highlight a need for discussions about group differences in order to see positive behavioral changes (see also Brewer & Miller, 1984, for discussion of the Personalization Model which states that contact between group members needs to be more personalized to see positive effects).

Existing evidence suggests that the positive effects of I-sharing on perceptions of an outgroup partner can increase the willingness of the I-sharer to interact with members of that outgroup in the future. Indeed, women and heterosexual men who had previously I-shared with an outgroup member (compared to those who had not) were more likely to choose to interact with another outgroup member in a future face-to-face task (Pinel & Long, 2012). And this is supported by other intergroup relations research. For example, other work has shown that creating friendships through repeated intergroup exposure reduces negative impressions of outgroup members (Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, Alegre, & Siy, 2010). And beyond the lab, White first-year college students assigned to live with a racial minority roommate were found to have more positive subsequent interactions with a novel Black individual compared to those who lived with White roommates (Gaither & Sommers, 2013).

However, the question of whether I-sharing can specifically affect one's behavior when interacting with other members of racial outgroups remains unaddressed. Furthermore, since willingness to interact with racial outgroup members does not necessarily translate into positive interracial interactions, it is important to determine what impact I-sharing has on one's behavior during a future interracial interaction. Given that intentions to interact with individuals of other races are a necessary precursor for the development of interracial friendships (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), I-sharing with an outgroup member may reduce anxious behaviors in live, face-to-face interracial interactions.

The Current Study

In the current study, we examined whether positive attitudes fostered by an I-sharing experience with an outgroup member can transfer to facilitate more positive behaviors (e.g., reduced anxiety, increased eye contact) during a

subsequent interaction with a novel outgroup member. Adapting the methodology from Pinel and colleagues (2008; Pinel & Long, 2012), White and Black participants first interacted with two, ostensibly student, partners (one Black and one White) during an online chat session (phase 1). They played a game during which they were randomly assigned to have an I-sharing experience (described below) with either the Black or the White partner, and then provided evaluations of each partner. Participants then had a second interaction; a face-to-face discussion about a race-related or -unrelated topic with a novel outgroup confederate (either White or Black depending on the participant's race) during which affective and behavioral responses were recorded and subsequently coded (phase 2). In phase 1, we predicted that participants who I-shared with their outgroup partner during the online session would rate that partner more favorably than participants who did not (Pinel & Long, 2012; Pinel et al., 2008). Based on previous intergroup contact findings demonstrating that shared experiences or cooperative tasks shape intergroup attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Aronson & Bridgeman, 1979; Dovidio et al., 2003; Sherif et al., 1961) and that the positive effects of contact with one outgroup member can generalize to other outgroup members (e.g., Gaither & Sommers, 2013; Pettigrew, 2009; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2000, 2011; Tausch et al., 2010; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997), we also predicted that this pattern would generalize to phase 2, leading to more positive and fewer anxious behaviors in the subsequent face-to-face interracial interaction with a novel outgroup member.

We considered two possible caveats to this predicted pattern for phase 2 suggesting that the effects might be exaggerated among White participants, or when the discussion topic focused on race-related issues. First, when examining anxiety during an interracial interaction, the topic of discussion is important to consider. Discussing race-relevant topics such as affirmative action increases the salience of the interracial nature of the setting (Shelton, Richeson, & Salvatore, 2005; Sommers, Warp, & Mahoney, 2008). Whites report more anxiety during interracial interactions regardless of whether the topic is race-related, but Blacks report less anxiety when discussing a race-related issue compared to a race-neutral issue (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). Second, although interracial interaction research including Black participants is limited (Shelton, 2000), previous work suggests that intergroup contact is not as effective at reducing intergroup anxiety for minorities as it is for White individuals (Shelton et al., 2005; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Given that Black individuals are less anxious overall in race-related interacial interactions, we did not necessarily expect an I-sharing experience to increase the comfort of Black individuals during the novel interracial interaction.

While similar to past research in many ways, the current experiment modified the I-sharing procedures used in the past in a few minor ways. As in previous research, I-sharing was manipulated using the "Imaginiff" game which asks participants to provide responses to hypothetical questions comparing celebrities to random objects (e.g., if Elvis Presley were a type of pie, what type of pie would he be?). However, in order to use a more realistic chatting paradigm, the present study simulated this interaction using Google Chat, a popular online platform that is widely used by college students. During this interaction, participants saw one of their partners (the I-sharer) provide a matching response on 8 of the 12 trials, while the other partner's responses never matched (see Pinel & Long, 2012; Pinel et al., 2008). Here, participants provided their own response and then, after an approximate 5-s delay, saw both of their partners' responses simultaneously in a group chat window. While not immediate, this short delay approximates the simultaneous experience of previous I-sharing studies and is consistent with how group chats occur in Google Chat. That said, these changes should be considered when making comparisons of the current findings with prior research. After I-sharing, all participants interacted with a novel outgroup member, and their affective and behavioral responses were assessed.

Method

Participants and Design

Participants (N = 258, 150 female; age range: 17–48, M_{age} = 20.62, SD = 5.24) were 160 White and 98 Black individuals recruited through a university participant pool and online ads. Participants received course credit or $20 as compensation. We used a 2 (Participant Race: Black or White) × 2 (I-Sharing Partner: Ingroup or Outgroup) × 2 (Discussion Topic: Race-salient or Race-neutral) between-subjects design. Again, participants had an I-sharing experience with either their racial ingroup partner or their racial outgroup partner and did not have this experience with the other partner. Put another way, participants in one condition were exposed to either a racial ingroup I-sharer and racial outgroup non-I-sharer or in the other condition participants were exposed to a racial outgroup I-sharer and a racial ingroup non-I-sharer (e.g., Pinel & Long, 2012; Pinel et al., 2008). Although it would be interesting to consider if I-sharing improves attitudes toward an outgroup partner (compared to not I-sharing with an outgroup partner) or, rather, worsens attitudes toward an ingroup partner (compared to I-sharing with both partners), the focus of the present study was to examine whether changes in attitudes

toward a racial outgroup transferred into a future social interaction with a novel outgroup member (but see Crimin, Pinel, & Long, 2008 for a between-subjects design that has shown the same effects stemming from I-sharing).

Procedure and Materials

Phase 1: Online I-Sharing Interaction

When participants arrived at the lab, the experimenter told them that the study was interested in looking at online and in-person social interactions. Participants were told that they would first complete the online interaction with two other participants using Google Chat and then they would complete the in-person interaction with a different participant who was also completing all of the same tasks but chatting in a different online group. Unbeknownst to participants, the experimenter played the roles of the other two online participants. The experimenter explained that each participant was assigned a Google Chat account (e.g., Participant916) and seated them at a laptop and told them to wait for further instructions through the online chat.

The experimenter then sent the following into the group chat window: "Today you will be participating in an online, live interaction with two other participants. I will be mediating the conversation by participating in a separate one-on-one private conversation with each of you. In these conversations you will be responding to my questions, and I will then take all of the responses and copy them into this four-way group chat. This will ensure that no one feels rushed in their responses, since I will not be pasting them here in the group chat until I have received a response from each of you. This also allows you to ask me any questions you may have in private." Next, the experimenter asked the participant for age, year in school, gender, and race. The experimenter then pasted all responses in the group chat so that participants would learn that they had one White and one Black online interaction partner. All other information about the confederate online participants was the same (i.e., 18, freshman, male, Black, or White).

As in Pinel and Long's (2012) I-sharing procedure, the online session then proceeded to the "Imaginiff" game designed to create a subjective sharing experience. Participants were asked 12 hypothetical questions such as, "Imagine Ellen DeGeneres is a musical instrument. Which one would she be?" The actual participant responded to the experimenter in the private chat window, and approximately 5 s later the experimenter pasted all "participant" responses into the group chat window to create the shared experience. The two confederate participant responses were predetermined, and participants were randomly assigned to I-share either with a racial ingroup or with an outgroup member. After each trial, participants learned their ostensible partner's responses through this group chat where they believed their partners were also learning their responses as well. Both partners' responses appeared simultaneously and one of the partners (either a racial ingroup or an outgroup member depending on the condition to which participants were randomly assigned) I-shared by providing the exact same response on 8 of 12 trials while the other partner never provided the same response (see both Pinel et al., 2008 and Pinel & Long, 2012 for similar methods). At the end of the game, participants used a 0 (= *very low*) to 9 (= *very high*) scale to rate how much they liked each of their online interaction partners.

Phase 2: In-Person Interracial Interaction

Based on a review of interracial interaction literature (see Toosi et al., 2012), there are four main types of measurable outcomes used to measure social behavior in interracial settings: explicit attitudes, self-reports of emotional states, nonverbal or observed behavior, and objective measures of performance. Using this literature as a guide for the present study, we measured participant self-report, confederate report, and we also coded for nonverbal behavior. These methods are explained in more detail next.

After the online interaction, the experimenter returned with an outgroup confederate (i.e., Black confederate for White participants or White confederate for Black participants) and told the participants that they would be discussing a controversial social issue for the in-person interaction portion of the study. Confederates were matched to gender, blind-to-condition, and trained to respond comparably across participants. Following methods from Gaither and Sommers (2013), participants were told there would be two roles for the interaction – interviewer and interviewee – and that the participants would select both their role and a social issues topic by random draw. Through a rigged drawing, all participants were assigned to be the interviewee and half of participants picked from a topics bowl assigning them to the race-relevant condition in which they would discuss affirmative action. The other half picked from a topics bowl assigning them to the race-neutral condition in which they would discuss transgendered issues. We wanted both topics to be controversial and political to control for affect between conditions; however, only affirmative action was race-specific (and has been used in past studies to heighten the salience of the interracial nature of the interaction). Therefore, the results from the present study could be compared to those typically measured in the interracial interaction literature.

The confederate read from a pre-written set of questions (e.g., Do you support affirmative action in all aspects? Do you support transgendered rights in all aspects?). Discussions lasted 5 min and were videotaped for later coding. Since the focus of the I-sharing experience was to test whether I-sharing reduced anxiety in future interracial

Table 1. Ratings of behavior in interracial interaction

	White participants				Black participants			
	I-share with outgroup		I-share with ingroup		I-share with outgroup		I-share with ingroup	
Measure	Race topic	Neutral topic	Race topic	Neutral topic	Race topic	Neutral topic	Race topic	Neutral topic
Participant self-reported anxiety	2.90 (1.65)	2.20 (1.44)	2.68 (1.78)	2.80 (1.50)	2.15 (1.59)	2.29 (1.27)	1.81 (1.04)	1.95 (1.23)
Confederate rating of anxiety	3.63 (1.50)	2.63 (1.50)	2.97 (1.52)	2.51 (1.45)	3.00 (1.32)	2.21 (1.02)	2.22 (1.37)	2.50 (1.43)
Nonverbal								
Anxiety	2.51 (0.71)	2.56 (0.71)	2.63 (0.70)	2.74 (0.81)	2.41 (0.79)	2.65 (0.81)	2.15 (0.71)	2.22 (0.60)
Pleasantness	3.88 (0.80)	3.77 (0.96)	3.79 (0.98)	3.96 (0.83)	4.27 (0.90)	3.77 (0.88)	4.59 (1.03)	4.23 (0.72)
Smiling	3.28 (1.01)	3.25 (1.09)	3.11 (1.32)	3.25 (1.03)	3.53 (1.33)	3.19 (1.08)	4.14 (1.26)	3.53 (0.96)
Moved naturally	3.52 (1.19)	2.95 (1.14)	3.04 (1.31)	3.34 (1.30)	3.37 (0.80)	3.42 (1.04)	4.09 (1.08)	3.24 (1.20)

Note. Behaviors were rated on 7-point scales. Standard deviations are given in parentheses.

interactions, the participant and the confederate both completed a post-interaction questionnaire asking them on a scale of 1 (= *not at all*) to 7 (= *very much*) how anxious they felt during the interaction in addition to answering a series of basic demographic questions. Confederates were asked to answer this question regarding how they felt the participant behaved during the interaction (see Toosi et al., 2012 for a review of interracial interaction methods and measurements).

Coding

Later, four coders (3 female; 1 Black, 1 White, 2 Asian) blind-to-condition and hypothesis rated participants' nonverbal behavior by watching silent video clips in which only the participant was visible. Using a scale of 1 (= *not at all*) to 7 (= *very much*), coders rated participants on how anxious and pleasant they appeared, in addition to how much they smiled and moved their bodies naturally during the interaction, signs indicative of positive social interaction and engagement (Dovidio et al., 2002; Gaither & Sommers, 2013; Norton, Sommers, Apfelbaum, Pura, & Ariely, 2006; Shelton et al., 2005). The four coders were high in reliability across all traits (intraclass r = .62) so responses were averaged to create one overall rating for each assessment.

Results

Phase 1: I-Sharing Interaction

Partner Liking

We analyzed the data using a 2 (Participant Race: Black, White) × (I-Sharing Partner: Ingroup, Outgroup) × (Liking: Ingroup, Outgroup) mixed model ANOVA with repeated measures on the last factor. The results revealed a main effect of liking, $F(1, 253) = 10.29$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, in which participants reported greater liking for an outgroup partner ($M = 6.35$, $SD = 1.89$) than an ingroup partner ($M = 5.95$, $SD = 1.94$). This effect was qualified, however, by an I-Sharing Partner × Liking interaction, $F(1, 253) = 216.03$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .46$. When participants I-shared with an ingroup member they liked the ingroup partner ($M = 6.82$, $SD = 1.91$) more than the outgroup partner ($M = 5.49$, $SD = 1.64$), $F(1, 253) = 63.96$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$. However, when participants I-shared with an outgroup member they liked the outgroup partner ($M = 7.17$, $SD = 1.75$) more than the ingroup partner ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.57$), $F(1, 253) = 165.63$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .40$. Neither the Participant Race × Liking interaction, $F(1, 253) = .61$, $p = .44$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$, nor the Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner × Liking interaction, $F(1, 253) = 2.20$, $p = .14$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, was significant. Therefore, I-sharing appeared to affect liking for both ingroup and outgroup partners.

Phase 2: In-Person Interracial Interaction

We conducted 2 (Participant Race: Black, White) × 2 (I-Sharing Partner: Ingroup, Outgroup) × 2 (Discussion Topic: Race-relevant, Race-neutral) between-subjects ANOVA. Means and standard deviations by participant race, I-sharing condition, discussion topic and for the following measures are reported in Table 1 and correlations between dependent variables are reported in Table 2.

Participant Self-Reported Anxiety

There was a main effect of participant race for participants' self-reported anxiety: White participants reported being more anxious ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.60$) compared to Black participants ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.29$), $F(1, 247) = 9.43$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. There was no significant main effect of I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 247) = .15$, $p = .70$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, or Discussion Topic, $F(1, 247) = .15$, $p = .70$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, nor were there significant two-way interactions: Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 247) = 1.89$, $p = .17$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$, Participant Race × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 247) = 1.20$, $p = .28$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$, I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 247) = 1.15$, $p = .29$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$. There was also no significant three-way interaction between I-Sharing Partner, discussion topic, and participant race, $F(1, 247) = 1.61$, $p = .28$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$.

Table 2. Correlations between dependent measures

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Liking for outgroup member	–							
2. Liking for ingroup member	.16*	–						
3. Participant self-reported anxiety	.15*	.16*	–					
4. Confederate rating of anxiety	.04	−.12	−.02	–				
Nonverbal								
5. Anxiety	−.008	−.03	.05	.12	–			
6. Pleasantness	.10	.24**	.008	−.12	−.46**	–		
7. Smiling	.07	.22**	−.008	−.06	−.34**	.83**	–	
8. Moved Naturally	.14*	.10	.06	−.08	−.33**	.46**	.44**	–

Notes. * indicates that correlation is significant at $p < .05$, ** indicates that correlation is significant at $p < .01$ (2-tailed).

Confederate Report of Participant Anxiety

There was a main effect of topic in that participants in race-relevant discussions were rated as more anxious ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.51$) compared to participants in race-neutral discussions ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 1.38$), $F(1, 245) = 7.14$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$.[1] Additionally, there was a main effect of participant race: White participants were rated as more anxious ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.54$) compared to Black participants ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.31$), $F(1, 245) = 5.96$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The main effect of I-Sharing Partner was marginally significant revealing that participants were rated as more anxious after sharing with a racial outgroup member ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.45$) than after sharing with a racial ingroup member ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.45$; $F(1, 245) = 2.87$, $p = .09$, $\eta_p^2 = 01$).

The analysis also revealed an I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic interaction, $F(1, 245) = 4.75$, $p = .03$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Simple effects tests showed that, among participants in the race-relevant discussion, those who I-shared with an outgroup member were rated by the confederate as more anxious ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.45$) than those who I-shared with an ingroup member ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.49$), $F(1, 249) = 8.40$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. There were no differences for participants in the race-neutral discussion, $F(1, 249) = .24$, $p = .88$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. In addition, participants who I-shared with an outgroup member were rated as more anxious in the race-relevant discussion ($M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.45$) than in the race-neutral discussion ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.35$), $F(1, 249) = 13.18$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. There was no effect of discussion topic among participants who I-shared with an ingroup member, $F(1, 249) = .31$, $p = .58$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$. No other two-way interactions were significant: Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 245) = .14$, $p = .71$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, Participant Race × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 245) = 1.64$, $p = .20$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$. Similarly, there was no significant I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic × Participant Race interaction: $F(1, 245) = .514$, $p = .47$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$.

Nonverbal Anxiety

Regarding perceived nonverbal anxiety, there was a main effect of participant race: White participants were rated as being more anxious ($M = 2.61$, $SD = .73$) compared to Black participants ($M = 2.37$, $SD = 1.29$; $F(1, 209) = 5.50$, $p = .02$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$).[2] There were no other main effects: I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 209) = .84$, $p = .36$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$, Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = 1.14$, $p = .29$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$. We observed a Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner interaction, $F(1, 209) = 5.40$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. White participants who I-shared with an ingroup member ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .76$) seemed more anxious than Black participants who I-shared with an ingroup member ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .66$), $F(1, 209) = 10.13$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Among participants who I-shared with an outgroup member, White and Black participants did not differ significantly in nonverbal anxiety, $F(1, 209) = .00$, $p = .99$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

In addition, among Black participants, those who I-shared with an outgroup member ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .79$) seemed more anxious than those who I-shared with an ingroup member, $t(72) = 2.03$, $p = .046$, $r = .23$. There were no differences for White participants who I-shared with either a racial outgroup or an ingroup member ($M = 2.53$, $SD = .71$; $t(141) = 1.25$, $p = .21$). There were no other significant two-way interactions: Participant Race × Discussion

[1] Five participants did not have a confederate rating of anxiety ($n = 4$ because the confederates thought they knew the participant and were told not to rate people they know, $n = 1$ because the participant did not complete the interaction).

[2] Forty-one participants do not have any nonverbal ratings ($n = 35$ because of either experimenter error or recording errors, $n = 4$ because they did not consent to be recorded, $n = 2$ because the participant left due to time constraints before the interaction). To confirm that missing data were randomly distributed between conditions, we computed a new variable in which participants whose nonverbal behavior was rated were coded as 0, and participants with missing data were coded as 1. We submitted this variable to separate logistic regressions for White and Black participants. For White participants, no significant main effects of I-sharing or discussion topic emerged, nor was the interaction significant (βs < 1.2, ps > .15). Similarly, for Black participants, we did not observe significant main effects nor did we observe a significant interaction (βs < −.62, ps > .18). Thus, missing data did not vary significantly as a function of our independent variables.

Topic, $F(1, 209) = .12$, $p = .73$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = .07$, $p = .80$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$ Similarly, there was no I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic × Participant Race interaction, $F(1, 209) = .28$, $p = .60$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$.

Nonverbal Peasantness

Regarding perceived nonverbal pleasantness, there was a main effect of participant race: White participants were rated as less pleasant ($M = 3.85$, $SD = .89$) compared to Black participants ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .94$), $F(1, 209) = 7.82$, $p = .006$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. No other main effects were significant: Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = 7.82$, $p = .13$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, and I-Sharing Partner was marginal with participants I-sharing with their racial ingroup being rated marginally higher in perceived nonverbal pleasantness ($M = 4.07$, $SD = .94$) than when I-sharing with a racial outgroup partner ($M = 3.90$, $SD = .89$), $F(1, 209) = 2.97$, $p = .09$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. There were no significant two-way interactions: Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 209) = 1.67$, $p = .20$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$, I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = .67$, $p = .42$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, and Participant Race × Discussion Topic was marginal, $F(1, 209) = 3.15$, $p = .08$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. The three-way interaction was also not significant, $F(1, 209) = .092$, $p = .76$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

Nonverbal Smiling and Body Movements

Regarding perceived smiling, there was a main effect of participant race: White participants were rated as smiling less ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.10$) compared to Black participants ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.22$), $F(1, 209) = 5.17$, $p = .024$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. There were no other main effects or two-way interactions: I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 209) = 1.38$, $p = .24$, $\eta_p^2 = .007$, Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = 1.60$, $p = .21$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$, Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 209) = 2.74$, $p = .10$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, Participant Race × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = 2.56$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = .02$, $p = .88$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$, nor did we observe a significant Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = .44$, $p = .51$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$. Regarding perceived body movements, there was a marginal main effect of participant race, $F(1, 209) = 3.54$, $p = .06$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$. Black participants were perceived as more likely to move naturally ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.05$) than White participants ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.24$). There were no other significant main effects: I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 209) = .43$, $p = .51$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = 2.43$, $p = .12$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, or significant two-way interactions: Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner, $F(1, 209) = .87$, $p = .35$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$, Participant Race × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = .62$, $p = .43$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$, I-Sharing Partner × Discussion Topic, $F(1, 209) = .001$, $p = .98$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

However, there was a significant Participant Race × I-Sharing Partner × Discussion interaction, $F(1, 209) = 6.78$, $p = .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. To decompose the interaction, we examined the results within each participant race group. Among Black participants who discussed a race-relevant topic, those who I-shared with an ingroup member ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.08$) moved more naturally than those who I-shared with an outgroup member ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 1.19$), $F(1, 70) = 5.15$, $p = .026$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. There were no significant differences for Black participants based on their I-sharing partner when discussing a race-neutral topic, $F(1, 70) = .23$, $p = .63$, $\eta_p^2 = .003$. Comparing across discussion topics, Black participants who I-shared with an ingroup member moved more naturally in the race-relevant conversation ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.08$) compared to those in the race-neutral conversation ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.20$), $F(1, 70) = 5.50$, $p = .022$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$. Lastly, there were no significant differences for Black participants based on the discussion topic when I-sharing with an outgroup member, $F(1, 70) = .02$, $p = .88$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$.

Next, we examined the body movements of White participants. Among White participants who I-shared with an outgroup member, there was a marginally significant effect of discussion topic, $F(139) = 3.79$, $p = .054$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$: Participants who discussed a race-relevant topic moved more naturally ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.19$) than participants who discussed a race-neutral topic ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.14$). The effect of discussion topic on White participants who I-shared with an ingroup member was not significant, $F(139) = 1.09$, $p = .30$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$. Furthermore, among White participants who discussed affirmative action the effect of I-sharing was not significant, $F(139) = 2.57$, $p = .11$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, nor was the effect of I-sharing significant among White participants who discussed transgendered issues, $F(139) = 1.90$, $p = .17$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

Discussion

In the present study, we examined whether I-sharing with a racial outgroup member affected both White and Black individuals' liking of that outgroup member, as well as their behaviors in a social interaction with a novel outgroup member. The results revealed that I-sharing positively affected attitudes toward an outgroup I-sharing partner but not the majority of behaviors toward a novel outgroup member. Consistent with past research, participants who I-shared with an outgroup member liked that person more than an ingroup member (Pinel & Long, 2012). However, contrary to our predictions, I-sharing with an outgroup partner did not systematically influence how participants behaved in a face-to-face interaction with a different outgroup member.

Regardless of whether participants initially I-shared with an ingroup or outgroup member, White participants appeared less pleasant overall (i.e., less smiling and positive nonverbal behavior) during the interaction experience than Black participants. White participants also displayed more anxious social behavior (as indexed by self-reports, confederate reports, and coders' nonverbal ratings) than Black participants. Although the majority of behavioral effects did not stem from I-sharing with an outgroup member, White participants were more anxious after I-sharing with a Black individual. This could be because Whites cared more about the outcomes of that future interracial interaction after the online chatting session with a racial outgroup member. However, without specific empirical data, this possible explanation remains one to be explored in future interracial interaction research. Additionally, I-sharing with a racial outgroup member unexpectedly increased levels of perceived anxiety during race-related discussions regardless of participant racial background.

Although it is possible that some anxiety is inevitable and perhaps even beneficial in social relations (i.e., if it motivates individuals to work through stressful situations), most literature to date suggests that it is the expectation of an *unpleasant* intergroup experience that creates anxiety, and that this anxiety can negatively shape subsequent interactions (e.g., Plant & Devine, 2003; Shelton, 2003; Shelton, West, & Trail, 2010; Wilder & Shapiro, 1989). Therefore, we interpret the present results through the lens that it is useful to reduce anxiety: our findings suggest that, at least regarding observable anxiety in an interracial setting, I-sharing with an ingroup member before an interracial interaction makes people less anxious than I-sharing with an outgroup member does. This could be due to a number of factors; for example, having a positive ingroup experience may affect one's mood positively or interacting with an outgroup member could also negatively affect one's mood. However, without a baseline measurement of these possibilities, future work is needed to examine this finding more thoroughly. Alternatively, it is possible that anxiety serves different functions in social interactions and is perceived in different ways. For example, some recent work documented that attributing an interaction partner's anxiety differentially predicts different interracial interaction outcomes (West, Pearson, & Stern, 2014). Thus, future work could also utilize other measures of anxiety such as physiological and other less subjective measurements. However, the present results do demonstrate that despite the positive effects of shared subjective experiences on attitudes toward an individual of another race, I-sharing did not appear to increase the positivity of the structured in-lab interracial interaction that participants completed, as assessed by those measures most frequently used in the extant interracial interaction literature.

Future Directions and Limitations

It is possible that I-sharing with an outgroup partner improves attitudes and behaviors toward that specific partner, the person with whom an I-sharer is intimately connected. Given that we examined behavior toward a novel outgroup individual (not the individual with whom participants I-shared) in the current study, the present results leave open this possibility. Therefore, additional research is needed to examine the link between I-sharing with an outgroup member and behavioral responses to novel outgroup members under varying conditions and contexts.

Relatedly, following methods used previously in the interracial interaction literature (see Shelton & Richeson, 2006 for a review), our study involved a structured interview involving a race salient and controversial topic. Therefore, it is possible that because the I-sharing context (the Imaginiff game) was not race-specific, the positive experience of I-sharing might transfer to other non-race-related interracial interactions even if it does not transfer to race-related interactions. Although the purpose of the present study was to explore ways to promote more positive race-related interracial interactions, this is a prediction worthy of follow-up. Moreover, the present study also only measured social behavior in an actual social interaction between two people; however, I-sharing experiences may affect other forms of behavior such as the inclusion or exclusion of outgroup members or prosocial behaviors with outgroup members.

Additionally, the present methods utilized Google Chat which required a 5-s delay before I-sharing occurred. Therefore, the experiences of our participants may have differed from the experiences of participants in previous I-sharing studies who learned immediately after they responded that their partner's response was the same. This may have affected the intimacy of the I-sharing experience in the present study, thus more work is needed to pinpoint the boundary and contextual effects that surround I-sharing experiences. Furthermore, additional research is also needed to further define the mechanism by which I-sharing operates. Perhaps if the mechanism underlying I-sharing effects were more fully defined, more effective experiences involving I-sharing could be developed.

One interpretation of the present results may be that initial interracial contact needs to last longer than one short chat session (Gaither & Sommers, 2013; Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008) in order for initial contact to improve interracial behavior. Longer I-sharing experiences, or several consecutive I-sharing experiences, may therefore be more likely to influence interracial behavior than the brief chat session we administered in the current study. Another possibility is that the two types of contact may have to occur through the same modality in order to

see positive transfer effects (i.e., both online interactions or both in-person interactions). Moreover, initial interracial contact may also need to be cooperative in order to reduce tension in subsequent interactions. For example, when White and Black individuals work together toward a common goal, they may develop a sense of positive interdependence that facilitates the ability of people to see outgroup members as being similar to them (Dovidio et al., 2009; Gaertner et al., 1999); however, the online task we used was not a cooperative task and therefore did not foster interdependence. Therefore, it is clear that additional work is needed to pinpoint the boundary effects and contextual necessities surrounding I-sharing.

Support From Previous Work

Some past research does support the account that, consistent with the present findings, positive attitudes toward an outgroup I-sharing partner may not correspond to positive social interaction behavior in a subsequent diverse setting. We have long known that attitudes assessed in relation to one individual, context, and time do not often translate to behaviors in other, heterogeneous circumstances (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977). Our participants formed attitudes about an outgroup partner in the absence of stressors and social concerns that arise in actual interactions. Actual interracial interactions also involve dynamics that our participants likely did not consider during the I-sharing experience. People in actual interracial settings appraise those situations as more demanding and less certain than same-race contexts (Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009); concerns that people may not experience while chatting online with an outgroup member. Concerns about appearing prejudiced (Vorauer & Turpie, 2004) and social norms suggesting they should not notice or talk about race (Apfelbaum, Sommers, & Norton, 2008) predict White individuals' regulating behavior to avoid saying or doing the "wrong" thing during interracial interactions. Behavior regulation is cognitively taxing and increases anxiety in those situations (Richeson & Shelton, 2003). Racial minorities, on the other hand, worry about encountering prejudice from Whites (Shelton et al., 2005). Maintaining vigilance for signs of prejudice depletes the cognitive resources of minority individuals, leaving them in an aversive, exhausted state (Murphy, Richeson, Shelton, Rheinschmidt, & Bergsieker, 2012). In sum, stressors arise in interracial settings because of the complexities of interacting with other people, which involve determining how others see you and how to make the best impression. These concerns were not present during the online chat. Therefore, our participants may have felt close to an outgroup member with whom they I-shared, only to capitulate to the concerns that typically characterize interracial settings during actual interracial interactions.

Participant Race Differences

Although we did not observe that I-sharing affected how participants appeared to behave in an interracial setting, we did find that, overall, Black participants were more comfortable than White participants during the cross-race interaction. This result is consistent with past research comparing the behaviors of White and Black participants in same-race and cross-race interactions (Trawalter & Richeson, 2008). As members of the majority racial group, White individuals (particularly our participants, who were students on a predominantly White college campus) interact with racial minorities infrequently. Black individuals, however, interact with Whites frequently and are likely more familiar than Whites with the dynamics of interracial settings. Trawalter and Richeson (2008) found that White participants were more anxious than Black participants during cross-race interactions. In fact, Black participants exhibited *less* anxiety when discussing a race-relevant topic (in a relatively safe university lab space) than a race-neutral topic. Despite holding concerns about interracial interactions (Shelton et al., 2005), racial minorities may be better able than Whites to adapt in diverse contexts.

Conversation Topic Differences

In the current study, we also did not find that White and Black participants behaved differently during the interaction depending on the conversation topic. However, Black participants who I-shared with a racial ingroup member and discussed a race-relevant topic were rated as moving their bodies more naturally during the interaction than Black participants who I-share with a racial outgroup member, while White participants showed the opposite – I-sharing with a racial outgroup member actually leads to more positive body movements during race-relevant discussions. Although this is only one finding, it does support past work demonstrating that intergroup contact can operate differently for majority and minority individuals (e.g., Shelton et al., 2005; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), but additional research is needed to more fully examine possible effects of online intergroup contact for participants of different races. We also observed that confederates rated all participants as more anxious when they were discussing race-relevant issues than when they were discussing race-neutral issues, suggesting that participants were nervous discussing affirmative action in this interracial situation regardless of their racial background. Thus, the data suggest that the discussion topic manipulation provoked the reactions that we intended among our participants. It is also possible, however, that participants in the control group were nervous about discussing transgendered issues with a stranger, even though this discussion did not involve race.

Participants may assume that they differ from outgroup members on their attitudes toward a variety of bias-related issues, including issues of gender identity. Therefore, the present results only show that the form of I-sharing investigated in this study may not transfer into particularly stressful interracial interactions, meaning future work should explore this paradigm in less stressful or difficult contexts and to other forms of behavior.

Conclusion

In sum, the results of the present study suggest that a short I-sharing experience with an outgroup individual may not reduce the anxiety experienced by individuals in structured interracial interactions with novel outgroup members. Therefore, it is important to test the utility of specific types of social experiences to improve intergroup interactions under different conditions in order to identify how we may harness the potential benefits of I-sharing for intergroup relations. It is possible that sharing subjective experiences with an outgroup member, when combined with more frank discussions about racial differences, reduces anxiety in novel diverse settings (Gaither & Sommers, 2013; Page-Gould et al., 2010). I-sharing may increase liking for an outgroup member, but without learning about how to appreciate complex racial differences, individuals may still lack the tools necessary to cope with stressful interracial situations (Trawalter et al., 2009).

Discussing race-related issues is crucial for increasing interracial understanding and helping to improve race relations, but such discussions can be difficult (and even counterproductive) for both White and Black individuals (Toosi et al., 2012). Our results revealed that White and Black individuals liked an outgroup member with whom they I-shared more than an ingroup member with whom they did not I-share. However, participants who I-shared with an outgroup member did not behave more positively during a subsequent interracial interaction with a different outgroup member. Future studies may examine the conditions – such as longer, more consecutive I-sharing experiences (e.g., Brewer, 1996; Brewer & Miller, 1984; Gaither & Sommers, 2013) – under which I-sharing is beneficial for Whites and racial minorities. Overall, this work contributes to the goal of identifying effective methods or specific social experiences that can facilitate positive cross-group interactions that may be implemented in educational and organizational settings.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, a Ford Dissertation Fellowship, and the University of Chicago Provost's Postdoctoral Scholarship awarded to Sarah Gaither and a Clara Mayo Award from SPSSI awarded to Jennifer Schultz.

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Received June 20, 2014
Revision received September 14, 2015
Accepted October 1, 2015
Published online June 22, 2016

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