

Discrimination-Based Stress Reactivity in White and Non-White College Students

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RESEARCH TOPIC

- We investigate how White and non-White participants perceive stressful situations targeted at racial identity.

METHODS

- Performed an online vignette study
 - With 5 discrimination & 5 non-discrimination vignettes matched in severity
- Collected stress responses ('stressed/overwhelmed') from 186 undergraduate students
- Ran a 2 (participant identity; non-White versus White) x 2 (stressor category; discrimination versus non-discrimination) ANOVA

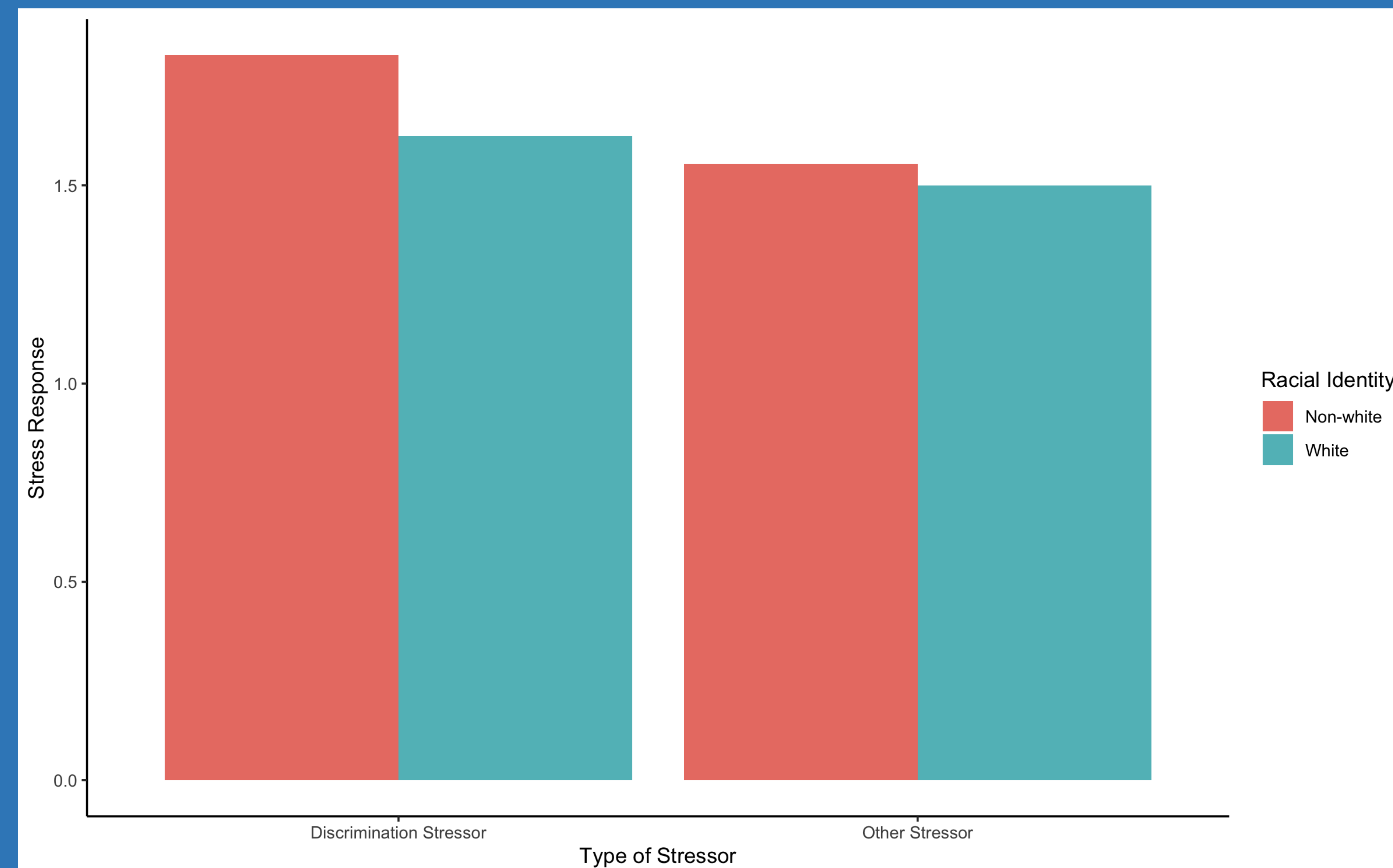
RESULTS

- There is a main effect for stressor category, with participants of all races perceiving discrimination events as more stressful ($p = 0.004$).
- There is a marginally significant main effect of participant identity ($p = 0.092$).
- There is no statistically significant interaction effect ($p = 0.337$).

CONCLUSIONS

- Non-white participants view the events as more stressful relative to their white counterparts, regardless of whether they are discrimination based or not.
- Discrimination events are perceived as significantly more stressful relative to non-discrimination events, regardless of participant racial identity.
- The relationship between type of stressor and stress response does not depend on participant racial identity

Non-white college students perceive all stressors, including discrimination and non-discrimination stressors, as more stressful compared to their white counterparts.



DISCUSSION

- Findings were consistent with common identity theory—white participants perceived all events (including discrimination) to be less stressful.^{1,3}
- Results diverged from minimization-of-personal-discrimination and affective habituation theories, which suggest non-White individuals are less reactive to instances of discrimination.^{2,4,5,6,7}

LIMITATIONS

- Only 10 vignettes (5 discrimination/5 non-discrimination matched)
- ANOVA independence assumption violated
- Did not adjust for including stressors that are indirectly experienced

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Greater sample size
- Multi-level statistical analysis
- Excluding participants who could not “imagine” themselves in the scenario
- Breaking down “non-White” category more specifically

REFERENCES



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