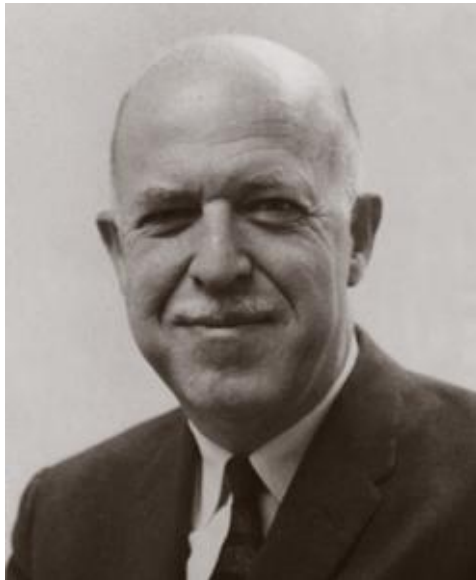


Do survey respondents lie?

Situated cognition and socially desirable responding

Norbert Schwarz
University of Michigan

Tacit assumptions of survey research



- People know what they do
- Know what they believe
- Can report on it “with candor and accuracy”

Angus Campbell, 1981

Tacit assumptions of survey research

- Researcher's task
 - Allow for accuracy
 - Ask reasonable questions
 - Allow for candor
 - Confidentiality
 - Anonymity
- Research efforts focused on these tasks

Some doubts

- Discrepancies
 - Between behavioral records and reports
 - Between reports given in different contexts
 - Interviewers
 - Sponsor
 - Question order
- Interpretation
 - They don't tell you what they know (“desirability”)
 - They didn't do the work (“satisficing”)

Suppose they don't know...

- Memory and judgment are highly constructive
 - Facts and beliefs not simply “retrieved”
- Answers formed when asked
 - Based on what comes to mind at that time
 - Strong contextual influences
- How these “constructions” work is central theme in psychology

Perhaps they don't lie?

- Discrepancies may not reflect “lying”
 - i.e., deliberate misrepresentation despite better knowledge
- May be “honest” answers
 - The best they can do in context
- Differential implications for measurement

But how would we know?

Attitude reports

- Reports of “sensitive” attitudes shift as a function of social context
 - E.g., racial attitudes & race of interviewer
- Are these effects obtained even when self-presentation is irrelevant?
 - No reason for desirable self-presentation
 - Full anonymity
 - Measure not transparent, allowing no insight into how one presents oneself
 - Implicit attitude measures

The case of racial attitudes

Race of interviewer

Key finding

- White respondents report more favorable attitudes towards Blacks as a group when the interviewer is Black.
- Black respondents report more favorable attitudes towards Whites as a group when the interviewer is White.

Race of interviewer



- Samuel Stouffer's (1950) World War II surveys
 - Attitudes related to race and conflict vary by race of interviewer
 - Can't separate race per se from differences in interviewer behavior
 - Nor can later studies

Race of interviewer

INTERVIEWING IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

By
HERBERT H. HYMAN

with
WILLIAM J. COMB
JACOB J. FELDMAN
CLAUDE W. SARTY
CHARLES ROBERT STEINER

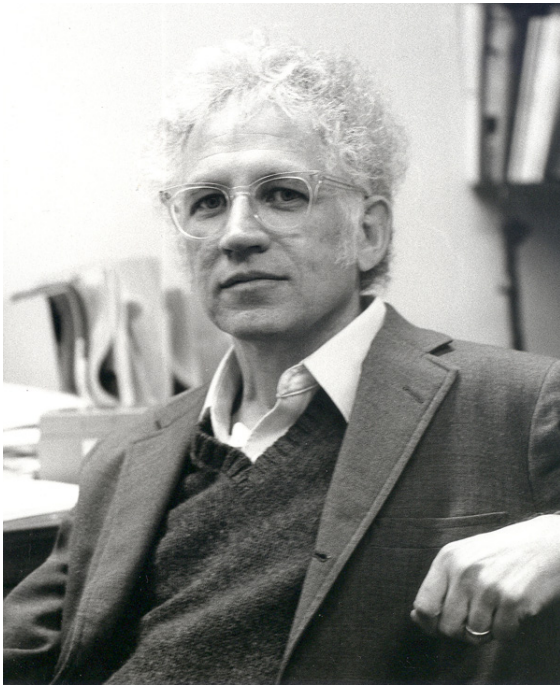
Revised by
SAMUEL A. STEINER



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

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Race of interviewer



To accept a guest into your house and then explain that you neither trust nor feel friendly toward people of their race probably takes more chutzpah than the average respondent possesses

H. Schuman & J. Converse (1971)

Race of interviewer effects

Two main arguments

- Politeness
 - You don't tell members of the other group
- Social desirability
 - You don't tell anyone (unless you're sure they agree with you)
- = Respondents tell a deliberate lie
 - To maintain a smooth interaction
 - To present themselves in a positive light

Some doubts

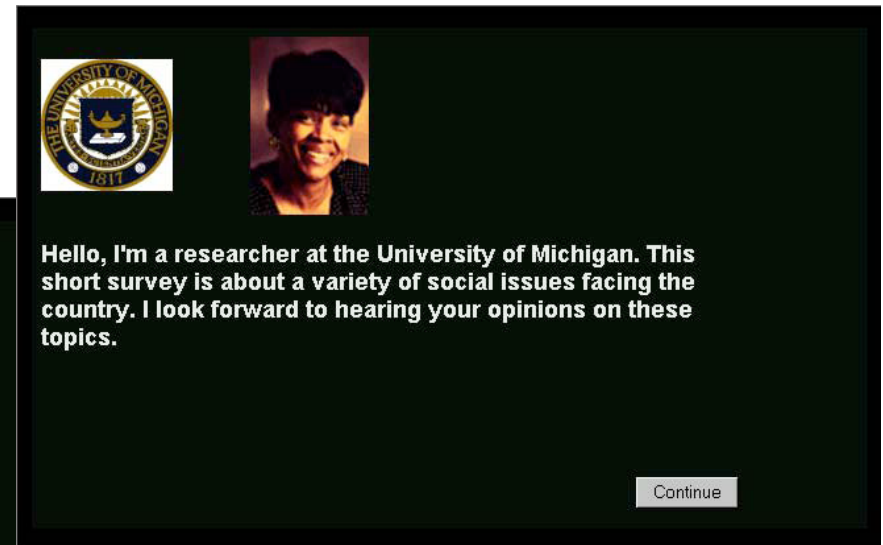
Summers & Hammond, *Social Forces*, 1966

- White undergrads complete anonymous self-administered questionnaire
- Handed out by two helpers
 - Both white
 - One black & one white
- More favorable racial attitudes in presence of a black person
 - Who does not see the answers
- “Mere presence” effect

A picture will do

Krysan & Couper, *Int J Internet Science*, 2006

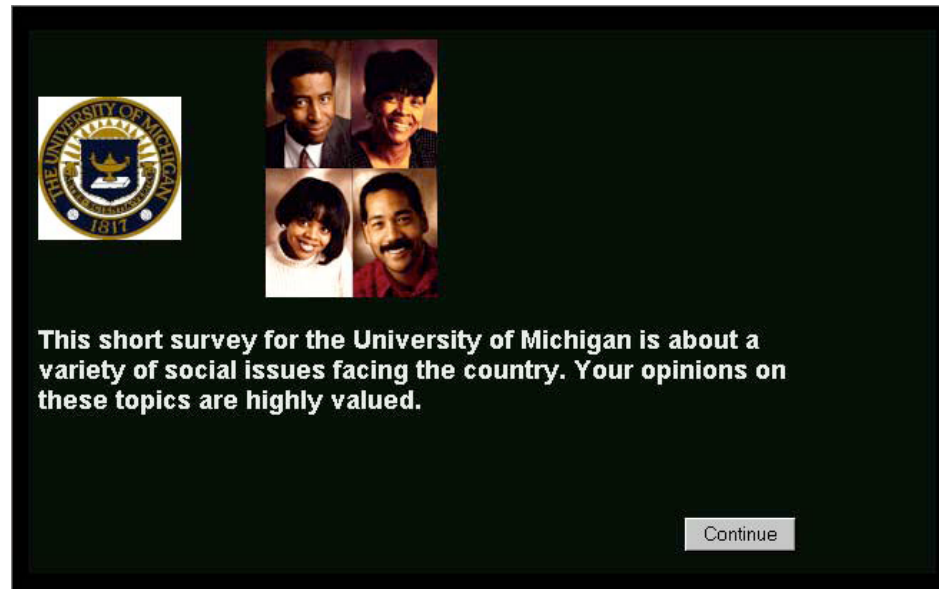
- White respondents in web survey;
 - Text & image only
- “Virtual interviewer” is black or white



A picture will do

Krysan & Couper, *Int J Internet Science*, 2006

- Less stereotypical perceptions of African Americans when “virtual interviewer” (= picture) is black
- Exception: R’s see racial discrimination as less of problem when several black interviewers are shown



Social presence?

- It does not take “social presence” with the chance of embarrassment
- “Mere presence” is enough
- Even a picture will do!

The thought is enough

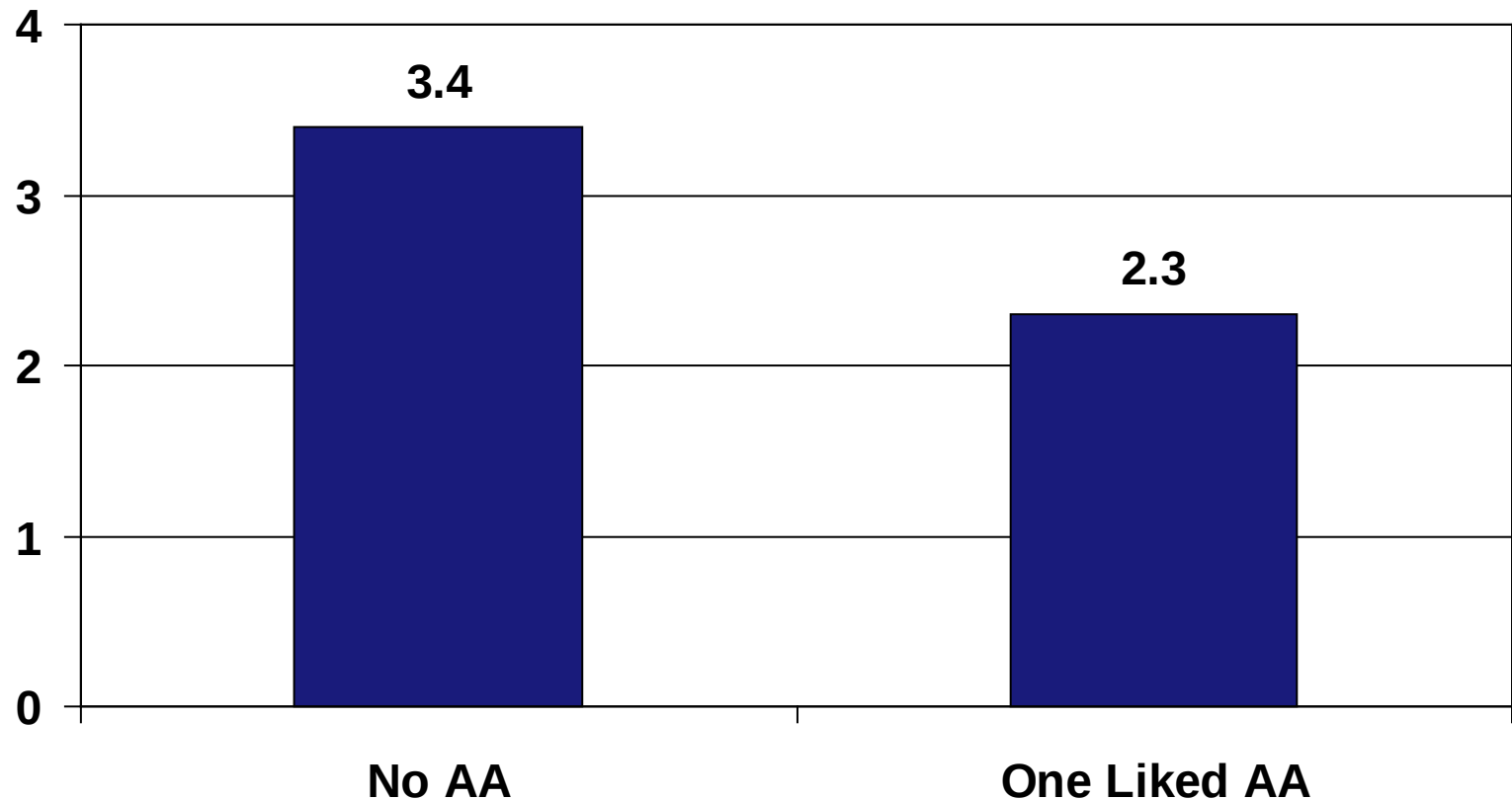
Who comes to mind

Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, *JESP*, 1995

- Participants estimate the height of 4 celebrities (Experiment 2)
- List includes
 - No African American
 - One highly liked African American (pretested)
 - E.g., Michael Jordan, Oprah Winfrey
- Racial attitude questions in later questionnaire
 - Items from Modern Racism scale
 - High score = very adverse beliefs (0-9)

Adverse racial beliefs

Bodenhausen, Schwarz, Bless, & Wanke, JESP, 1995



Positive effects of positive exemplars

- If a liked exemplar is brought to mind, the group is evaluated more favorably
 - Exemplar included in temporary representation formed of the group
- In absence of any incentives for self-presentation or politeness
- Negative attitudes are based on chronic accessibility of negative exemplars
 - Which dominate media coverage

Negative effects of positive exemplars

- Negative contextual influences occur at the same time
- Other individual members of the group are evaluated less favorably
 - Contrasted to exemplar
 - Unless you know little about them
- Highly respected members help the group, but hurt their peers
 - Bless, Schwarz, Bodenhausen, & Thiel, *JESP*, 2000
 - Bless & Schwarz, *Adv Exp Soc Psych*, 2010

MLK Day

- Martin Luther King Day brings to mind
 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
 - Positive norms about race relations
- Judgment logic
 - Helps group, hurts individual members
- Desirability logic
 - The norm activation helps all
 - At least on that day you should get with the program...

MLK Day

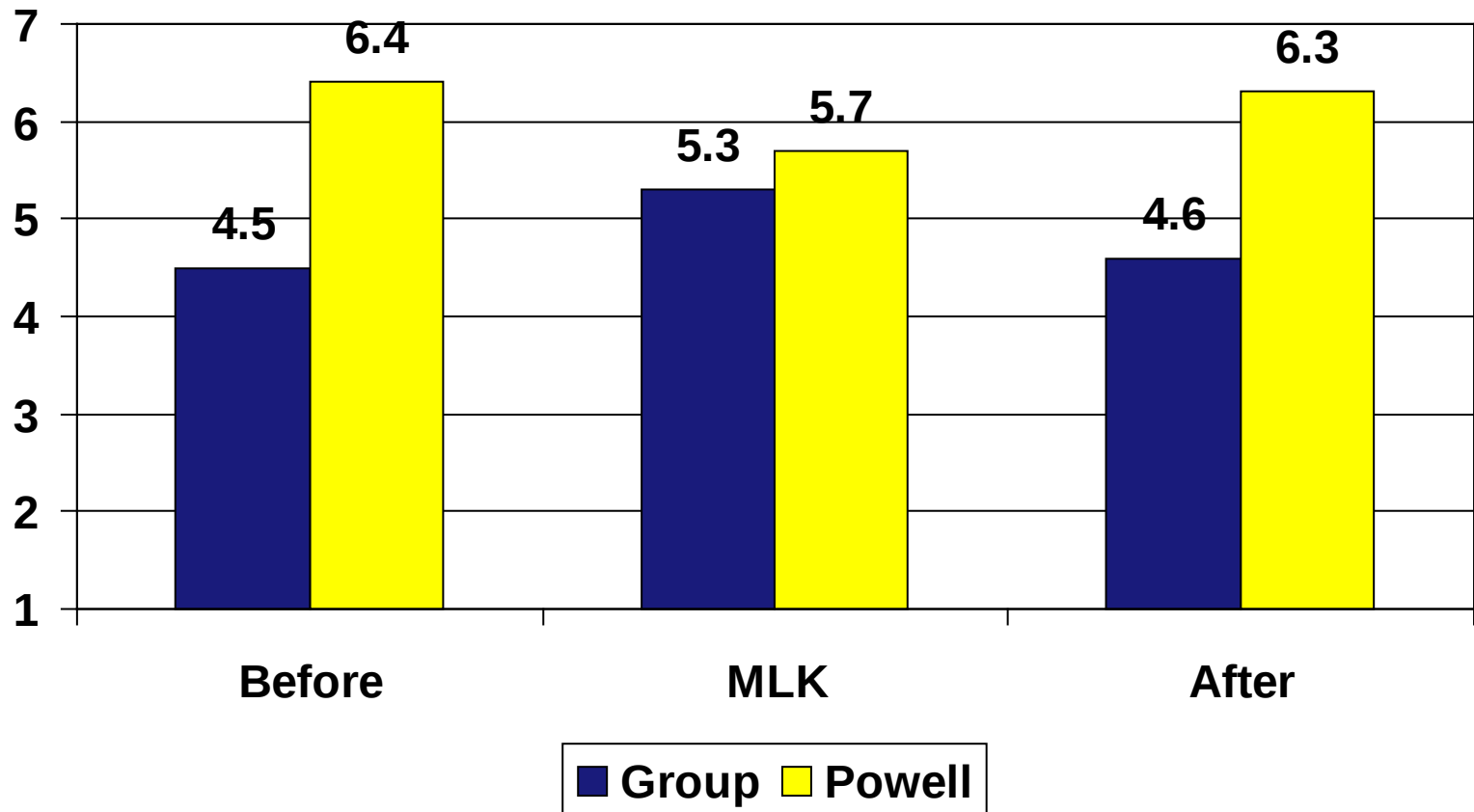
Konrath & Schwarz, 2005



- Web experiment around MLK Day 2004
- Students randomly assigned to time
 - Monday 2 weeks before MLK day
 - On MLK day
 - Monday 2 weeks after MLK day
- Attitudes
 - Towards African Americans as group
 - Towards Colin Powell
- High numbers = positive evaluation (1-9)

MLK Day

Konrath & Schwarz, 2005



Summary

- Exposure to liked exemplar produces:
 - More positive evaluations of the group
 - More negative evaluations of individual members
 - “He’s no MLK...”
- Under conditions of full anonymity & no interracial interaction
 - Minimal social desirability / politeness pressure

Summary

- Krysan & Couper's "virtual interviewers" are positive exemplars
- So is the interviewer in your living room



This short survey for the University of Michigan is about a variety of social issues facing the country. Your opinions on these topics are highly valued.

Continue

No social presence needed

- “Race-of-interviewer” effects can be obtained
 - Without an interviewer
 - Under full anonymity
 - With mere symbolic exposure to positive exemplars

No social presence needed

- Thinking of *any* African American you like is enough for
 - more favorable evaluation of the group
 - less favorable evaluations of other individual African Americans
- Same holds for any other group (or non-social category)
- Review:
 - Bless & Schwarz, *Adv Exp Soc Psych*, 2010

Lying to yourself?

Lying to yourself?

- Survey researchers: they lie to us
 - They know what they think, but don't tell us.
- Psychologists: they lie to themselves
 - Perhaps they don't even want to admit their racist attitudes to themselves?
 - If so, anonymity is not the answer

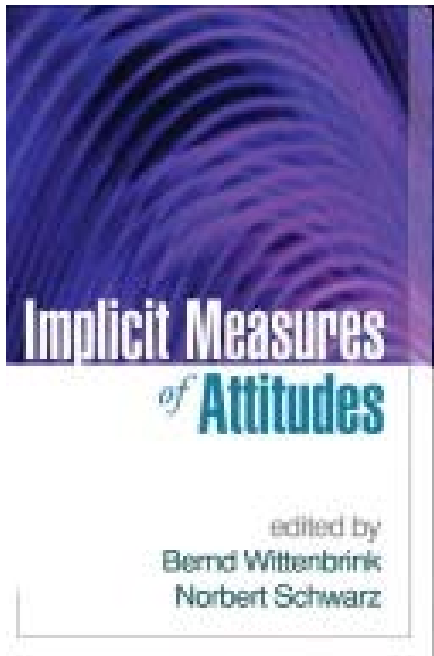
Lying to yourself?

- Needed are nontransparent measures
- If you don't know what you reveal, you don't have to confront your own nasty self

Implicit attitude measures

- Promise to capture people's "true" attitude even if
 - They don't want to tell
 - May not want to admit it to themselves
 - May not even know it
- How does that magic work?

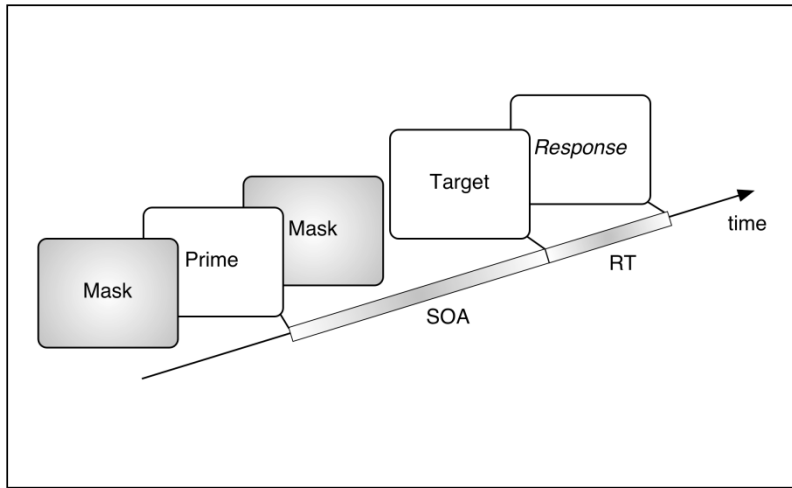
How does the magic work?



- Overview: Wittenbrink & Schwarz (Eds.), *Implicit measures of attitudes*. NY: Guilford, 2007
- Measures not transparent
- Participants not aware what they reveal
- Responses (mostly) outside of strategic control

Evaluative priming measures

Fazio et al., *JPSP*, 1986



- Is it a good or a bad word?
- Decide as fast as possible
- Of interest
 - Good words faster after white primes?
 - Bad words faster after black primes?

Prime	Positive Word	Negative Word
XXX	Good	Bad
White	Pleasant	Awful
Black	etc	etc

How would you lie on this?

- Requires insight into task
- Awareness of the prime you didn't see
- Control over speed of response

“To avoid looking like a racist, I should be fast with good words and slow with bad words when the thing I cannot see is a black person. But when the thing I cannot see is a white person, I should do the opposite.”

Implicit Associations Test

Greenwald et al., *JPSP*, 1998

Task	Left key	Right key
1	Flower	Insect
2	Good	Bad
3	Flower OR Good	Insect OR Bad
4	Bad	Good
5	Flower OR Bad	Insect OR Good

- See words or pictures
- Hit proper key as fast as you can
- Measure of interest:
 - Speed of #3 vs. speed of #5
 - The more you like flowers and hate insects, the greater the difference

How would you lie on this?

- Requires insight into task
 - Differential speed of categorizing valence congruent vs. valence incongruent targets
- Control over speed of response

“To not look like a racist, I should be slower when they pair bad stuff with black people than when they pair good stuff with black people. For white people I have to do the opposite.”

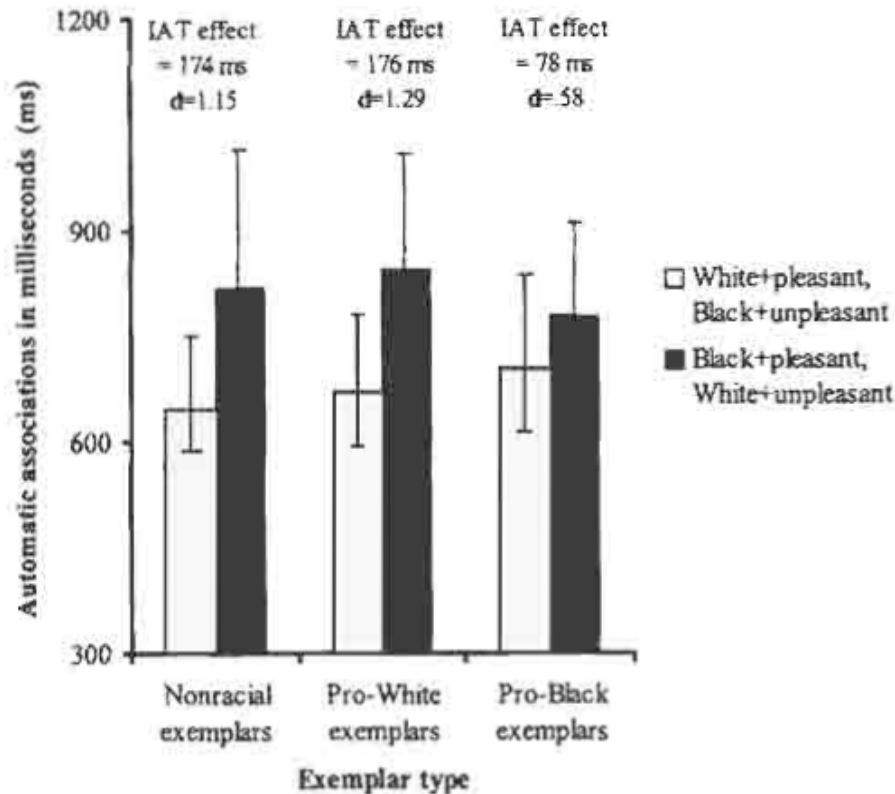
The surprise

New measures, same story

- **Same context sensitivity!**
- **Under conditions, where people wouldn't easily know how to "lie"**
- **Review:**
 - Ferguson & Bargh, in Wittenbrink & Schwarz, 2007

Exemplar effects on IAT

Dasgupta & Greenwald, JPSP, 2001, Exp 1

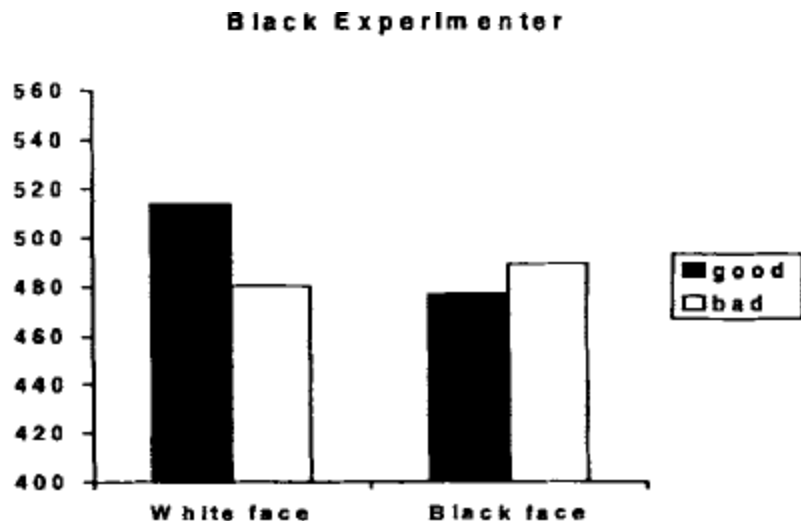
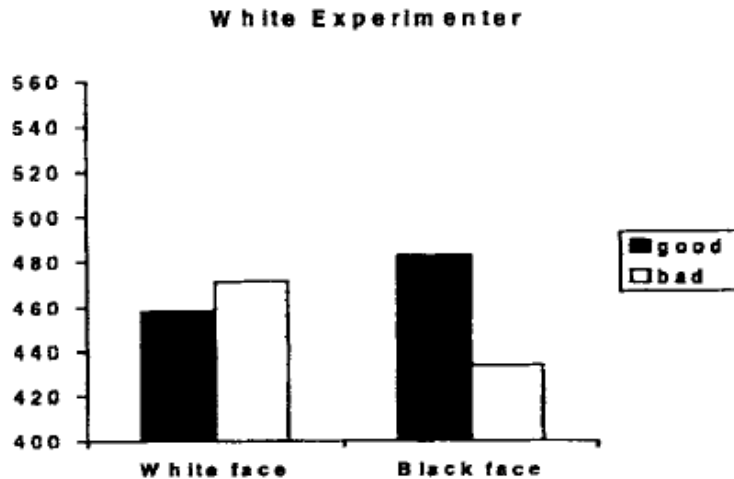


- See pictures of exemplars
 - Control pix (objects)
 - Pro-White: Liked Whites + disliked Blacks
 - Pro-Black: Liked Blacks + disliked Whites
- Do IAT

Race of Experimenter

Lowery et al., *JPSP*, 2001

- Experimenter who greets you is Black vs. White
- Decide if word is “good” or “bad”
 - Preceded by White or Black face prime
- No social presence
 - Nobody in room
 - Anonymous
 - Confidential



Race-of-interviewer without the interviewer

- Findings parallel race-of-interviewer effects
 - Under full anonymity & confidentiality
 - On measures where you don't even know what you disclose
 - To others or to yourself
- Hard to reconcile with
 - Politeness
 - Deliberate self-presentation to others
 - Hiding your true feelings from yourself

What does it mean?

Attitude construction

Situated & pragmatic



William James

**“My thinking is first
and last and always
for the sake of my
doing.” (1890)**

Situated & pragmatic

- We do things here & now, in specific contexts
- To guide “doing-in-context”, our judgments should...
 - ...be informed by past experience
 - ...but sensitive to the specifics of the present
 - ...overweight recent experience
 - ...overweight experience from similar situations
 - ...take current goals into account

Situated & pragmatic

- Only context-sensitive judgment can guide behavior in an adaptive way
 - Alert us to problems and opportunities when they exist
 - Interrupt ongoing processes when needed, but not otherwise
 - Support fast responding by making information accessible that is relevant now
- “Stable” = context-insensitive attitudes are problematic in daily life

Situated & pragmatic

- This context sensitivity is good for you
- Unless you wear your survey hat
 - Context dependency
- An adaptive feature turns into a problem because we're chasing an illusion

Attitudes as evaluation-in-context

Schwarz, Soc Cog, 2007

- Attitude reports reflect evaluations in context
 - Not stable “dispositions” or things people “know”
- Stable when evaluative implications of inputs are similar over time
- Variable when evaluative implications of inputs vary
- Observed contextual variation reflects changes in judgment, not (necessarily) “lying”

Set size effects

- Judgment at t_1 depends on what comes to mind
- A given piece of information X has less influence, the more other information comes to mind
- Implication
 - The more you know about the attitude object, the smaller the race-of-interviewer effect

The “Bradley effect”

- Voters are more likely to say they will vote for a black candidate than to do it.



- Named after LA Mayor Tom Bradley
- Lost 1982 CA gubernatorial race despite being ahead in the polls

- Poll reports in favor of black candidate more pronounced when interviewer is black

Race of interviewer & Obama

Frankovich (2009) based on CBS polls

- The less people know about the attitude object (Obama), the more they rely on general information about the category (Blacks)
- Race of interviewer influenced Obama judgments from February to June 2008
 - Most so for Democrats
 - Republicans have a neutral political reason
- As knowledge about Obama increases, race of interviewer effects disappear
 - None in CBS polls during main campaign

**How about behavioral
reports?**

Theory-driven reconstruction

- They don't know what they do
 - Memory is reconstructive
 - Reconstruction influenced by research instrument
- Same ambiguity applies
 - Do they know what they did and not tell us?
 - Or is the reconstruction of what they “must have done” influenced by context?
 - Or both?

Theory-driven reconstruction

- Likely to depend on behavior
 - “Really” bad behavior more memorable & less desirable
 - “Kind of” bad behavior less memorable & fewer worries
- Any higher report of “bad” behaviors under conditions of high confidentiality can reflect
 - Influence of self-presentation concerns
 - Differential inferences
 - A mix of both -- perhaps for different people

Implications for accuracy

- If they lie, we want to keep doing what we do
 - Increase confidentiality
- If the information provided by our efforts feeds into their reconstruction, we want to adjust the strategy
 - Contextual cues inflate reports of moderately bad behaviors of low memorability
 - But not of very bad behaviors
- We better find out

So what?

Do respondents lie?

- Yes, sometimes
- But it is surprisingly hard to know
 - Takes more than observation of contextual influences
 - Takes more than higher reports under confidentiality
- The “classic” example – race of interviewer – may be one of the worst we have

