

Learning Goals Mitigate Identity Threat for Black Individuals in Threatening Interracial Interactions

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Objective: Interactions between members of different racial and ethnic groups are often stressful. These interactions are stressful, in part, because they contribute to social identity threat—the fear of being judged or treated negatively based on one’s social group membership. Previous work separately suggests that the diversity of an interaction partner’s friendship network and the goals that people set for themselves influence social identity threat. Bringing these two bodies of work together, the present research examines whether adopting a learning (vs. performance) goal mitigates identity threat for Black people anticipating an interaction with a White partner who had a racially homogenous (vs. diverse) friendship network (a context previously shown to arouse identity threat). **Method:** Two experimental studies ($N = 310$) were conducted. Black adults ($M_{\text{age}} = 29.66$, 64% women) primed with either a performance or learning goal anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had either a racially diverse (Study 1) or racially homogenous (Studies 1 and 2) friendship network. After, we assessed participants’ social identity threat and anticipated interaction experiences. **Results:** Black adults primed with learning (vs. performance) goals expected to be perceived more positively by their interaction partner and expected to have more positive interaction experiences when they anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a racially homogenous network of friends. **Conclusions:** These findings suggest that learning goals can mitigate threat among Black individuals within an otherwise identity-threatening interaction context, thus opening the door for positive interracial contact in the future even in the context of challenging interracial interactions.

Public Significance Statement

One of the challenges of a diverse society is that interracial interactions can be difficult and uncomfortable; thus, many people avoid them. Yet, research documents many benefits to a truly integrated society. It is therefore important to investigate strategies that foster more comfortable interactions—even in the context of the most challenging interracial situations. Results from our research suggest that adopting learning (vs. performance) goals may be effective in reducing threat and promoting positive interactions for Black individuals.

Keywords: intergroup relations, motivation/goals, social identity, social network

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 The data are available at <https://osf.io/anmtr/>

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The United States is becoming increasingly racially diverse, which makes the opportunities for intergroup interactions—contact with individuals of a different ethnicity, race, or culture—more common. There are many long-term benefits of increased contact, including lower intergroup prejudice and anxiety (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Research suggests, however, that interracial interactions are often stressful for both Whites and racial/ethnic minorities (Blascovich, Mendes, Hunter, Lickel, & Kowai-Bell, 2001; Page-Gould, Mendoza-Denton, & Tropp, 2008; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). As a result, interracial friendships are still relatively rare (Carter et al., 2019; Massey, Charles, Fischer, & Lundy, 2003). Given the potential long-term benefits of interracial contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), it is important to develop strategies so that people can engage in interracial interactions without these affective and interpersonal costs (Murphy, Richeson, & Molden, 2011; Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Shelton & Richeson, 2006). The present research, therefore, investigates the effects of one situational cue (a partner's diverse vs. homogeneous friendship network) and one motivational mindset (adopting learning vs. performance goals) in shaping Black participants' interaction experiences.

Interracial Interactions Can Trigger Social Identity Threat

Interactions between members of different racial groups are often challenging. One reason that interracial interactions are typically more difficult than intraracial interactions is that the probability of experiencing social identity threat—being judged or treated negatively based on one's racial group membership—is greater in interracial contexts (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Wout, Murphy, & Steele, 2010). People are acutely aware that racial outgroup members are likely to perceive them more stereotypically (i.e., metastereotypes) than racial ingroup members (Shelton et al., 2006; Vorauer, Main, & O'Connell, 1998; Wout, Shih, Jackson, & Sellers, 2009). For example, in an interaction between Blacks and Whites, Blacks may worry that their White partner may think of them as “unintelligent,” “lazy,” or “aggressive” (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010). These negative expectations are, in turn, related to more negative (and less positive) affect (Plant, 2004; Shelton et al., 2005), more negative partner evaluations (Shelton et al., 2005), and less willingness to engage in future intergroup interactions (Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Shelton et al., 2006).

Experiencing a social identity threat, such as stereotype threat, is psychologically, cognitively, and physiologically taxing (Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007; Schmader & Johns, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). As a result, members of stigmatized groups are often vigilant to cues that signal the likelihood that they will be negatively stereotyped or mistreated in a given context (Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002; Wout et al., 2009). Recent research has demonstrated that situational cues—like posters on a wall, or the number of people that share one's identity in a setting—can affect people's experiences of social identity threat (Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, & Steele, 2009; Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008). Given that interracial interactions can trigger social identity threat, people should also be vigilant to cues of possible devaluation and mistreatment in these contexts. Situational cues in interracial interactions, therefore, can attenuate or exacerbate the extent to which racial minorities expe-

rience identity threat, in turn, shaping subsequent interaction experiences.

Intergroup Friendships as a Cue to Identity Threat or Safety in Interracial Interactions

Recent work has demonstrated that the cue of friendship diversity exerts a powerful influence on how people expect to be perceived and treated by others prior to an interracial interaction (Plummer, Stone, Powell, & Allison, 2016; Shapiro, Baldwin, Williams, & Trawalter, 2011; Wout et al., 2010). For instance, Wout and colleagues (2010) found that Black participants who anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a racially diverse (vs. homogeneously White) network of friends expected to be perceived less stereotypically by the partner and expected the interaction itself to be less challenging. Similarly, Wout, Murphy, and Barnett (2014) found that anticipating an interaction with a White partner who had a racially diverse friendship network alleviated Black participants' rejection concerns and increased their interest in befriending their interaction partner. Taken together, this research suggests that the racial diversity of a White partner's friendship network serves as an identity safety cue whereas a homogeneously White friendship network can lead to identity threat. Black participants' experiences of identity threat or safety in interracial interactions, in turn, shape their interaction experiences.

Thus, it seems that diverse friendship networks are beneficial to intergroup perceptions and interactions—at least from the perspective of Black individuals interacting with White individuals. However, because close interracial friendships remain uncommon and White people's friendship networks remain relatively racially homogeneous (Carter et al., 2019; Dunsmuir, 2013; Massey et al., 2003), it is important to take steps to mitigate threat in the absence of such friendship diversity to allow initial interactions to proceed more positively. The present research builds on and extends previous research on friendship network diversity by examining whether people's motivational orientation (i.e., adopting a learning vs. performance goal) going into an interaction attenuates identity threat when interacting with a White partner who has a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) friendship network.

Motivational Mindsets in Intergroup Contexts

Extensive research has investigated the efficacy of a number of interventions in mitigating the stress and discomfort associated with intergroup interactions. Cognitive, behavioral, and affective strategies such as perspective-taking (Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011) and behavioral scripts (Avery, Richeson, Hebl, & Ambady, 2009) along with structural interventions that change the nature of the interaction by fostering cooperation relative to competition (Sherif, 1958) have been shown to foster positive intergroup interactions. People's *motivational mindsets*—that is, the specific types of goals that individuals pursue—can also shape intergroup dynamics (for a review see, Murphy et al., 2011). Acute interventions that target these specific types of goals prior to an interracial interaction may improve interaction experiences.

The types of specific goals that individuals pursue creates a psychological framework within which they interpret and respond

to different situations (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Goals, in turn, shape cognitions, affect, and behavior in different contexts, particularly in difficult or challenging contexts (e.g., Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Two kinds of interpersonal goals that may be particularly relevant to interracial interactions are performance goals and learning goals (Murphy et al., 2011). When people pursue performance goals, they are primarily focused on proving their abilities and being seen as competent by others (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). As a result, those who pursue performance goals typically avoid challenging situations or tasks that require effort since high effort is often seen as indicator of low ability (Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Furthermore, for people who pursue performance goals, high-effort situations increase the risk of being seen as incompetent and thus, lead to negative emotional experiences such as anxiety, depressed affect, and shame (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

On the other hand, people who pursue learning goals primarily focus on improving their abilities by developing new skills (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Those who pursue learning goals seek out challenging situations as these situations provide opportunities to increase their abilities and develop themselves. Moreover, for people who pursue learning goals, skills and abilities are mastered through effort; therefore, they experience positive affect such as pleasure or pride in high-effort situations. More recent research suggests that endorsing learning (vs. performance) goals also shapes how people behave in interpersonal interactions (for reviews see, Darnon, Dompnier, & Marijn Poortvliet, 2012; Poortvliet & Darnon, 2010). For instance, in uncertain, effortful situations (like interracial interactions), learning (vs. performance) goals predict efforts to understand different viewpoints (Darnon, Muller, Schrage, Pannuzzo, & Butera, 2006).

Unfortunately, there is reason to believe that most individuals enter interracial interactions with performance goals (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006). Specifically, many racial minority and majority group members are focused on demonstrating that they do not conform to negative group-based stereotypes, like unintelligence or being prejudiced, respectively (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Shelton & Richeson, 2006). One way to pursue these performance goals in interracial interactions is to engage in effortful monitoring of one's own and one's partner's verbal and nonverbal behavior, which is cognitively taxing and ironically contributes to awkward nonverbal behaviors and negative other-directed affect—increasing threat in an already uncomfortable interpersonal situation (Bergsieker et al., 2010; Shelton et al., 2005; Trawalter & Richeson, 2006). If, instead of pursuing performance goals, individuals could be encouraged to enter interracial interactions with learning goals—such as developing a greater understanding of other cultural groups—it may reduce their anticipated levels of threat, in turn leading to more positive interaction outcomes.

Consistent with this reasoning, Migacheva and Tropp (2013) found that among Black and White middle school students, greater learning goal orientations were associated with greater comfort and interest in intergroup interactions. In addition, research demonstrates that White participants primed with a learning goal prior to an anticipated interracial interaction performed better on a cognitive control task (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006) and opted to sit closer to Black confederates in advance of an anticipated interracial interaction (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008). Taken together, this research suggests that the adoption of learning goals

can be an effective strategy to reduce threat in interracial interactions—especially for White individuals. Do similar processes occur for Black individuals?

The Present Research

The present research examines whether the adoption of a learning (vs. performance) goal prior to an interracial interaction is an effective strategy to reduce the identity threat that is experienced by Black people when they anticipate an interaction with a White individual. For Black people anticipating an interaction with a White individual, friendship network diversity is a cue to identity safety (Wout et al., 2010, 2014). Given that White people tend to have predominantly racially homogeneous (i.e., all-White) friendship networks (Carter et al., 2019), the present research investigates whether learning goals mitigate threat in the absence of such friendship diversity. Previous research suggests that learning goals are particularly effective in promoting positive outcomes in uncertain, effortful interpersonal interactions (Darnon et al., 2006). We extend this research to interracial interactions by examining whether learning goals mitigate threat in interracial contexts known to be highly threatening for Black individuals.

Across two studies, we investigate whether priming Black participants with a learning, compared with a performance, goal attenuates identity threat when Black individuals anticipate an interaction with a White partner who has a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) friendship network—an interracial context that is particularly threatening for Black individuals (Wout et al., 2010, 2014). We predicted that Black participants led to adopt a learning goal prior to an interaction with a White partner who had a homogeneously White friendship network would experience less identity threat and would anticipate more positive interaction experiences, compared with Black participants led to adopt a performance goal in the same interracial interaction context.

Study 1

Study 1 is the first effort (to our knowledge) to examine the synergistic effects of learning/performance goals and friendship network diversity on Black people's interaction experiences. Specifically, we manipulated two factors: whether Black participants expected to interact with a White person who had either a homogeneously White or a racially diverse friendship network and whether participants were encouraged to adopt a learning goal or a performance goal prior to the interaction. The primary aims of Study 1 were twofold: (a) to replicate the original findings (Wout et al., 2010, 2014) that Whites' friendship network diversity serves as a cue to identity threat for Black individuals and (b) to examine whether our specific goal manipulations might influence participants' anticipated identity threat and interaction experiences. Based on previous research (Shapiro et al., 2011; Wout et al., 2010), we predicted a main effect of friendship network diversity such that Black participants who anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a racially homogeneous (vs. diverse) friendship network would experience more identity threat (that is, they would expect to be perceived more negatively by their White partner), anticipate more challenges in the interaction, express less interest in befriending their partner, report greater rejection concerns, and experience less positive emotions in anticipation of the

interaction. Consistent with previous research on learning and performance goals in interracial interactions (Goff et al., 2008; Trawalter & Richeson, 2006), we also predicted a main effect of goal orientation such that participants led to adopt a learning goal would report more positive psychological and emotional experiences compared with those led to adopt a performance goal.

Based on previous research by Darnon and colleagues (2006) demonstrating that learning goals are most likely to promote positive outcomes in uncertain and effortful interpersonal interactions, we predicted that learning goals would be especially effective in reducing threat in the more identity-threatening interaction context—that is, when Black individuals anticipate an interaction with a White partner who has a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) network of friends, given that previous research shows that Whites' racially diverse friendship networks engender greater identity safety for Black individuals (Wout et al., 2010, 2014). Finally, we examined whether the interaction between goal orientation and friendship network diversity interaction would predict people's anticipated identity threat (i.e., their metaperceptions), which would in turn shape their anticipated interaction experiences.

Method

Participants. One hundred forty-eight self-identified Black participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 32.49$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 8.69$; 68% female) participated through a Qualtrics panel. A sensitivity power analysis (G*Power; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) was conducted to determine the minimum effect size that could be detected with our sample size. Analyses indicated that we are able to detect a small-to-medium effect size ($f = .232$), with an alpha of .05, and minimum power of .80.¹

Procedure and manipulations. Participants were recruited through a Qualtrics panel to participate in an online study on first impressions and friendship formation. After consenting to take part in the study, participants read that they would exchange information with an online interaction partner, form an impression of their partner, and answer questions regarding their impression of the upcoming interaction; then, they would have an online interaction with their partner. To bolster the cover story, participants were required to have a web camera that supported an online interaction to take part in the study. Participants who indicated that they did not have a web camera were not allowed to continue the study. In addition, we told participants that we would match them with an ostensible partner who was online at the same time. The platform displayed a “searching for an available partner” spinning gif while it ostensibly searched for a partner, and participants were then told that they had been connected to a partner when it ostensibly found someone. Pilot testing showed that participants believed that they were being matched to another participant during this process. After, participants were matched with their partners, they were then instructed to complete a profile sheet that would be exchanged with their online interaction partner. Specifically, participants were asked to fill in their name, race, gender, age, and occupation. In addition, participants were asked to fill in the name, race, and gender of their five closest friends.

After a short delay, participants received a profile ostensibly completed by a White, gender-matched interaction partner. Similar to the profile the participants completed, it included the partner's

name, race, gender, age, and occupation. In addition, the profile included the name, race, and gender of the partner's five closest friends. Consistent with past research (Wout et al., 2010, 2014), we manipulated the racial diversity of the interaction partner's friendship network, such that in the homogeneously White friends condition, the partner had five White gender-matched friends. In the racially diverse condition, the partner had three White and two Black gender-matched friends.

Next, participants rated their interest in engaging in four interaction topics and then were told that they had been randomly assigned to discuss “Whether racism is no longer a major problem in America” with their partner (see Wout et al., 2010 and Goff et al., 2008 for similar procedures). Participants were then randomly assigned to adopt either a learning or a performance goal during the interaction. Following previous goal manipulations (Trawalter & Richeson, 2006), participants in the learning goal condition read, “Please keep in mind that when it comes to discussing whether racism is no longer a major problem in America, your goal is to approach the interaction as an opportunity to have an enjoyable intercultural exchange.” Participants in the performance goal condition read, “Please keep in mind that when it comes to discussing whether racism is no longer a major problem in America, your goal is to avoid appearing incompetent during the interaction.”

After receiving these instructions, participants completed a questionnaire that included the dependent variables of interest. Once they completed the questionnaire, participants received a message stating that the online platform was unable to connect the participant to their partner and that the study was over. Participants were then fully debriefed, thanked, and paid for their participation.

Materials. The full text of all measures can be found in the online supplemental materials.²

Metaperceptions. Following previous work (Wout et al., 2010, 2014), we assessed how participants thought that they would be perceived by their White partner along the dimensions of warmth and competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). As in Wout et al., 2014, we asked participants to indicate the likelihood that their partner would perceive them as *warm*, *friendly*, *competent*, and *intelligent* on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*). We averaged participants responses to these items to create a metaperceptions composite ($\alpha = .84$).

Anticipated interaction challenges. We assessed the challenges that participants expected to experience during the interaction by asking them to complete a six-item ($\alpha = .87$) social identity contingency measure (Wout et al., 2010). Items included, “How much do you feel like you can be yourself during this

¹ We also conducted a sensitivity power analysis to determine the minimum effect size that could be detected with the sample size among participants who adopted a learning (vs. performance) goal and anticipated an interaction with a White partner who has a homogeneously White network of friends. We did this analysis to maximize comparability with our Study 2 results. Analyses indicated that we were able to detect a medium-to-large effect size ($d = .65$), with an alpha of .05, minimum power of .80, and two-tailed tests.

² At the request of a reviewer, we conducted a factor analysis to empirically examine the distinctness of these measures. Factor analysis confirmed that, although these measures are correlated, they do load on distinct factors that account for unique variance. See the online supplemental materials for the factor analysis results.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations: Study 1

Dependent variables	Range of scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Positive metaperceptions	1.75–7.00	5.24	1.34	—					
2. Anticipated interaction challenges	1.00–5.67	2.83	1.26	-.63***	—				
3. Rejection concerns	1.00–7.00	2.86	1.28	-.62***	.70***	—			
4. Friendship interest	1.00–7.00	5.14	1.35	.61***	-.66***	-.89***	—		
5. Positive emotions	1.20–7.00	5.31	1.28	.62***	-.75***	-.68***	.67***	—	
6. Negative emotions	1.00–7.00	3.29	1.72	.03	-.14	-.09	.14	-.11	—

*** $p < .001$.

interaction?" (reverse-coded), and "If you have an opinion that you think your partner might disagree with, how comfortable do you think you will be expressing this opinion during the conversation?" (reverse-coded), (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*). We took the average of these items to create an anticipated interaction challenges composite, with higher scores indicating greater anticipated interaction challenges.

Friendship interest. We measured participants' interest in befriending their interaction partner by averaging the responses to the following 3 items ($\alpha = .88$), "I would like to be my partner's friend," "I think that I would be able to get along with my partner," and "I would accept my partner as a friend." Participants made their responses on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Rejection concerns. Similarly, we measured participants' concerns about being rejected by their partner by averaging the responses to the following three items ($\alpha = .88$), "I think that my partner would like to be my friend" (reverse-coded), "I think that my partner would be able to get along with me" (reverse-coded), and "I think my partner would accept me as a friend" (reverse-coded). Participants made their responses on a scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Emotional experiences. Finally, participants completed a 19-item emotional experiences questionnaire that assessed how they were feeling about the upcoming interaction. Specifically, participants were asked to report the extent to which they were experiencing a range of positive (e.g., friendly, excited, happy; $\alpha = .92$) and negative (e.g., anxious, angry, upset; $\alpha = .92$) emotions on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much so*).³

Results

Participants' metaperceptions, anticipated interaction challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and emotional experiences were submitted to a 2 (goal orientation: learning goals vs. performance goals) \times 2 (partner's friendship network: homogeneously White vs. racially diverse) ANOVA. No significant main effects for learning goals emerged for any outcomes, all $ps > .27$ and, thus, it is not discussed further.

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Table 1 includes descriptive statistics for all dependent variables.

Metaperceptions. Participants in the racially diverse friends condition ($M = 5.48$, 95% CI [5.18, 5.78]) expected to be perceived more positively than participants in the homogeneously White friends condition ($M = 5.02$, 95% CI [4.73, 5.32]), $F(1, 144) = 4.62$, $p = .033$, $\eta_p^2 = .031$. As hypothesized, this effect was qualified by a goal orientation by partner's friendship network

interaction, $F(1, 144) = 8.37$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .055$. Simple effects tests revealed that in the homogeneously White friendship network condition, participants in the learning goal condition expected to be perceived more positively than those in the performance goal condition, $F(1, 144) = 8.24$, $p = .005$, $d = .68$ (see the first panel of Figure 1). Participants reported relatively positive metaperceptions in the racially diverse friendship network condition, regardless of goal, $F(1, 144) = 1.55$, $p = .215$, $d = .28$. Examined differently, participants in the performance goal condition expected to be perceived less positively when they anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) network of friends, $F(1, 144) = 12.36$, $p = .001$, $d = .82$. Participants reported relatively positive metaperceptions in the learning goal condition, regardless of their White partner's friendship network diversity, $F(1, 144) = 0.28$, $p = .595$, $d = .12$.

Anticipated interaction challenges. Participants in the homogeneously White friends condition ($M = 3.17$, 95% CI [2.90, 3.44]) anticipated more challenges than participants in the racially diverse friends condition ($M = 2.47$, 95% CI [2.19, 2.75]), $F(1, 144) = 12.59$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .080$. This effect was qualified by the hypothesized Goal Orientation \times Partner's Friendship Network interaction, $F(1, 144) = 6.05$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .040$. Simple effects tests revealed that in the racially homogeneous friendship network condition, participants in the learning goal condition anticipated fewer challenges than those in the performance goal condition, $F(1, 144) = 6.52$, $p = .012$, $d = .60$ (see the second panel of Figure 1). Participants reported relatively low anticipated interaction challenges in the racially diverse friendship network condition, regardless of goal, $F(1, 144) = .90$, $p = .346$, $d = .22$. Examined differently, participants in the performance goal condition anticipated more challenges when they expected to interact with a White partner who had a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) network of friends, $F(1, 144) = 17.54$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.01$. Participants reported relatively low anticipated interaction challenges in the learning goal condition, regardless of their White partner's friendship network diversity, $F(1, 144) = 0.61$, $p = .435$, $d = .18$.

Rejection concerns. Participants in the homogeneously White friends condition ($M = 3.04$, 95% CI [2.76, 3.32]) had greater rejection concerns than participants in the racially diverse

³ In addition to the measures reported in the article we also assessed participants' perceptions of their partner, and their desire to avoid the interaction. We report the results for these outcomes in the online supplemental materials.

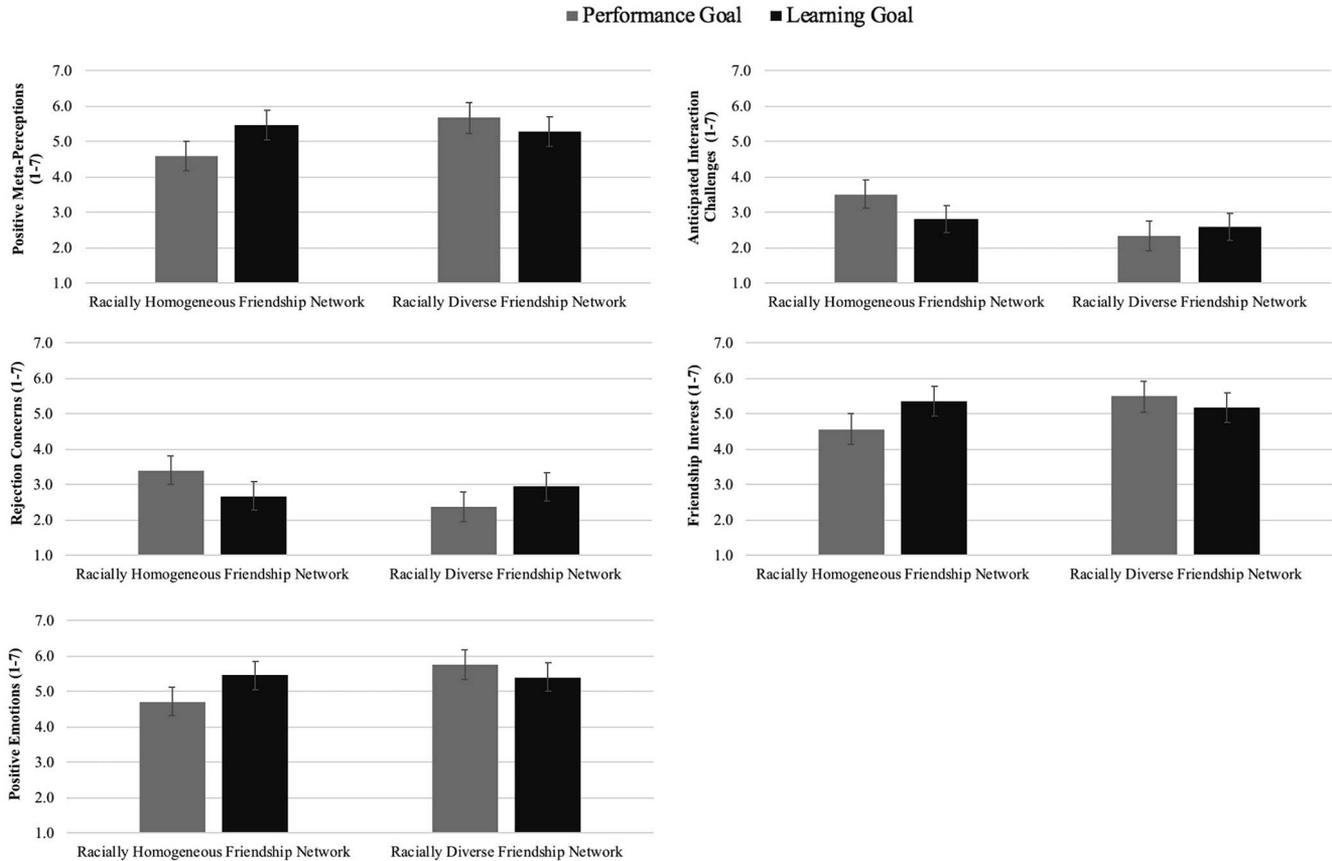


Figure 1. Study 1. Positive metaperceptions, anticipated interaction challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and positive emotions ratings as a function of goal orientation and partner's friendship network. Bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

friends condition ($M = 2.65$, 95% CI [2.36, 2.94]), $F(1, 144) = 3.63$, $p = .059$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$. Consistent with predictions, this was qualified by a Goal Orientation \times Partner's Friendship Network interaction, $F(1, 144) = 10.20$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .066$. As hypothesized, in the racially homogeneous friendship network condition, participants in the learning (vs. performance) goals condition were less concerned about being rejected by their partner, $F(1, 144) = 6.55$, $p = .012$, $d = .57$ (see the third panel of Figure 1). In the diverse friendship network condition, participants in the performance goals condition were marginally less concerned about being rejected than participants in the learning goals condition, $F(1, 144) = 3.87$, $p = .051$, $d = .48$. Examined differently, participants in the performance goal condition were more concerned about being rejected by their partner when they anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) network of friends, $F(1, 144) = 12.64$, $p = .001$, $d = .84$. Participants reported relatively low rejection concerns in the learning goal condition, regardless of their White partner's friendship network diversity, $F(1, 144) = 0.86$, $p = .357$, $d = .21$.

Friendship interest. Participants in the homogeneously White friends condition ($M = 4.97$, 95% CI [4.67, 5.26]) were somewhat less interested in befriending their partner than participants in the racially diverse friends condition ($M = 5.32$, 95% CI

[5.02, 5.63]), $F(1, 144) = 2.75$, $p = .099$, $\eta_p^2 = .019$. This effect was qualified by the hypothesized goal orientation by partner's friendship network interaction, $F(1, 144) = 6.51$, $p = .012$, $\eta_p^2 = .043$. As hypothesized, participants in the racially homogeneous friendship network condition were more interested in befriending their partner when they were in the learning (vs. performance) goal condition, $F(1, 144) = 6.86$, $p = .010$, $d = .61$ (see the fourth panel of Figure 1). Participants in the racially diverse friendship network condition reported relatively high friendship interest, regardless of goal, $F(1, 144) = 1.02$, $p = .313$, $d = .23$. Examined differently, participants in the performance goal condition expressed less interest in befriending their partner when they anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) network of friends, $F(1, 144) = 8.62$, $p = .004$, $d = .70$. Participants reported relatively high friendship interest in the learning goal condition, regardless of their White partner's friendship network diversity, $F(1, 144) = 0.41$, $p = .523$, $d = .15$.

Emotional experiences. Participants in the homogeneously White friends condition ($M = 5.08$, 95% CI [4.80, 5.36]) experienced less positive emotions prior to the anticipated interaction than participants in the racially diverse friends condition ($M = 5.57$, 95% CI [5.28, 5.86]), $F(1, 144) = 5.84$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .039$. This was qualified by a goal orientation by partner's friendship

network interaction, $F(1, 144) = 7.09, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .047$. As hypothesized, in the racially homogeneous friendship network condition, participants in the learning goal condition experienced more positive emotions than participants in the performance goal condition, $F(1, 144) = 6.73, p = .010, d = .63$ (see the fifth panel of Figure 1). Participants in the racially diverse friendship network condition, reported relative high positive emotions, regardless of goal, $F(1, 144) = 1.42, p = .236, d = .27$. Examined differently, participants in the performance goal condition expressed less positive emotions when they anticipated an interaction with a White partner who had a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) network of friends, $F(1, 144) = 12.53, p = .001, d = .86$. Participants reported relatively high positive emotions in the learning goal condition, regardless of their White partner's friendship network diversity, $F(1, 144) = 0.31, p = .580, d = .04$.

Participants in the homogeneously White friends condition ($M = 3.56, 95\% \text{ CI } [3.18, 3.95]$) experienced more negative emotions prior to the anticipated interaction than participants in the racially diverse friends condition ($M = 3.00, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.61, 3.40]$), $F(1, 144) = 4.01, p = .047, \eta_p^2 = .027$. There were no other statistically significant effects ($F_s < 1, p_s > .4, \eta_p^2 < .01$).

Exploratory mediational analyses. We conducted exploratory mediation analyses to examine whether the Goals \times Friendship Network Diversity interaction would predict people's anticipated identity threat (i.e., their metaperceptions), which would in turn predict their anticipated interaction experiences (i.e., anticipated interaction challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and their anticipated positive emotional experiences). To conduct these analyses, we used the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Model 8; Hayes, 2017) with 95% confidence intervals computed with 10,000 bootstrap resamples. We used PROCESS Model 8 since both the *a* path (predictor \rightarrow mediator) and *c'* path (predictor to outcome) were moderated by the same variable. In addition, PROCESS Model 8 generates an index of moderated mediation which indicates whether the indirect effect differed at each level of the moderator. In each model, goals (0 = performance goal; 1 = learning goal) were entered as the predictor (X), friendship diver-

sity (0 = homogeneously White; 1 = racially diverse) was entered as the moderator (W), metaperceptions was entered as the mediator (M), and separate models were run with anticipated interaction challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and positive emotional experiences as the outcome (Y) variables.

Evidence of moderated mediation via metaperceptions—as indicated by an index of moderated mediation that excludes zero (Hayes, 2017)—emerged for all outcome variables: anticipated interaction challenges (index of moderated mediation = 0.67, 95% CI [0.21, 1.17]), rejection concerns (index of moderated mediation = 0.69, 95% CI [0.22, 1.25]), friendship interest (index of moderated mediation = -0.72, 95% CI [-1.31, -0.22]), and positive emotions (index of moderated mediation = -0.68, 95% CI [-1.20, -0.21]). In the homogeneously White friends condition, the indirect (*ab*) path from learning goals through metaperceptions was significant for anticipated interaction challenges ($ab = -0.47, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.82, -0.16]$), rejection concerns ($ab = -0.48, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.86, -0.16]$), friendship interest ($ab = 0.50, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.16, 0.88]$), and positive emotions ($ab = 0.47, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.15, 0.82]$); see Figure 2. In contrast, in the racially diverse friends condition, no significant indirect paths emerged as indicated by confidence intervals that included zero (Hayes, 2017). Taken together, these results suggest that learning (vs. performance) goals mitigated participants' experiences of threat (i.e., how they anticipated being viewed by their partner), which in turn buffered their anticipated interaction experiences—but only for Black participants in the most threatening interracial interaction context (when they anticipated interacting with a White partner with a homogeneously White friendship network) and not so when the context was less threatening (when the partner had a racially diverse friendship network).

Discussion

Study 1 provided additional evidence that the racial homogeneity of a White partner's friendship network engenders identity threat among Black individuals. Replicating previous research

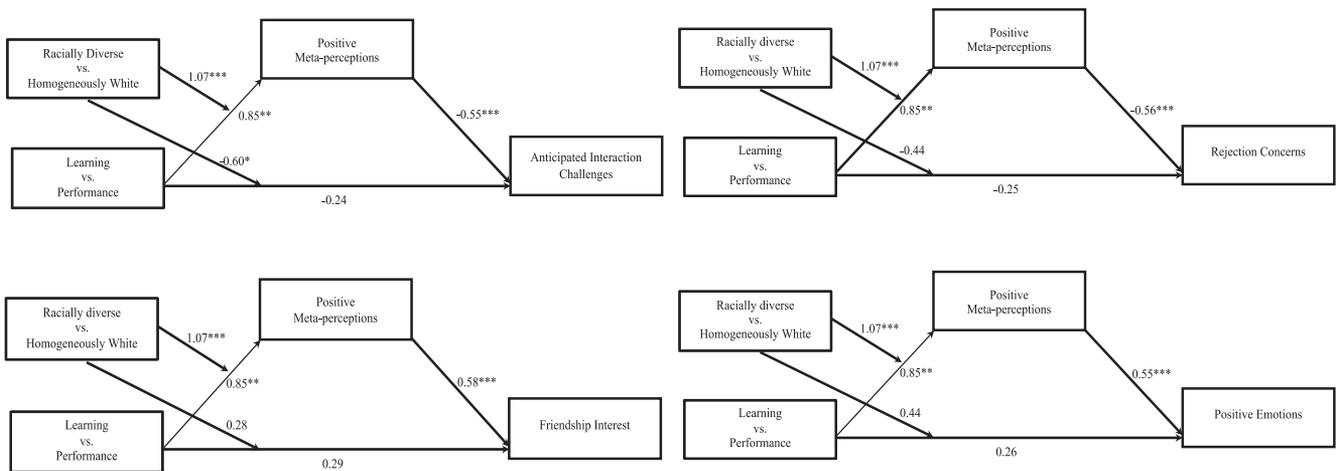


Figure 2. Study 1. Moderated mediation models depicting the conditional indirect effect on anticipated interaction challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and positive emotions through metaperceptions. Path values represent unstandardized regression coefficients. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

(Wout et al., 2010, 2014), our results revealed that participants who anticipated interacting with a White partner with all-White friends expected to be perceived less positively by their partner. They also anticipated a more challenging interaction, were more concerned about being rejected, expressed more interest in befriending their partner, and experienced less positive emotions compared with participants who expected to interact with a White partner with racially diverse friends. These effects, however, were mitigated when participants were asked to adopt a learning (vs. performance) goal. In addition, participants' experiences of identity threat (i.e., their metaperceptions) predicted their anticipated interaction experiences. That is, how Black participants anticipated being viewed by their White partner predicted how well they thought the interaction would proceed. The goal manipulation did not have a significant effect on Black people's anticipated threat and interaction experiences; instead, the effects of learning (vs. performance) goals on Black people's interaction experiences seem to depend on the threatening nature of the interaction context.

Study 1 revealed that adopting a learning goal mitigated identity threat in interracial contexts known to be highly threatening for Black individuals—an interaction with a White partner with all-White friends. Consistent with previous findings, our results suggest that when Whites have a diverse friendship network, it reduces the threat of an impending interaction among Black individuals. Because the interaction is already identity-safe, goals seemed to have little effect in this context. Indeed, this finding is in line with previous research (Wout et al., 2014) demonstrating that when one identity safety cue is present in interracial interaction contexts, additional safety cues do not necessarily increase identity safety further among Black people—they already perceive the context as relatively safe (Wout et al., 2009, 2014).

Taken together, the results of this study suggest that adopting a learning goal might be an effective threat mitigation strategy in an otherwise identity threatening interracial interaction context. Although promising, we narrowed in on this finding and sought to examine its robustness with a larger sample of participants.

Study 2

In Study 2, we sought to replicate the effects observed in Study 1 with a new sample of Black adults. Given that the results of Study 1 revealed that learning goals were particularly beneficial for Blacks individuals in threatening interaction contexts (i.e., interacting with a White partner with all White friends), the primary goal of Study 2 was to replicate the effects of learning (vs. performance) goals in the homogenously White friendship network condition. To demonstrate the robustness of Study 1's findings, we improved the study design by adding attention and memory checks to increase statistical precision and power (Ledgerwood, 2019; Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009; Thomas & Clifford, 2017). Based on Study 1's findings, we predicted that Black participants who expected an interaction with a White partner with all-White friends would report more positive metaperceptions, anticipate less interpersonal challenges, report less rejection concerns, be more interested in befriending their partner, and report more positive emotions when they were led to adopt a learning (vs. performance) goal.

Method

Participants. We recruited 254 individuals using Prolific (<https://prolific.ac/>) and Prime Panels.⁴ Participants received compensation for their participation from these platforms. To ensure a sufficient sample size, we conducted a priori power analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007) to detect a medium effect size ($d = .50$) for the comparison of interest (learning vs. performance goals within the homogenously White friendship network condition), using the test results from Study 1. One hundred twenty-eight participants were required to attain power of .80. We intentionally oversampled to account for participants who might fail the new attention and memory checks that we added to the study. Of the 254 participants who initially started the study, 34 stopped participation prior to random assignment. Another 53 participants were excluded from analyses because they forgot the race of their partner ($N = 19$) or failed the goal manipulation check ($N = 34$). One additional participant was excluded for inaccurately completing the study tasks.⁵ We also excluded the few participants who did not self-identify as Black ($n = 4$). This resulted in a final sample of 162 Black participants ($M_{\text{age}} = 26.83$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 5.12$; 60% female).⁶ Participants reported the following socioeconomic levels: working class (26%), lower middle class (25%), middle class (36%), upper-middle class (9%), upper class (1%). A sensitivity power analysis (G*Power; Faul et al., 2007) was conducted to determine the minimum effect size that could be detected with our final sample size of 162 participants. Analyses indicated that we were able to detect a small-to-medium effect size ($d = .44$), with an alpha of .05, minimum power of .80, and two-tailed tests.

Procedure and manipulations. Similar to Study 1, participants read that they would exchange information with an online interaction partner, form an impression of their partner, and answer questions regarding their impression and the upcoming interaction; then, they would have an online interaction with their partner. Again, after a short delay, participants received a profile ostensibly

⁴ The pattern of results of results is unchanged when controlling for the platform used to recruit participants.

⁵ This participant used derogatory terms throughout the survey when filling in his or her responses to open-ended questions.

⁶ Prior to data collection, we also preregistered Study 2's design and analysis plan on the Open Science Framework (OSF) website. In the preregistration, we originally planned to recruit 200 participants using Prolific. Because of difficulties recruiting participants on this platform, we filed an addendum to the original preregistration plan to recruit the remaining 128 participants that we needed via Prime Panels. However, after viewing the completion rates and manipulation check responses in the Prime Panels sample, but before we examined the effects of the manipulation, we discovered that many participants were dropping out of the study (starting it, but not completing it, $n = 34$) or were failing the manipulation checks ($n = 53$). We therefore decided to increase our initial target sample for the study by 50. In addition to the exclusion criteria reported in the preregistration and this article, we had also initially planned to exclude participants if they failed to correctly answer a number of other attentional check questions in the survey such as their partner's name and the topic they would discuss in the online interaction. To preserve sample size, we decided to only exclude participants who failed the manipulation checks regarding the key experimental manipulation (i.e., goal orientation and partner race). This resulted in a final sample size of 162 Black participants, as reported in the main text. Excluding participants based on all the prespecified exclusions would have reduced our original sample of 254 participants to 92 participants (well below the sample size recommended by the power analysis, $N = 128$).

completed by a White, gender-matched interaction partner along with the name, race, and gender of the partner's five closest friends. In this study, all participants received the profile of a White partner who had a homogeneously White friendship network. The rest of the procedure and measures matched Study 1.

Materials. The full text of all measures can be found in the online supplemental materials.⁷

Metaperceptions. Participants completed the same four-item ($\alpha = .80$) measure described in Study 1.

Anticipated interaction challenges. Participants completed the same six-item ($\alpha = .82$) measure described in Study 1.

Friendship interest. Participants completed the same three-item ($\alpha = .81$) measure described in Study 1.

Rejection concerns. Participants completed the same three-item ($\alpha = .83$) measure described in Study 1.

Emotional experiences. Participants completed the 19-item measure of positive ($\alpha = .91$) and negative ($\alpha = .91$) emotional experiences described in Study 1.⁸

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Table 2 includes descriptive statistics for all dependent variables.

Metaperceptions. As hypothesized, and consistent with Study 1, participants who adopted a learning goal prior to the interaction ($M = 4.72$, 95% CI [4.46, 4.99]) expected to be perceived more positively than those who adopted performance goals ($M = 4.27$, 95% CI [3.98, 4.56]), $t(160) = 2.33$, $p = .021$, $d = 0.37$.

Anticipated interaction challenges. As hypothesized, participants who adopted a learning goal ($M = 3.40$, 95% CI [3.15, 3.66]) anticipated fewer interaction challenges than those who adopted a performance goal ($M = 3.98$, 95% CI [3.68, 4.28]), $t(160) = 2.88$, $p = .004$, $d = 0.45$.

Rejection concerns. Consistent with predictions, participants who adopted a learning goal ($M = 3.16$, 95% CI [2.86, 3.46]) were less concerned about being rejected by their interaction partner than participants who adopted a performance goal ($M = 3.68$, 95% CI [3.39, 3.96]), $t(159) = 2.48$, $p = .014$, $d = 0.39$.⁹

Friendship interest. As we hypothesized, participants who adopted a learning goal were more interested in befriending their partner ($M = 4.91$, 95% CI [4.65, 5.16]) than participants who adopted a performance goal, ($M = 4.45$, 95% CI [4.18, 4.73]), $t(159) = 2.39$, $p = .018$, $d = 0.38$.

Emotional experiences. Consistent with predictions, participants who adopted a learning goal ($M = 4.86$, 95% CI [4.57, 5.15]) experienced more positive emotions prior to the anticipated interaction than participants who adopted a performance goal ($M = 4.48$, 95% CI [4.18, 4.79]), $t(159) = 1.80$, $p = .074$, $d = 0.28$. As in Study 1, there were no significant effects of condition on participants' negative emotional experiences (learning goal: $M = 2.97$ 95% CI [2.67, 3.30]; performance goal: $M = 2.99$ 95% CI [2.66, 3.29]), $t(159) = 0.06$, $p = .957$, $d = 0.01$.

Mediation analyses. As in Study 1, several mediation models examined whether learning (vs. performance) goals predicted people's levels of identity threat (i.e., their metaperceptions), which in turn predicted their anticipated challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and their positive emotional experiences. To conduct these analyses, we used the PROCESS macro in SPSS

(Model 4; Hayes, 2017) with 95% confidence intervals computed with 10,000 bootstrap resamples. In each model, goals (0 = performance goal; 1 = learning goal) were entered as the predictor (X), metaperceptions were entered as the mediator (M), and separate models were run with anticipated challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and positive emotional experiences as the outcome (Y) variables.

Replicating Study 1, results revealed that participants' metaperceptions mediated the effect of learning (vs. performance) goals on: anticipated interaction challenges, *indirect effect* = $-.24$, 95% CI [-0.47 , -0.03]; rejection concerns, *indirect effect* = $-.27$, 95% CI [-0.52 , -0.05]; friendship interest, *indirect effect* = $.25$, 95% CI [0.04, 0.48]; and positive emotions, *indirect effect* = $.26$, 95% CI [0.05, 0.50]; see Figure 3.

Discussion

In Study 2, we sought to replicate the findings of Study 1 by examining whether adopting a learning (vs. performance) goal prior to an interaction with a White partner who had all White friends attenuated the negative psychological effects associated with these particularly challenging interracial interactions. As expected, and consistent with our Study 1 results, Black participants who adopted a learning goal prior to interaction expected to be perceived more positively by their White partner, anticipated fewer challenges during the interaction, reported fewer rejection concerns, expressed more interest in befriending their partner, and experienced more positive emotions about the upcoming interaction compared with participants who had a performance goal. Moreover, mediation analyses suggest that the effects of the learning (vs. performance) goal on participants' experiences of identity threat shaped their expectations for the interaction.

General Discussion

Although opportunities for interracial contact have become more common, the racial diversity of White people's friendship networks remain relatively homogenous (Carter et al., 2019; Massey et al., 2003). Previous research suggests that the homogeneously White friendship networks of White people contribute to identity threat when Black people anticipate interactions with Whites (Wout et al., 2010, 2014). The primary goal of the present research, therefore, was to examine whether adopting a learning (vs. performance) goal would mitigate identity threat and engender more positive expectations for otherwise threatening interracial interactions. In line with previous research (Wout et al., 2010, 2014), Study 1 found that Black adults expected a White partner with all White friends to perceive them more negatively which, in

⁷ As in Study 1, we conducted a factor analysis to empirically examine the distinctness of these measures at a reviewer's request. Factor analysis again confirmed that, although these measures are correlated, they do load on distinct factors that account for unique variance. See the online supplemental materials for the factor analysis results.

⁸ In addition to the measures reported in the article we also assessed participants' perceptions of their partner and their desire to avoid the interaction. We report the results for these outcomes in the online supplemental materials.

⁹ The analyses for rejection concerns were initially preregistered as exploratory.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Correlations: Study 2

Dependent variables	Range of scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Positive metaperceptions	1.00–7.00	4.50	1.26	—					
2. Anticipated interaction challenges	1.00–6.67	3.68	1.29	-.54***	—				
3. Rejection concerns	1.00–7.00	3.41	1.34	-.54***	.64***	—			
4. Friendship interest	1.00–7.00	4.69	1.22	.55***	-.63***	-.80***	—		
5. Positive emotions	1.40–7.00	4.68	1.34	.52***	-.72***	-.47***	.47***	—	
6. Negative emotions	1.00–7.00	2.98	1.41	-.18*	.21**	.12	-.15	-.38***	—

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

turn, predicted greater expected challenges during the interaction, more concerns about being rejected by the partner, less interest in befriending the partner, and less positive emotional experiences. Consistent with our hypotheses, however, our results revealed that adopting a learning goal attenuated the threat posed by this interracial interaction. Study 2 replicated this finding demonstrating that adopting a learning (vs. performance) goal reduces threat and fosters more positive interaction expectations when Black participants anticipate interacting with a White partner who has a racially homogeneous network of friends.

Consistent with previous research (Wout et al., 2014), our results suggest that when there is at least one identity safety cue in an interracial interaction context, additional safety cues (i.e., learning goals) may not reduce threat further. Because the diversity of a White partner’s friendship network is a strong cue to identity safety in interracial interactions, Whites should work to diversify their friendship networks. However, in the absence of such friendship network diversity (as it exists today), it is important to identify ways to arm Black individuals with effective strategies to navigate these otherwise threatening interactions with White individuals (who often have homogeneously White friendship networks).

Implications

Our results demonstrate that the adoption of learning goals is an effective identity threat mitigation strategy for Black indi-

viduals when they anticipate a relatively threatening interracial interaction context—an interaction with a White partner who has a homogeneously White (vs. racially diverse) friendship network. These findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that learning goals are particularly effective in uncertain, effortful interpersonal situations (Darnon et al., 2006). Moreover, the present work goes beyond previous research demonstrating that learning goals mitigate threat (for White individuals) in interracial contexts (Goff et al., 2008; Murphy et al., 2011; Trawalter & Richeson, 2006) by demonstrating a boundary condition of these effects. Specifically, our results suggest that if threat is already diffused in an interracial interaction context (e.g., such as when a White interaction partner has a racially diverse friendship network), additional safety cues do not further mitigate threat. That is, in identity-safe interaction contexts, adopting a learning (vs. performance) goal will not differentially shape Black individuals’ levels of threat or anticipated interaction experiences. Learning goals are only effective when threat is high in interracial interaction contexts. Practically, however, these threatening interracial interaction contexts are very common (as Whites’ friendship networks remain relatively homogenous). Theoretically, it is important to note these boundary conditions as we build knowledge about when and for whom certain evidence-based strategies work to ease intergroup interactions.

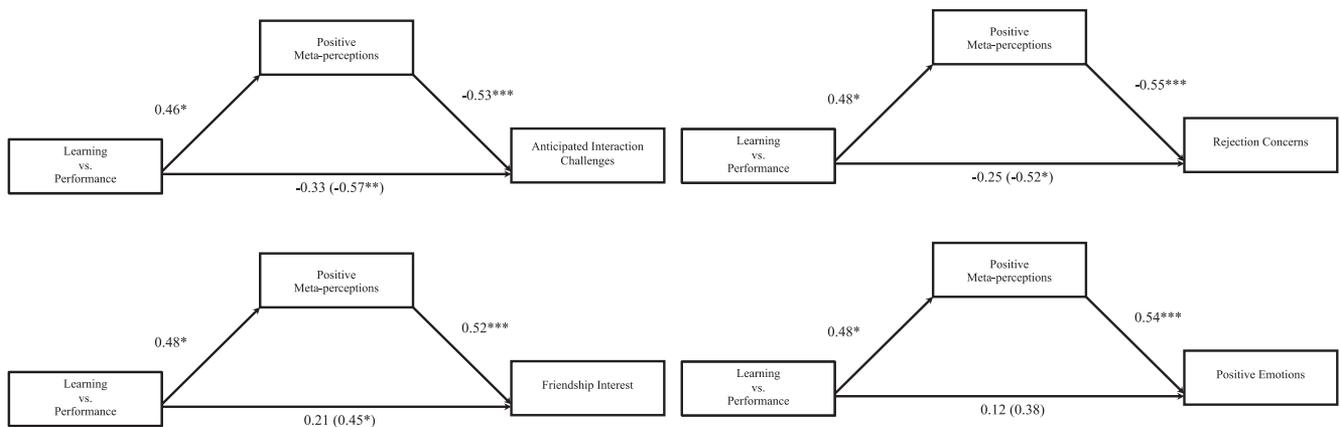


Figure 3. Study 2. Simple mediation models depicting the indirect effect of condition on anticipated interaction challenges, rejection concerns, friendship interest, and positive emotions through metaperceptions. Path values represent unstandardized regression coefficients. The value inside the parentheses indicates the total effect prior to the inclusion of our mediator—metaperceptions. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

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The present research also has implications for interventions that seek to mitigate social identity threat in academic and work contexts. In new environments, racial minorities are vigilant to situational cues that signal that they could be devalued or mistreated in the environment (Murphy & Taylor, 2012; Steele et al., 2002). These cues include diversity ideologies that are communicated in the workplace (Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), the number of people who share one's stigmatized social identity in a setting (Murphy et al., 2007; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), ambient cues like posters on the wall (Cheryan et al., 2009), and faculty beliefs about students' inherent abilities (Canning, Muenks, Green, & Murphy, 2019; Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012). These cues have a negative impact on psychological and physiological well-being which can, in turn, impact performance on important tasks. Our research suggests that equipping stigmatized people with a learning goal prior to entering settings that elicit social identity threat may mitigate its negative effects. A learning goal, therefore, may be protective in the face of a variety of social identity threats.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although these findings are compelling, there remain some limitations. First, in this initial investigation of our primary research questions, participants expected to interact with a White peer but did not actually take part in an interaction. Because of this study design, we were only able to assess participants' self-reported anticipated interaction experiences. These initial impressions and expectations, however, are important to consider because they shape whether people actually pursue or persist in interracial interactions (e.g., Schultz, Gaither, Urry, & Maddox, 2015; Shelton & Richeson, 2005). Future research should build on our work to examine whether our findings replicate in the context of a live, face-to-face interaction and in more unobtrusive measures of interaction experiences such as physiological responses consistent with threat (Sawyer, Major, Casad, Townsend, & Mendes, 2012; Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009).

Second, it is possible that our manipulation of learning versus performance goals also shaped the extent to which participants (a) adopted other motivational mindsets (i.e., approach/avoidance mindsets, regulatory focus), (b) experienced stereotype threat, and (c) focused on the self. Learning-performance goals, regulatory focus (i.e., promotion vs. prevention mindsets), and approach-avoidance mindsets are related but theoretically distinct (for a review, see, Murphy et al., 2011). Given that these motivational mindsets are related, it is possible that our instructions activated all three mindsets. For instance, in addition to inducing a performance goal, the goal of avoiding appearing incompetent could motivate the desire to avoid an undesired outcome (vs. move toward a desired outcome), which is characteristic of an avoidance (vs. approach) mindset (Carver & Scheier, 2001; Elliot, 2006). These instructions may also produce a preference for vigilant (vs. eager) cognitive and behavioral strategies that are characteristic of a prevention (vs. promotion-focused) mindset (Higgins, 1997).

Furthermore, it is possible that explicitly mentioning a negative ingroup stereotype (i.e., incompetence) in our performance goal manipulation elicited social identity threat in the performance (vs. learning) goal condition. That is, participants' anticipated interaction experiences could be explained by the presence (in the performance goal condition) versus the absence (in the learning goal

condition) of social identity threat. Although this is a possibility, this is unlikely given research demonstrating that in intergroup contexts, Black individuals are aware of negative stereotypes that racial outgroup members might hold of their racial group including being seen as incompetent or unintelligent (Bergsieker et al., 2010). The anticipated interracial interaction therefore triggers social identity threat regardless of the condition. In the present research, adopting a learning (vs. performance) goal mitigates identity threat in the face of a challenging interracial interaction.

Lastly, our manipulation of learning and performance goal orientation in the present research varies who is focal. That is, in the performance goal condition the instructions may have induced a focus on the self while the instructions in the learning goal condition may have shifted focus away from the self onto the dyad. Although the varying foci in the manipulations may be a concern, research suggests that during intergroup encounters people are often self-preoccupied—concerned about how they might be evaluated by outgroup members (Vorauer, 2006; Vorauer & Sucharyna, 2013). Strategies, such as adopting a learning goal, that divert attention away from the self by encouraging people to learn more about their interaction partner are crucial in promoting positive intergroup interactions and reducing negative metaperceptions (Vorauer, 2006). This differing focus is a natural and necessary part of what makes a learning orientation more effective in intergroup contexts. Future research, however, is needed to test these possibilities as well as to disentangle the effects of the manipulation of learning versus performance goals on different motivational mindsets, stereotype threat, and self-focus.¹⁰

Conclusion

American society is becoming increasingly diverse. Mounting evidence demonstrates that diverse academic and work settings, for instance can reduce bias, improve perspective taking, increase people's desire to participate in a multicultural society, and increase employee creativity (Graham, Baker, & Wapner, 1984; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002, 2004; Kerby & Burns, 2012; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Despite these benefits of diversity, interracial interactions remain challenging (Carter, 2016) and many people avoid contact with members of different racial and ethnic groups because they find it both cognitively and emotionally taxing (Schmader & Johns, 2003; Trawalter et al., 2009). The present research demonstrates the efficacy of a learning goal orientation in the absence of a diverse friendship network to foster positive interactions. The current research, therefore, provides insight into the mindsets with which to encourage individuals to engage in interracial contact experiences. In so doing, our findings will aid in the development of future intergroup contact interventions that are geared toward fostering and maintaining healthy and racially diverse environments.

¹⁰ We thank an anonymous reviewer for noting these alternate explanations.

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