

HOW ACTORS' REACTIONS TO DEVIANCE MAINTAIN RACIAL  
STEREOTYPES: THE ROLE OF BACKLASH AND RACIAL IDENTITY

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

How Actors' Reactions to Deviance Maintain Cultural Stereotypes:

The Role of Backlash and Racial Identity

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Previous research has demonstrated that reprisals for counterstereotypical behavior (i.e., *backlash effects*, Rudman, 1998) maintains cultural stereotypes by increasing the likelihood that deviant actors will hide their atypical behavior and decreasing their desire to identify with counterstereotypical domains (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). The present research examined how backlash impacts non-White male deviants (led to believe they succeeded in a White domain), tested social support as an intervention strategy, and examined the moderating role of racial identification. Results revealed that high racial identification acted as a buffer against the negative effects of backlash. In contrast, participants with low racial identification behaved defensively after backlash from a White confederate, but not a Black confederate. Identification with the atypical domain was decreased after backlash, regardless of racial identification. Implications of these findings for the role of backlash in cultural stereotype maintenance are discussed.

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## I. Introduction

In the past several decades, researchers have proposed models of interpersonal perception that specify how stereotypes and individuating information influence our impressions of others (e.g., Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Kunda & Thagard, 1996). Although there is some discrepancy between the models, each suggests that if actors wish to avoid being stereotyped, they must provide clear evidence of their atypical attributes. Indeed, evidence abounds that perceivers are less likely to rely on stereotypes when they receive individuating information (for a review see Kunda & Thagard, 1996). Thus, in order to thwart stereotypes, an actor need only clearly demonstrate his individuating attributes, in essence to defy (stereotypic) expectations.

However, stereotypes serve important cognitive, social, political and defensive functions (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Schimel et al., 1999; Snyder & Miene, 1994). At a personal level, stereotypes help perceivers navigate an exceedingly complex social world by organizing information, facilitating decision making, and informing social norms. In addition, stereotypes provide actors with a useful guide on how to regulate their behavior in order to fit in to various social situations. At the cultural level, stereotypes support legitimizing ideologies by justifying why some groups are valued more than others, or better suited for particular roles (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Because stereotypes are personally and culturally useful, it is not surprising that individuals often attempt to maintain their stereotypes in the face of conflicting evidence (Cameron & Trope, 2004; Dunning & Sherman, 1997; Fiske, 1998; Gawronski et al., 2003; Hamilton & Sherman, 1994; Kunda & Sherman-Williams, 1993; Trope &



Thompson, 1997). Therefore, while unambiguously atypical actors may be rewarded with individuation, it is important to consider the possible negative consequences they face for challenging stereotypic expectations. In fact, recent research suggests that violating stereotypes can result in social and economic sanctions (Gill, 2004; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004), a phenomenon known as the *backlash effect* (Rudman, 1998). As described below, backlash not only has negative implications for the individual atypical exemplar, but also may work to perpetuate stereotypes in the culture at large by preventing those best suited to challenge cultural stereotypes from becoming successful and visible role models (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Previous research has focused on backlash towards actors who defy gender stereotypes (Gill, 2004; Heilman et al., 2004; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). In the present research, I expand beyond gender to examine the role of backlash in ethnic stereotype maintenance.

### Backlash and Cultural Stereotype Maintenance

Rudman and Fairchild (2004) proposed a model that outlines the role of backlash in stereotype maintenance from the perspective of both perceivers and actors (see Figure 1). The top row of the model, which is consistent with a growing literature on the consequences of stereotype violation, outlines the role of perceivers in cultural stereotype maintenance. The model predicts that backlash is likely to occur when perceivers (1) encounter a target who fails to meet stereotypic expectations, and (2) feel they are justified in penalizing the target (e.g., when they have legitimate power as evaluators, felt threatened, or desire revenge). By decreasing the success and visibility of atypical

exemplars, backlash then leads to the preservation of cultural stereotypes because, as noted above, it prevents atypical role models from effectively challenging them. For example, research has amply documented the negative impact of backlash on atypical women's career trajectory (for a review see Rudman & Phelan, in press). Essentially, although women who violate gender prescriptions by demonstrating agency (i.e., confidence and competence) are viewed as highly qualified for jobs, they are also viewed as interpersonally deficient, which results in hiring and promotion discrimination (Heilman et al., 2004; Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999, 2001), negative performance evaluations (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992) and even sabotage (Heim, 1990; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Thus, due to backlash, the women who are best suited to challenge gender stereotypes are prevented by perceivers from becoming recognizable, successful role models. Men also suffer backlash effects for behaving communally (e.g., by being modest and cooperative; e.g., Rudman, 1998; Rudman & Glick, 1999), self-disclosing to strangers (Derlega & Chaiken, 1976), or even performing well at a feminine task (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). Thus, both genders incur penalties when they behavior counterstereotypically. However, the current research is focused on the less investigated bottom row of the model, which outlines the role of actors in stereotype maintenance, as described below.

**Actor Deviance and Fear of Backlash.** Rudman and Fairchild (2004) proposed that cultural stereotypes are also likely to be reinforced by actors' defensive reactions to their own counterstereotypical behaviors. That is, people who enact counterstereotypical behaviors might fear negative reactions (backlash) from others and, if so, they might engage in recovery strategies (e.g., hiding or lying about their atypical behavior) that

would ultimately reinforce cultural stereotypes by rendering the behavior invisible (see Figure 1, bottom row). If actors are not willing to stand out as atypical role models, cultural stereotypes will thrive.

In the first step of the model, actors are presumably aware of stereotypic expectancies, and if they violate them they should also be aware of the consequences of violating those expectancies (i.e., being a “deviant”). For example, people thought that a woman who had reached the top of her medical school class (or a man the top of his nursing class) would be treated harshly by others (Cherry & Deaux, 1978; Yoder & Schleicher, 1996). However, whether or not people fear the consequences of their *own* deviance has only recently begun to be examined (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; see also Bosson, Prewitt-Freilino, & Taylor, 2005).

**Awareness of Backlash.** In a test of the models’ bottom row, Rudman and Fairchild (2004, Exp. 3) led some men and women (“gender deviants”) to believe they had performed exceptionally well on an opposite-sex knowledge test but poorly on a same-sexed knowledge test. By contrast, “gender normatives” were led to believe they had performed exceptionally well on a same-sexed knowledge test, but poorly on an opposite-sex knowledge test. In line with predictions, gender deviants feared backlash to a greater extent than did gender normatives. Specifically, deviants were more likely to fear negative reactions from others if their success was publicized (on a Web site advertising the project) than normative participants. Thus, people who violated stereotypic expectancies by excelling at a cross-sexed task showed the expected fear of backlash for their success.

Recovery Strategies. In the next step of the model, it is predicted that deviants who fear backlash will be motivated to hide their deviant behavior and conform to stereotypic expectations. Social rejection impacts negatively on self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), therefore deviants who fear negative sanctions for succeeding at atypical domains may attempt to protect their self-esteem by hiding their success from others, lying about it when asked, and increasing their gender conformity to appear “normal” (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). In line with these predictions, Rudman and Fairchild (2004) found that gender deviants who feared backlash were less willing to publicize their success on a website, and were more likely to deceive experimenters by falsely claiming success in the same-sex knowledge task. They also reported increased interest in gender stereotypical occupations and activities, compared with gender normatives.

Finally, the model predicts that recovery strategies should lead to self-esteem maintenance. However, and contrary to expectations, participants who feared backlash had uniformly low state self-esteem, regardless of whether they engaged in recovery strategies. Thus, the path from recovery to self-esteem is, at present, suspect. Instead, a negative path leading directly from fear of backlash to self-esteem maintenance may be in order. Although these findings testify to the power of social threats to reduce self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000), they are not in line with the model. The present research investigated this path using backlash for ethnic deviance and an implicit measure of self-esteem.

In addition, I sought to extend the types of recovery strategies that actors might use. In particular, fear of backlash may also act as a deterrent to identification with behaviors

and qualities that are typically associated with out-group members. According to Steele (1997), a sense of belonging and acceptance is integral for identifying with a domain (e.g., academic achievement). If actors fear negative reactions for success in an atypical domain, then it is unlikely that they will proudly identify with the domain, or be willing to pursue it further.

**Stereotype Maintenance.** Finally, as noted above, the model predicts that the use of recovery strategies (such as hiding deviant behavior, deception, and dissociation from atypical domains) maintains cultural stereotypes. Rather than challenging perceivers' stereotypes by presenting and pursuing their success in counterstereotypical domains, recovery strategies for avoiding backlash result in actors hiding counterstereotypical behavior and conforming to stereotypic expectations. Thus, atypical actors who engage in recovery strategies to avoid backlash deprive perceivers of the opportunity to have their stereotypes challenged. In turn, this helps to maintain stereotypes in the culture-at-large.

#### A Potential Intervention Strategy

As outlined above, deviants who fear backlash are likely to hide their deviant behavior, thereby leaving stereotypes unchallenged. Thus, assuaging backlash fears is a crucial step in reducing cultural stereotypes. Because fear of backlash is essentially a fear of violating norms to conform to stereotypic expectations, Asch's (1955) work on conformity suggests a potential intervention that may successfully reduce the fear of backlash. In particular, he demonstrated the "one true partner effect," whereby a similarly dissenting other was found to drastically reduce conformity. Extending the one true partner effect to the present research, I tested whether support for atypical success by

a peer would decrease conformity pressures and thus, decrease fear of backlash and the need to engage in recovery strategies (e.g., hiding deviant success).

### Backlash and Ethnic Stereotype Maintenance

Although the research evidence thus far has demonstrated repercussions for stepping outside of gender boundaries, there is some work to suggest that violating ethnic stereotypes may be similarly sanctioned. For example, Schimel et al. (1999, Exp 3) found that White participants threatened with reminders of their mortality indicated greater liking for a stereotype-confirming, compared with a stereotype-disconfirming, Black male target. However, the reaction of ingroup members to ethnic deviance has received more research attention. Fryer and Torelli (2006) found that for Black and Hispanic students, high academic achievement (viewed as “acting White”) was associated with decreased popularity, whereas for White students, higher grades were associated with higher popularity. Similarly, Ogbu and colleagues (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Ogbu, 2004) have suggested that the academic achievement gap between African American and White college students may be at least partially due to African American students’ fears that their peers believe they are “acting too White” (see also Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). In fact, researchers have identified *own-group conformity pressure*, or the experience of being constrained by one’s ethnic group’s expectations for appropriate behavior, as a significant stressor for ethnic minority college students (Contrada et al., 2001). Thus, research suggests that deviating from ethnic stereotypes may result in social sanctions, and as a result, members of ethnic groups may behave defensively to avoid backlash. The present research tested the consequences of receiving

backlash (or social support) for minority group members' ethnic deviance (i.e., successfully "acting White").

### Ethnic Identity

While the model proposed by Rudman and Fairchild (2004) has been supported using predominantly White samples, additional factors may come into play when extending the model to non-White samples. In particular, the strength of participants' ethnic identity and the race of the person administering backlash or social support for deviance may have a significant impact on how the participant reacts. Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) suggests that people derive their self-esteem, in part, from their social (or collective) identity, which includes the individual's membership in valued social groups. That is, the social groups to which an individual belongs can be an important aspect of their identity, and ingroup members may provide a better source of self-esteem than outgroup members (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

For ethnic minorities, race can be a particularly salient aspect of their self-concept (Deaux, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). However, research in the social identity theory tradition has found that individuals differ in the extent to which they identify with the social groups to which they belong (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). As a result, ethnic minorities may identify more or less strongly with their race. Pertinent to the present experiment, research has demonstrated that strongly identifying with one's racial group can act as a buffer against the negative impact of discrimination from outgroup members (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Schmitt, Branscombe, Kobrynowicz, & Owen,

2002; Wong, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2003). If these findings can be extended to backlash for “acting White,” minority group members who are highly identified with their race may be protected from backlash from a White confederate to a greater extent than those who are not highly identified with their race. Similarly, social support from a White confederate may not be effective for people high on racial identity.

When considering how minority members high on racial identity might react to feedback from a Black confederate, there are at least two rival possibilities. First, highly identified group members are likely to derive a greater portion of their self-esteem from their group membership (Crocker, Luhtanen, Blain, & Broadnax, 1994; Rowley, Sellers, Chavous, & Smith, 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), as well as more likely to perceive themselves as similar to fellow group members (Brewer & Brown, 1998; Wilder, 1986). As a result, backlash from a minority group member may be more damaging for participants who are high, as compared with low, on racial identity. Second, and alternatively, it is also possible that the protective effects of ethnic identification may act as a shield against backlash from both minority and dominant group members. This is because participants high on racial identity may be so secure in their ethnic identity as to not be affected by anyone who questions their ethnicity (e.g., by accusing them of “acting White,” see Cross et al., 1998). In support of this global buffer effect, minority group identification has been associated with lower depression (Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Munford, 1994), more positive self-esteem (Bat-Chava, 1993, 1994; Grossman, Wirt, & Davids, 1985; Hall, 1966; Hammersmith & Weinberg, 1973; Munford, 1994; Phinney, 1989, 1991, Phinney & Alipuria, 1990), as well as other measures of psychological adjustment (Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers, Caldwell, Schmeelk-Cone, & Zimmerman,



2003). In sum, people high on racial identity might be more sensitive to feedback from a Black, compared with White, confederate, or they might be impervious to feedback from either source because racial identification may act as a global buffer against threats to ethnic identity.

In contrast, minority group members who are not identified with their race may be particularly vulnerable to backlash from majority group members (i.e., a White confederate). Not only do low identifiers lack the buffer provided by racial identification, but low identifiers are less committed to their group, and therefore, are more likely to desire individual mobility to a higher status group than high identifiers (Ellemers et al., 1997; Tajfel, 1978; Spears et al., 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As a result, they may be less likely to be influenced by the opinions of minority group members than dominant group members because they may be more sensitive to the high status group's opinion of them. Therefore, backlash from a White confederate should be more threatening than backlash from a Black confederate, and social support from a White confederate should be more reassuring than support from a Black confederate.

#### The Current Study

The goal of the present study was to (1) test the generalizability of the bottom row of the backlash model to minority group members, (2) examine social support as a potential intervention strategy, (3) examine the role of ethnic identification in the backlash process, and (4) reexamine the impact of recovery strategies on self-esteem. In order to operationalize ethnic deviance, non-White male participants received feedback that they were especially good at country western singing (a skill typically associated with White men). Backlash was manipulated rather than measured (cf. Rudman & Fairchild, 2004),

in order to provide experimental control. In the social support condition, a male confederate supported participants for their success, and in the backlash condition, a male confederate insulted participants for their success). I also included a control condition (with no feedback from a confederate). In addition, rather than having a live confederate insult or support participants, they overheard the encouraging or disparaging remarks via an intercom, ensuring that the delivery was standardized. Finally, the race of the phantom male confederate was manipulated (identifiable by White or Black dialects) to investigate whether the impact of backlash and social support differs depending on whether the confederate is a minority or dominant group member.

Unwillingness to publicize success on the project website and participate in an upcoming project served as my focal recovery strategies. In addition, participants' identification with both country music and Whites (the outgroup associated with country music) was assessed.

In line with Rudman and Fairchild's (2004) model, it was predicted that participants who received success feedback for country singing would feel especially deviant after suffering backlash, and thus would be less likely to publicize their success and pursue their talent by signing up for an upcoming project and show decreased identification with country music and with Whites as compared with participants in the control condition. However, in keeping with social identity theory, it was expected that this effect would be qualified by the race of the confederate and the participant's identification with their racial group. Strong racial identity was expected to buffer participants from the negative impact of backlash from (at least) a White confederate, but it might also protect them from backlash in general. For participants low on racial identity, however, backlash from

a majority group member (i.e., the White confederate) might be more detrimental than backlash from a minority group member (whose opinion may not be as valued).

In contrast, participants in the social support condition should be more comfortable with their atypical success and thus should be more willing to publicize and pursue their success, as well as identify with country singing and with Whites, thus being more likely to challenge cultural stereotypes. However, I again expected that the positive impact of social support would be qualified by confederate race and racial identification, with the benefit of social support being weakened when the confederate delivering the social support is an outgroup member (i.e., a White male) and the participant is highly identified with their racial group, but strengthened when the participant is not identified with their racial group.

Finally, in keeping with the Rudman and Fairchild (2004) model, it was expected that recovery strategies (e.g., not releasing one's videotape) would protect the self-esteem of participants who feared backlash. Although Rudman and Fairchild (2004) did not find support for this aspect of their model in their initial investigation (using gender deviance and state self-esteem), I reexamined the link using ethnic deviance and (1) state self-esteem and (2) implicit self-esteem. As predicted by the model, it was expected that participants in the backlash condition who did not release their videotape, or agree to pursue their atypical talent, would indicate greater self-esteem than participants in the backlash condition who did release their videotape.

## II. Method

### Participants

Participants ( $N = 126$ ) included minority male students from the Rutgers University Introduction to Psychology subject pool, as well as Black male Rutgers students who were recruited through various strategies (e.g., the distribution of flyers that advertise the project). In exchange for participation, subjects from the participant pool received credit towards a research requirement for class, and subjects outside of the participant pool were paid \$20. Data from 22 participants were dropped either because the participant expressed suspicion during debriefing ( $n = 15$ ), or due to experimenter error during the participant's session. Of the final sample ( $N = 104$ ), 61 (59%) were Black, 18 (17%) were Asian, 16 (15%) were Latino, and the remaining 8% reported another ethnicity.

### Experimental Design and Cover Story

The design of the study was a 2 (backlash condition: backlash, social support) x 2 (race of male confederate: Black, White) between subjects factorial. In addition to these four conditions, a separate control condition was included in which participants did not overhear feedback from a confederate (therefore, confederate race was not manipulated). Participants were told they were auditioning for a future project designed to study "natural stage presence." It was stressed that no past experience was necessary (or desired) because we were interested in people "who have raw talent". Participants viewed a music video of a country song for inspiration, and, following a brief training session, they auditioned by performing a single verse from that song in front of a camera.

### Materials

Music Video. The music video used was “Last of a Dying Breed” by Neal McCoy. After watching the complete music video, participants then watched a training video. The training video contained only the verse the participants were asked to audition with, and the words of the verse streamed underneath the video images. The lyrics for this verse can be found in the Appendix. After viewing several music videos, selection of this video was decided on the basis of its ability to heighten deviance for Black men (e.g., the song extols the virtues of “overall wearers” and “farmer tan tearers” while the video depicts a montage of White male “cowboys”) and because the lyrics and rhythm appeared to be readily learnable.

Costume Index. In keeping with the cover story, participants were encouraged to wear costume items provided by the experimenter because “it helps people perform better” (in fact, they were designed to heighten perceptions of deviance). These items included a cowboy hat, bolo tie, and a bandana.

Publicizing Success and Pursuing Talent. After receiving the success feedback, the experimenter asked participants to sign a release form that allowed their audition tape to be used “for publicity purposes” (i.e., to be shown on a website that advertises the project). The experimenter also reminded participants that they passed the audition and then asked whether they were willing to provide contact information in order to be recruited for the upcoming project. The experimenter coded responses to both measures as 0 (*no*) or 1 (*yes*). In addition, following their public response, participants were asked privately (by a computer program) to respond to two questions, “Were you willing to be contacted for the upcoming project?” and “Were you willing to release your audition videotape?” on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*a great deal*). The behavioral and

private measures for participating in the future study ( $r = .67, p < .001$ ) and for releasing the audition tape ( $r = .89, p < .001$ ) were combined to form the Pursing Talent and Publicizing Success indices, with high scores indicating greater willingness to participate in future research and publicize success, respectively.

**Country Music Identity Index.** To directly measure country music identification, subjects responded to three items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The items were: “I think I would be a good country singer,” “I have imagined myself as a country singer in the past,” and “I would be happy learning how to be a country singer.” Responses to these items were combined ( $\alpha = .79$ ), with higher scores indicating greater identification with country music.

**Identification with Whites.** Participants reported how much they identified “at this moment,” with Whites on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 10 (*a great deal*).

**Explicit State Self-Esteem.** To assess current self esteem (as opposed to trait self-esteem), participants completed a shortened version of the State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES, Heatherton & Polivy, 1991), which included only the Performance and Social subscales ( $n = 14$  items). Sample items include, “I feel self-conscious,” “I feel inferior to others at this moment,” and “I feel displeased with myself.” Participants responded on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). After recoding, items were combined ( $\alpha = .91$ ), with higher scores indicated greater state self-esteem.

**Racial Identification.** I assessed the importance of race to the participant’s identity using the four-item Importance to Identity Subscale of Luhtanen and Crocker’s (1992) Collective Self-Esteem Scale (CSES). Sample items include “The racial/ethnic group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am,” and “In general, belonging to my

race/ethnicity is an important part of my self-image". Participants responded on 7-point Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). After appropriate recoding, responses were combined ( $\alpha = .66$ ), with higher scores indicating that race was more important to the participant's identity.

**Fear of Backlash.** As a manipulation check, participants responded to eight items that assessed their fear of backlash (adopted from Rudman & Fairchild, 2004) on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 6 (*very much so*). Regardless of whether or not participants released their audition tape, they were instructed to imagine that their tape was public knowledge, and answer the questions with that in mind. Sample items include, "Would you be concerned that people might think you're odd," "Do you think you would be embarrassed," and "Would people give you a hard time (e.g., call you names)." Items were combined ( $\alpha = .82$ ) to form the Fear of Backlash Index, with higher scores indicating greater fear.

**Implicit State Self-Esteem.** The implicit self-esteem measure was based on research on the name letter and birthdate effect (Kitayama & Karasawa, 1997; Koole, Dijksterhuis, & Van Knippenberg, 2001; Nuttin, 1985, 1987) suggesting that people tend to overevaluate letters in their name and numbers in their birth date, with increased liking indicating greater implicit self-esteem. Research has shown that these measures are sensitive to context effects. For example Koole, Smeets, van Knippenberg and Dijksterhuis (1999) found decreased name letter effect following failure feedback. Similarly, Koole, Dechesne, and van Knippenberg (2000) found decreased name letter effects following a mortality salience manipulation. Finally, Pelham and colleagues work suggests that the name letter effect is affected by recent positive and negative life experiences (Pelham & Hetts, 1999; DeHart & Pelham, 2006).

To determine implicit self-esteem, I assessed participants' implicit evaluation of their birth month by asking participants to rate their preference for the numbers 1 through 30 (see also DeHart, Pelham, & Tennen, 2006; Pelham et al., 2005). Participants were told that "we are in the process of developing stimuli for a future study of linguistic and pictorial preference" and that they should rate their preference for numbers quickly, "based on their gut feelings." Participants reported their liking for each number on a scale from 1 (*dislike very much*) to 9 (*like very much*). The implicit self-esteem score was computed by taking the difference between each participant's rating of his birth month and the mean liking for this number provided by people whose birthday did not fall in that month (thus, more positive numbers indicate greater liking for birth month).

#### Procedure

The lab was set up to suggest that another participant had already arrived (e.g., a coat and books were displayed in the waiting area). After a participant entered the laboratory, the experimenter stated that "the other participant, [confederate's name: Donald in the White condition, Jamal in the Black condition and Leon in the control condition], stepped out to take a phone call, but that was a while back, and who knows how long he will be? So let's just get started." The experimenter then went on to describe the audition, explaining that he or she was trained to recognize "natural stage presence" and that past experience was not desirable, much less a prerequisite.

After signing the consent form, participants were escorted to a cubicle where they watched the country music video. The cubicle was equipped with an intercom and the participant was told to use the intercom to "buzz" the experimenter when they finished watching the training video. The experimenter then escorted the participant to the



audition room. Once in the audition room, the participant was encouraged to put on the costume items. The experimenter turned on the photographer's lamps, performed a sound check (which included asking participants to say their subject number aloud) and started the camera for the audition. The participant was told that they could begin "when they are ready" or by asking the experimenter to cue them. In addition, they were able to start over, or re-audition if they wanted to try to improve their performance. The experimenter then played a CD that contained an instrumental version of the song while the lyrics of the song were displayed on a computer monitor, and the participant auditioned. When they were done, the experimenter always complimented them (by saying "Good job!"). After removing their costumes, participants were then escorted back to a cubicle.

At this point, paid participants were compensated as an attempt to reduce forced compliance on later measures, but told there were still survey measures to complete before their session was over. The experimenter then left the participant in the cubicle, ostensibly to "check on the other participant and prepare him for his audition." The experimenter then acted as though they were bringing the other participant into the audition room (e.g., they talked out loud and opened and shut the doors). Once in the audition room, the participant said over the intercom, "Hey! Stop that! Don't play with those buttons!" This was to increase the believability of the later critical manipulation, and make it seem like the "other participant" had tampered with the intercom system. The experimenter then returned to the participant with a "check list" in hand and, remarking that the participant's audition was "especially good," announced that he was eligible for the upcoming project. The experimenter then left to "get some forms and

check on the other participant.” Shortly thereafter, participants in the social support or backlash condition then “overheard” an intercom conversation between the “other participant” and the experimenter. In reality, this conversation was a taped recording between a male confederate (either White or Black) and the experimenter, which the experimenter played through the intercom system. The recording went as follows:

Experimenter: “...the headphones have been acting up lately, did they work for you?”

Confederate: “No problem.”

Experimenter: “Most people don’t ask to watch somebody else’s audition before they do their own, so I’m not sure I should have let you see the guy who auditioned before you. What’d you think?”

In the backlash condition, the confederate laughs derisively and says: “Oh man - what’s wrong with him? Does he think he’s White?”

In the social support condition, the confederate says: “That was pretty good -- I hope I can do it half as well!”

The experimenter’s reply is inaudible due to static, and the intercom then cuts off.

Participants in the control condition did not overhear any conversation.

After a few minutes, the experimenter returned to the cubicle to ask whether the participant was willing to be contacted for an upcoming project, and whether he was willing to release his audition tape for the website. If yes, the participant was asked to fill out a contact sheet and a release form. The experimenter then started a computer program for the participant. This program administered the remaining measures utilizing the psychological software program, *Inquisit* (Millisecond Software) in the order listed above. Items within each measure were randomly presented.

Participants were then probed for suspicion and fully debriefed. Those in the backlash and social support condition were informed that no one actually viewed their

audition tape, and that the conversation they overheard was just a recording (with apologies made to those in the backlash condition). Participants were then asked to release their audition tapes for research, not publicity, purposes, and to sign a confidentiality agreement (all participants did so).

### III. Results

#### Fear of Backlash Manipulation Check

Participants reported their fear of backlash as a manipulation check. My hypothesis was that low racially identified participants would be more affected by feedback from the White confederate (a dominant group member) than feedback from a Black confederate. In contrast, I proposed two alternative hypotheses for high identifiers, expecting that either (1) racial identification would act as a buffer against feedback from White confederates, but enhance the impact of feedback from a Black confederate or (2) racial identification would act as a global buffer against ethnic-related feedback. That is, I expected a Racial Identity x Backlash Condition x Confederate Race interaction for fear of backlash. In order to perform the regression, dummy coded variables for backlash condition (0 = backlash, 1 = social support) and confederate race (0 = White, 1 = Black) were created, identification with racial group was centered on its mean, and the interaction terms between variables were computed.

The regression analysis revealed a significant Backlash x Confederate Race interaction ( $\beta = .37, p < .05$ ), and a significant Backlash x Racial Identity interaction ( $\beta = .60, p = .01$ ). These interactions were qualified by a significant three-way interaction ( $\beta = -.54, p = .04$ ). To decompose the interaction, regressions were computed separately for high and low racially identified participants (divided by the mean). As shown in the right half of Figure 2, and in support of the hypothesis that ethnic identification would act as a global buffer, no significant effects were found for participants high on racial identity, all  $\beta s < .13, ns$ . However, for participants low on racial identity, a significant main effect of backlash condition ( $\beta = -.73, p < .01$ ) and a significant interaction between backlash

condition and confederate race was revealed ( $\beta = .94, p < .001$ ). As can be seen in the left half of Figure 2, and in line with expectations, feedback from a White confederate was effective in raising or reducing fear of backlash for participants who were low in racial identification, whereas feedback from Black confederates showed a weak trend in the reverse direction, with slightly more fear of backlash reported in the social support condition, compared with the backlash condition. Simple contrast effects using the dichotomized identification means revealed that these differences were statistically significant (see Table 1). Specifically, low identifiers who received backlash from a White confederate reported significantly greater fear of backlash than those who received backlash from a Black confederate ( $p < .05$ ). Similarly, low identifiers who received social support from a White confederate reported significantly less fear of backlash than participants who received social support from a Black confederate ( $p < .05$ ).

**Comparisons with Control Group.** To examine fear of backlash in the control condition, I first tested whether racial identity was related to fear of backlash. It was not;  $r(21) = .25, ns$ , so I then compared the control cell to all eight Confederate Race x Backlash Condition x Racial Identification means. Participants in the control condition ( $M = 2.46, SD = 1.09$ ) reported significantly less fear of backlash than participants in the White backlash condition with low racial identification ( $M = 3.54, SD = .39; t(26) = 2.52, p = .02, d = 1.27$ ). In addition, participants in the control condition unexpectedly reported significantly less fear of backlash than participants in the Black social support condition with low racial identification ( $M = 3.45, SD = 1.25; t(30) = 2.30, d = .81$ ). No other comparisons were statistically significant.

#### Correlations Among Measures

To further investigate fear of backlash, I correlated this measure with all of the focal dependent variables. Table 2 shows these relationships in the first column, as well as the remaining relations among racial identification, the publicity index, the pursue talent index, identification with country music, the White identification measure, state self-esteem and implicit self-esteem. As can be seen, people who feared backlash were less likely to publicize their success and identify with country music, as well as indicate decreased state self-esteem. These results suggest that fear of backlash may have a negative effect on deviants' willingness to become an atypical role model and identify with atypical talents (as well as self-regard; Leary & Baumeister, 2000). However, fear of backlash did not influence talent pursuit (although the coefficient was negative), or identification with Whites. Instead, and not surprisingly, participants who indicated that race was an important part of their identity were less likely to identify with Whites. In addition, participants who pursued their talent were more likely to identify with country music and to report high state self-esteem.

Table 2 also shows that participants who were willing to release their audition tape were also more likely to sign up for the future research project, identify with country music, and report high state self-esteem. Finally, country identity was unexpectedly associated with higher state self-esteem, suggesting that successful deviants who identified with country music felt better about themselves than non-identified deviants.

#### Consequences of Backlash for Stereotype Maintenance

Based on the Rudman and Fairchild (2004) model, it was expected that participants would be more likely to engage in recovery strategies and less likely to identify with country music and Whites after overhearing backlash, as compared to overhearing social

support. However, it was predicted that for those participants who strongly identified with their race, the negative impact of backlash and the positive benefits of social support would be weakened, especially when the confederate administering the feedback was White because racial identification would act as a buffer against White (and perhaps all) feedback. In contrast, participants low in racial identification might be more impacted by the White confederate than the Black confederate. To examine these hypotheses, I separately regressed the dummy coded backlash condition and confederate race variables and the centered racial identification variable on willingness to publicize deviant success (i.e., release the audition tape for website publicity), willingness to pursue atypical talent (i.e., be contacted to participate in the upcoming study), identification with country music, and identification with Whites.

**Willingness to Publicize Deviant Success.** When the variables were regressed on willingness to release the audition tape, the expected three-way interaction between backlash condition, confederate race and racial identification was revealed ( $\beta = .53, p = .04$ ). This interaction qualified a marginally significant main effect of racial identification ( $\beta = .37, p = .06$ ) and a marginally significant Backlash Condition x Racial Identification interaction ( $\beta = -.39, p = .08$ ). No other interactions or main effects reached statistical significance ( $ps > .11$ ).

To decompose the three-way interaction, regressions were again computed separately for participants high and low on racial identity. As seen in the right half of Figure 3, for highs, results again revealed no effects, all  $\beta s < .30, ns$ . Although there was a tendency for feedback from the Black, as opposed to the White, confederate to be more effective, this trend was unreliable (see Table 1). In contrast, for lows, the regression

analysis revealed significant main effects of backlash condition and confederate race ( $\beta = .51, p = .02$  and  $\beta = .77, p < .001$ , respectively) that were qualified by a significant Backlash Condition x Confederate Race interaction ( $\beta = -.93, p = .001$ ). In line with predictions, participants low on racial identity were less willing to release their tape when the confederate administering the backlash was White, as opposed to Black, and more willing to release their tape when a White (compared with Black) confederate administered social support (see Figure 3). Simple effects using the dichotomized racial identity means demonstrated that these differences were statistically significant (see Table 1). These results are the mirror image of the findings for fear of backlash (Figure 2), and in concert, they suggest that low racial identity corresponded to greater sensitivity to feedback from a dominant (as opposed to a minority) group member, whereas high racial identity acted as a buffering effect that was not dependent on confederate race.

**Comparisons with Control Group.** To examine willingness to publicize success in the control condition, the control cell was again compared to the eight Confederate Race x Backlash Condition x Racial Identity (dichotomized) means. Participants in the control condition ( $M = 3.10, SD = 1.17$ ) were significantly more willing to release their audition tape than participants in the White backlash condition with low racial identification ( $M = 1.50, SD = 1.12$ ),  $t(26) = 3.16, p = .004, d = 1.35$ . No other comparisons were statistically significant.

**Willingness to Pursue Atypical Talent.** The regression for willingness to participate in future research revealed a significant Backlash Condition x Racial Identity interaction ( $\beta = -.50, p = .02$ ). However, this interaction was qualified by a Backlash Condition x Confederate Race x Racial Identity interaction, albeit marginal ( $\beta = .48, p = .06$ ). To



afford comparison with the publicity index, I decomposed this interaction for participants high and low on racial identity. Results showed a significant main effect of backlash condition ( $\beta = .67, p = .01$ ) and a marginal Backlash Condition x Confederate Race interaction for participants low on racial identity ( $\beta = -.48, p = .08$ ). As can be seen in the left half of Figure 4, the pattern is similar to the pattern shown for publicizing deviant success in that feedback from Whites was more effective than feedback from Blacks. By contrast, participants high on racial identity were relatively unaffected by manipulations, all  $\beta$ s  $< .33, ns$ . Simple effects using dichotomized identification means corroborated these findings, as can be seen in Table 1.

Comparisons with Control Group. Follow up *t*-tests were computed to examine willingness to participate in future research for participants in the control condition as compared to all other conditions. Results indicated that participants in the control condition were significantly more willing to participate in future research ( $M = 3.60, SD = .60$ ) than participants in the White backlash condition who indicated low racial identification ( $M = 2.64, SD = 1.35$ ),  $t(26) = 2.61, p = .02, d = .89$ . No other comparisons were statistically significant.

Country Music Identification. For country music identification, the regression analyses revealed only a significant main effect of backlash condition ( $\beta = .23, p = .04$ ). As expected, participants who overheard backlash were significantly less likely to identify with country music than participants who overheard social support. No other effects reached significance ( $ps > .19$ ).

Comparisons with Control Group. Follow up analyses revealed that participants' identification with country music in the control condition ( $M = 3.61, SD = .87$ ) did not

significantly differ from participants' identification with country music in the backlash condition ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = .72$ ;  $p > .80$ ), and did not significantly differ from participants' identification with country music in the social support condition ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.18$ ,  $p > .14$ ). Thus, the only reliable difference in identification with country music was between the backlash condition and the social support condition,  $t(81) = 2.22$ ,  $p = .03$ ,  $d = .48$ .

Identification with Whites. Regression analyses revealed a significant main effect of the importance of race to identity on identification with Whites ( $\beta = -.38$ ,  $p < .00$ ). Not surprisingly, participants high on racial identity were less likely to identify with Whites ( $M = 5.74$ ,  $SD = 2.30$ ) than participants low on racial identity ( $M = 6.98$ ,  $SD = 2.10$ ). This main effect was qualified by a significant Backlash Condition x Racial Identity interaction ( $\beta = .41$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Simple effects showed that, in the backlash condition, participants low in racial identification reported surprisingly greater identification with Whites than participants high in racial identification ( $M_s = 7.45$  vs.  $4.90$ , respectively),  $t(39) = 3.70$ ,  $p = .001$ . In contrast, identification with Whites in the social support condition did not reliably differ as a function of racial identification,  $t(40) = 1.03$ ,  $ns$  (overall  $M = 6.12$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ).

Comparison with Control Condition. Follow up analyses revealed that identification with Whites was lower for participants high in racial identification who experienced backlash ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 2.32$ ) as compared to racial identification in the control condition ( $M = 6.95$ ,  $SD = 1.77$ ),  $t(40) = 3.21$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $d = .99$ . In contrast, there were no reliable differences between the control condition and social support conditions,

indicating that social support was effective for increasing identification with Whites even for participants high on racial identification.

#### Self-Esteem Maintenance

The model predicts that hiding deviant behavior from public view (and therefore, avoiding ridicule) should protect deviants' self-esteem. In order to examine this hypothesis, I computed two 2 (Backlash Condition: backlash, social support) x 2 (Confederate Race: Black, White) x 2 (Release Tape: yes, no) ANOVAs with state self-esteem and implicit self-esteem as the dependent measures. I used the actual behavior (instead of the aggregate index combining behavior with self-report) because I expected it to have more influence on state self-esteem than simply reporting a willingness to publicize. Preliminary analyses ruled out racial identity as a significant moderator of the explicit and implicit and state self-esteem findings. Support for the model would be shown if participants in the backlash condition who refused to publicize their audition tape showed higher self-esteem than participants who released their tape. Although the model would make similar predictions for refusing to pursue atypical talent, ceiling effects on this variable made testing this prediction impossible. For example, in the Black confederate, social support condition (and in the control condition) everyone agreed to be contacted for the upcoming project. Even in the backlash condition, only two participants refused to be contacted in the White confederate condition, and only one participant in the Black confederate condition.

**Explicit State Self-Esteem.** The ANOVA with state self-esteem as the dependent variable revealed a significant interaction between backlash condition and releasing audition tape,  $F(1, 72) = 6.56, p = .01$ . Follow up analyses were computed to probe this

effect, as well as to examine state self-esteem in the control conditions (see Table 3). Results indicated that self-esteem for participants in the backlash condition did not differ as a function of whether or not the participant released their audition tape. However, two findings were in line with Figure 1. First, participants who hid their success after receiving backlash had significantly higher self-esteem ( $M = 4.06$ ) than participants who hid their success after receiving social support ( $M = 3.26$ ),  $t(21) = 3.15, p = .005, d = 1.27$ . Second, participants who publicized their success after receiving backlash had significantly lower self-esteem ( $M = 3.77$ ), compared with control participants who publicized their success ( $M = 4.23$ ),  $t(44) = 2.05, p < .05, d = .61$ . Finally, participants who publicized their success after receiving social support reported higher self-esteem ( $M = 3.99$ ) compared with those who hid their success ( $M = 3.26$ ),  $t(38) = 2.72, p = .01, d = .97$ . These findings provide modest support for Figure 1. Although participants in the backlash condition who hid their success did not show significantly greater self-esteem than participants who released their tape, they did show significantly higher self-esteem than participants who hid their success after being socially supported. Moreover, participants in the backlash condition who released their tape showed lower self-esteem than control participants who released their tape.

**Implicit State Self-Esteem.** Results of the ANOVA for implicit self-esteem revealed a significant three way interaction,  $F(1, 72) = 5.89, p = .02$  (see Table 3). To decompose the interaction, 2 (confederate race) x 2 (release tape) ANOVAs were computed separately for the backlash and social support conditions. Results revealed that implicit self-esteem was similar for the social support condition, irrespective of confederate race and whether or not the participant released his audition tape (all  $F_s < 2.77, p_s > .11$ ). In

contrast, results of the ANOVA for participants in the backlash condition revealed marginally significant main effects of releasing tape and confederate race on implicit self-esteem, as well as a marginally significant interaction. Participants who did not release their video tape after overhearing backlash had higher implicit self-esteem ( $M = 1.62$ ,  $SD = 2.63$ ) than participants who did release their audition tape ( $M = .22$ ,  $SD = 2.29$ ),  $F(1, 36) = 3.53$ ,  $p = .07$ . In addition, participants who overheard backlash from a Black confederate had lower self-esteem ( $M = .18$ ,  $SD = 2.11$ ) than participants who overheard backlash from a White confederate ( $M = 1.04$ ,  $SD = 2.71$ ),  $F(1, 36) = 3.76$ ,  $p = .06$ . However, both of these main effects were qualified by an interaction,  $F(1, 36) = 3.13$ ,  $p = .09$ . Table 3 reveals that participants who hid their audition tape after hearing backlash from a White confederate showed higher implicit self-esteem, as compared to all other (non-control) cells. Thus, hiding ethnic deviance had the predicted “recovery” effect on participants’ implicit self-esteem. However, participants who overheard backlash from a Black confederate reported similar implicit self-esteem regardless of whether or not they engaged in recovery strategies. Thus, the model was supported provided the confederate was White.

Comparisons with Control Condition. Follow up analyses were conducted to examine the control condition. Table 3 shows that controls did not differ in their implicit self-esteem, relative to any other condition, but there were only 4 control participants who refused to release their tape. Because there was no difference in implicit self-esteem between participants who hid their tape or released their tape in the control condition ( $p > .63$ ), I collapsed across this variable to preserve statistical power. Pairwise comparisons revealed that participants who hid their audition tape after hearing backlash had higher

implicit self-esteem ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ) than participants in the control condition ( $M = .74$ ,  $SD = 2.42$ ),  $t(24) = 2.21$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $d = 1.20$ . No other comparisons were statistically significant.

In sum, the model was somewhat supported using explicit state self-esteem in that participants in the backlash condition who hid their success showed significantly higher self-esteem than participants who hid their success after being socially supported. Moreover, participants in the backlash condition who released their tape showed lower self-esteem than control participants who publicized their success. For implicit self-esteem, the model was supported provided the confederate was White. That is, participants in the backlash condition who hid their deviant success showed higher implicit self-esteem, as compared to all other cells (including controls, when they were collapsed across releasing or hiding their tape). These results are the first to suggest that recovery behaviors may have the predicted maintenance effect on self-esteem that Figure 1 suggests (cf. Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

#### IV. Discussion

Past research has revealed that backlash preserves stereotypes by increasing the likelihood that deviants will hide their atypical abilities and decreasing the likelihood that deviants will identify with atypical domains (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). The present research examined whether these findings generalize to minority men who succeed in a typically White domain (country western singing), and examined social support as a potential method for alleviating the negative consequences of backlash. Results of the study provided support for the model proposed by Rudman and Fairchild (see Figure 1) and the intervention strategy, but also indicated the important moderating role of racial identification and the race of the person administering backlash or social support on these effects. In particular, the model was mainly supported for those participants who did not identify with their racial group who heard feedback from a White confederate, with backlash increasing the use of recovery strategies and social support decreasing the use of recovery strategies. In contrast, participants who were highly identified with their race showed similar levels of fear of backlash regardless of the feedback from the confederate, and did not differentially engage in recovery behaviors based on this feedback.

Our findings did not support the hypothesis that feedback from a fellow minority group member would have more of an impact on the use of recovery strategies for high identifiers than feedback from a majority group member. This prediction was based on the idea that highly identified group members tend to derive a greater portion of their self-esteem from their group membership (Crocker et al., 1994; Rowley et al., 1998; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and therefore may be more impacted by the opinion of a fellow minority group member. Although the pattern of results for highly identified participants

appears to align with these predictions (see Figure 3 and Figure 4), the effects were nonsignificant (see Table 1). Instead, highly identified participants were largely unaffected by positive and negative feedback from both White and Black confederates. Thus, the alternative hypothesis that racial identification acts as a global buffer against threats to ethnic identity was supported. This suggests that the benefits of racial identification (e.g., Arroyo & Zigler, 1995; Munford, 1994; Phinney, 1989, 1991, Phinney & Alipuria, 1990; Rowley et al., 1998; Sellers et al., 2003) may extend to protection against the damaging consequences of backlash

However, individuals do not always closely identify with the groups to which they belong. In this study, participants who did not identify with their racial group were more likely to identify with Whites, and also were more influenced by feedback from a White confederate (as compared to feedback from a Black confederate). Backlash from a White confederate increased fear of backlash and the use of recovery strategies, and social support from a White confederate decreased fear of backlash and the use of recovery strategies for low identifiers. Because ingroup membership can be a source of self-esteem, when one's ingroup is low in status, group members are potentially faced with a negative social identity (Tajfel, 1978). When individuals who are highly identified with their group are faced with a threat to their social identity, they tend to become more committed to their group (Ellemers et al., 1997) and work toward the improvement of the status of their group (Barreto & Ellemers, 2000). In contrast, individuals who are not strongly identified with their group are less committed to their group (Ellemers et al., 1997), more likely to attempt to enhance their personal status by engaging in individualistic behavior rather than group-based behavior (Barreto & Ellemers) and are



more likely to desire individual mobility to a higher status group (Ellemers et al., 1997) than high identifiers. As a result, and as is indicated by the present research, individuals who are not identified with their group are more likely to desire acceptance by members of a high status group, and therefore more likely to be influenced by the opinions of dominant group members than they are by the opinions of their own (unvalued) group members.

#### The Role of Backlash in Cultural Stereotype Maintenance

Hiding and refusing to pursue atypical talents are critical means for reinforcing cultural stereotypes. When people refuse to stand out as counterstereotypical role models, perceivers' stereotypes are allowed to thrive, unhindered. In addition, the present experiment extended the negative consequences of backlash to decreased identification with counterstereotypical domains. Participants who overheard backlash were significantly less likely to identify with country music than participants who overheard social support. Unlike the recovery strategies results, this finding was not moderated by confederate race or racial identity. While highly identified participants may have discounted the feedback from confederates when it came to their decision to release their audition tape or participate in future research, the feedback did impact their willingness to identify with country music. Thus the protective effects of racial identification may only extend to public regard (e.g., "I don't care what anyone thinks of me"), but not to private identification with counterstereotypical domains. Because identification with a domain is likely a necessary step in seriously pursuing a counterstereotypical skill, this finding points to the insidious influence of backlash.

## The Effect of Recovery Strategies on Self-Esteem

An additional goal of this study was to further explore the link between recovery strategies and self-esteem maintenance. Rudman and Fairchild (2004) proposed that deviant actors engage in recovery strategies as a means of protecting their self-esteem from the threat of social rejection. In Rudman and Fairchild's (2004) initial examination of the role of the actor in stereotype maintenance, however, this aspect of the model was unsupported (Study 3). In their study, participants who feared backlash had uniformly low self-esteem (i.e., regardless of whether or not they engaged in recovery strategies), thus casting doubt upon this aspect of the model. In contrast, the results of this study lend credence to this step in the model. Specifically, participants who hid their audition tape after overhearing backlash (i.e., engaged in recovery strategies) reported similar state self-esteem as participants in the control condition who released their audition tape and significantly higher self-esteem than participants in the social support condition who hid their tape. In contrast, participants in the backlash condition who released their audition tape had significantly lower self-esteem than participants in the control condition who released their audition tape. The results for implicit self-esteem were stronger in that participants who hid their success after receiving backlash had higher implicit self-esteem than participants in every other condition. Thus, when participants overheard backlash, recovery strategies served to protect implicit and, to some extent, explicit state self-esteem.

## Limitations of the Present Research

By including a control condition, I hoped to more clearly elucidate how backlash and social support impact defensive behaviors. For example, our results suggest that for

participants with low racial identification, backlash from White confederates increased fear of backlash and lowered willingness to release their audition tape and participate in future research compared to controls, whereas participants in the control and social support condition did not significantly differ on these variables. Therefore, our results support the interpretation that backlash increases the use of recovery strategies compared to controls, but not that social support decreases the use of recovery strategies compared to controls. However, because very few participants in the control condition hid their audition tape ( $N = 4$ ) and no participants in the control condition refused to participate in future research, the control condition was less useful than I hoped due to floor effects.

In fact, only six participants overall refused to participate in the future research project and only about a quarter of the participants refused to release their audition tape ( $N = 27$ ). This high rate of compliance is possibly due to the fact that the present research utilized paid participants. Although I attempted to minimize the likelihood that participants would feel forced to comply in order to be compensated, it seems probable that the money entered into the participants' decisions about releasing their tape and participating in future research. Indeed, the prospect of earning more money by participating in future research may have prompted high compliance with this particular measure.

In addition, although standardizing the delivery of backlash and social support by utilizing an intercom system increased experimental control, it likely decreased the experimental realism of the study. As noted earlier, several ( $n = 15$ ) participants indicated suspicion during debriefing. Even for those participants who believed the manipulation, it is likely that they did not attend to the intercom as much as they would

have if a live person had administered the social support or backlash. However, in addition to providing increased control, the decision to standardize this manipulation was also based on ethical concerns. Confederates in a previous study in our lab found it difficult to insult White participants by derogating them for “acting Black” (Schleiffer, 2005). They formed a social support group among themselves, and participated in the debriefing phase to ensure participants they meant no harm. The converse requirement for this study would have been just as (if not more) difficult. The fact that I found any significant effects when utilizing an unseen, anonymous and taped source of feedback provides a conservative estimate of the power of backlash to maintain cultural stereotypes in the real world. Backlash from a valued significant other (i.e., girlfriend, family members, and friends) is likely to have even more detrimental consequences than the effects I captured in the lab.

#### Future Directions

In the present study, racial identification was measured, not manipulated, suggesting caution when interpreting correlational results. Although previous research indicates there are stable differences in the extent to which participants identify with their group (e.g., Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990, Crocker et al., 1994; Phinney, 1990) identification with one’s group has also been shown to fluctuate due to external factors. For example, research has demonstrated that identification with one’s group can be enhanced after experiencing discrimination from outgroup members (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt et al., 2002). Therefore, while our interpretation that racial identification moderates the effects of feedback from minority and majority group members seems theoretically

founded, future research that manipulates identification is necessary to be certain of the causal pathway.

The present research certainly expands our knowledge of the role of backlash in preserving cultural stereotypes. Nonetheless, these initial tests of Figure 1's bottom row using minority men are limited in their scope. For example, there are many other groups that could be tested (beyond gender), including other ethnic groups, and groups based on religious and political orientation. In addition, there may be other ways that actors who fear (or suffer) backlash unwittingly perpetuate stereotypes, beyond the behaviors tested here. For example, people may avoid even trying to succeed in atypical domains if they fear backlash, and if they are given a choice (Prentice & Miller, 2006). Thus, future research is needed to lend confidence to the generalizability of Rudman and Fairchild's (2004) model.

In sum, the present research furthers our understanding of the role of backlash in cultural stereotype maintenance and demonstrates that social support can be an effective antidote to this consequence. In addition, the present research suggests that the detrimental effects of backlash may vary depending on the race of the person administering the sanctions, as well as the extent to which the target identifies with his racial group. For most White Americans, ethnicity is not an important part of their identity, and they can choose what role, if any, it will have in their life (Waters, 1990). In contrast, ethnicity can be a particularly salient and important self-component for racial minorities (Deaux, 1992; Phinney & Alipuria, 1990). Therefore, future research on the role of backlash in ethnic stereotype maintenance must further explore the moderating role of racial identification. However, regardless of the protective effects racial

identification may sometimes provide, backlash limits human behavior and perpetuates stereotypes in society by causing perceivers to sanction those who stray from expectations, and atypical actors to distance themselves from their atypical success to avoid social penalties.

Table 1

Fear of Backlash, Willingness to Publicize Success and Pursue Atypical Talent as a Function of Racial Identity, Backlash Condition, and Confederate Race

Measure	<u>Low Racial Identity</u>				<u>High Racial Identity</u>			
	Backlash		Social Support		Backlash		Social Support	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<u>White Confederate</u>								
Fear of Backlash	3.54 <sub>ax</sub>	.39	1.95 <sub>bx</sub>	.69	2.74 <sub>cx</sub>	1.02	3.13 <sub>acx</sub>	2.93
Publicize	1.50 <sub>ax</sub>	1.12	3.70 <sub>bx</sub>	.42	3.42 <sub>bx</sub>	.98	2.85 <sub>abx</sub>	1.92
Pursue Talent	2.64 <sub>ax</sub>	1.35	3.85 <sub>bx</sub>	.34	3.50 <sub>bx</sub>	.54	3.23 <sub>abx</sub>	1.63
<u>Black Confederate</u>								
Fear of Backlash	2.70 <sub>ay</sub>	1.02	3.44 <sub>ay</sub>	1.25	2.88 <sub>ax</sub>	.92	2.95 <sub>ax</sub>	1.32
Publicize	2.96 <sub>ay</sub>	1.44	2.18 <sub>ay</sub>	1.59	2.69 <sub>ax</sub>	1.58	3.31 <sub>ax</sub>	2.09
Pursue Talent	3.31 <sub>ay</sub>	.83	3.55 <sub>ay</sub>	.82	3.38 <sub>ax</sub>	1.63	4.13 <sub>ax</sub>	1.22

*Note.* Means not sharing an a,b,c subscript differ within rows (all  $ps < .055$ ). Means not sharing an x,y subscript differ within columns, comparing across confederate race (all  $ps < .05$ ).

Table 2

## Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Dependent Measures

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Fear of Backlash	--							
2. Race Identification	.06	--						
3. Publicity Index	-.46**	.10	--					
4. Pursue Talent Index	-.19	.01	.56**	--				
5. Explicit Country Identity	-.36**	-.09	.33**	.38**	--			
6. Identification with Whites	-.05	-.31**	-.08	-.03	.07	--		
7. State Self-Esteem	-.61**	.11	.28**	.12	.25*	-.05	--	
8. Implicit Self-Esteem	-.05	.01	-.05	.01	-.01	.18	.17	--
Mean	2.81	4.70	2.93	3.48	3.76	6.30	3.89	.59
SD	1.08	1.32	1.47	1.00	.97	2.28	.76	2.36

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



Table 3

## State Self-Esteem as a Function of Backlash Condition and Releasing Audition Tape

	<u>Hid Tape</u>			<u>Released Tape</u>			<u>Tape Differences</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
Backlash	4.06 <sub>a</sub>	.58	11	3.77 <sub>a</sub>	.73	29	1.18	.38
Control	3.61 <sub>ab</sub>	.24	4	4.23 <sub>b</sub>	.74	17	1.64	-.82
Social Support	3.26 <sub>b</sub>	.63	12	3.99 <sub>ab</sub>	.83	28	2.72*	-.96

*Note.* Within each column, differing subscripts indicate significant differences at  $p < .05$ .

Positive effect sizes (Cohen's  $d$ ) indicate greater state self-esteem for participants who hid their deviant success, as compared to publicizing it.

\*  $p < .05$ .

Table 4

Implicit Self-Esteem as a Function of Backlash Condition, Confederate Race and Releasing Audition Tape

	<u>Hid Tape</u>			<u>Released Tape</u>			<u>Tape Differences</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>d</i>
<b>Backlash</b>								
Black Confederate	.24 <sub>a</sub>	2.63	6	.15 <sub>a</sub>	1.96	14	.08	.03
White Confederate	3.27 <sub>b</sub>	1.56	5	.29 <sub>a</sub>	2.63	15	2.38*	1.26
Control	1.28 <sub>ab</sub>	3.46	4	.61 <sub>a</sub>	2.24	17	.49	.28
<b>Social Support</b>								
Black Confederate	.95 <sub>a</sub>	2.00	8	-.05 <sub>a</sub>	2.53	10	.91	.42
White Confederate	-.96 <sub>a</sub>	.76	4	.85 <sub>a</sub>	2.49	18	1.41	-.77

*Note.* Within each column, differing subscripts indicate significant differences at  $p < .05$ .

Positive effect sizes (Cohen's  $d$ ) indicate greater implicit self-esteem for participants who hid their deviant success, as compared to publicizing it.

\*  $p < .05$ .

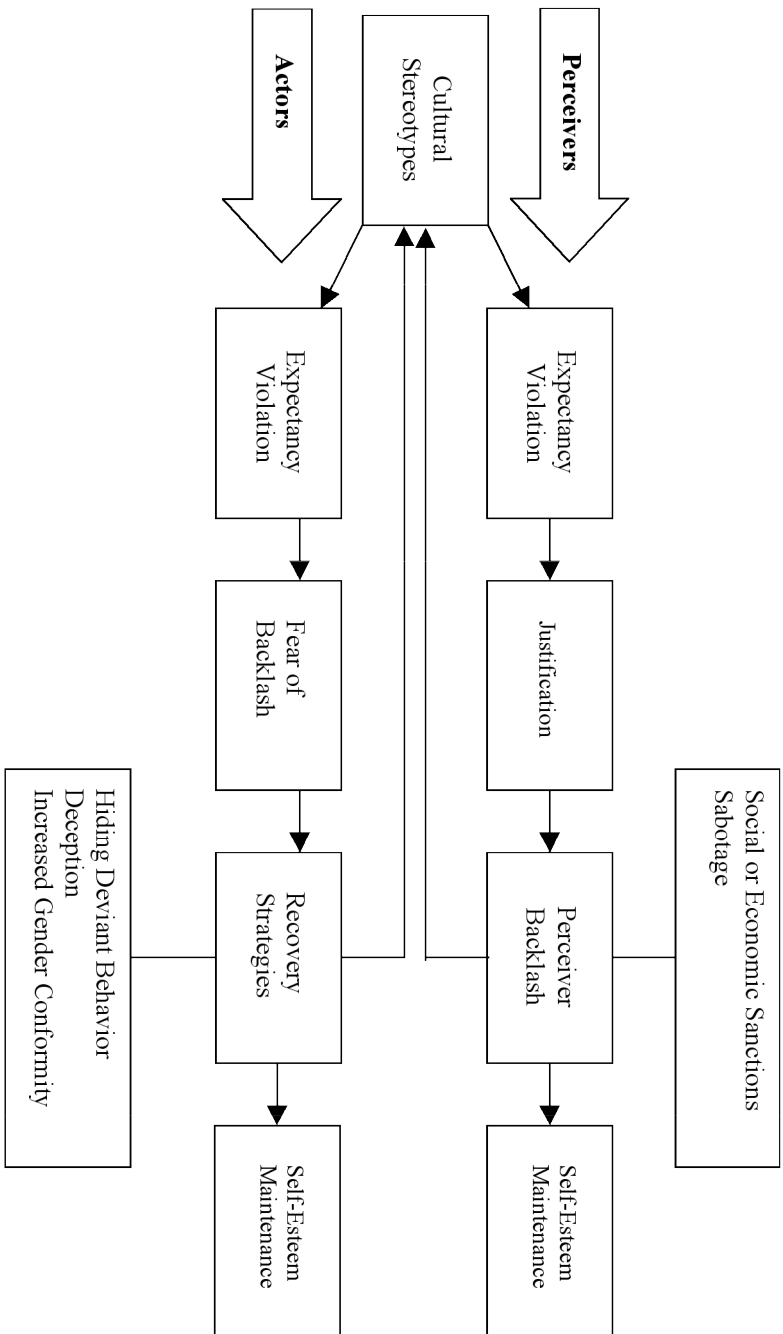
### Figure Captions

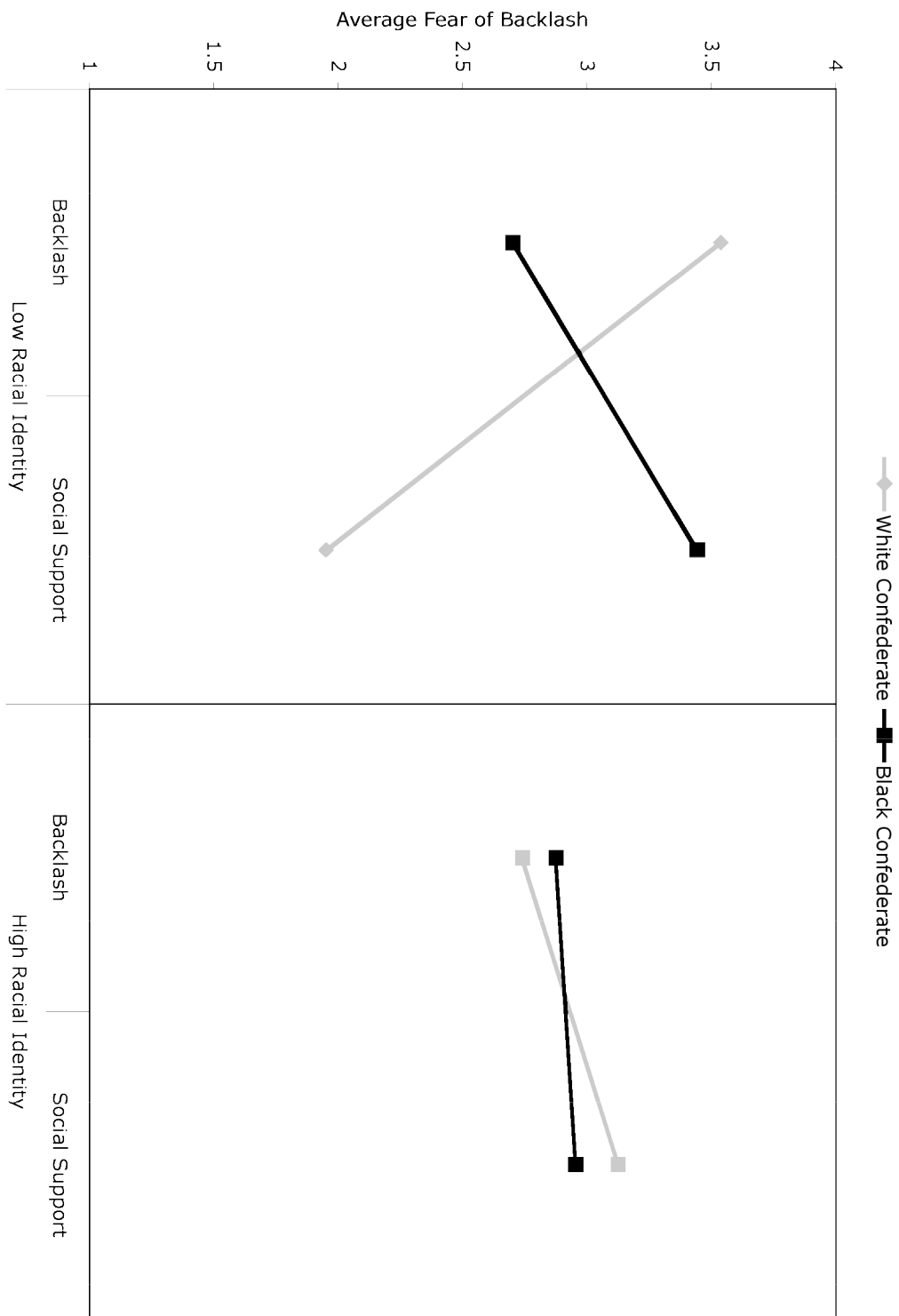
*Figure 1.* A working model of the role of backlash in cultural stereotype preservation (adapted from Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). The top and bottom rows illustrate how backlash preserves cultural stereotypes from the standpoint of perceivers and actors, respectively.

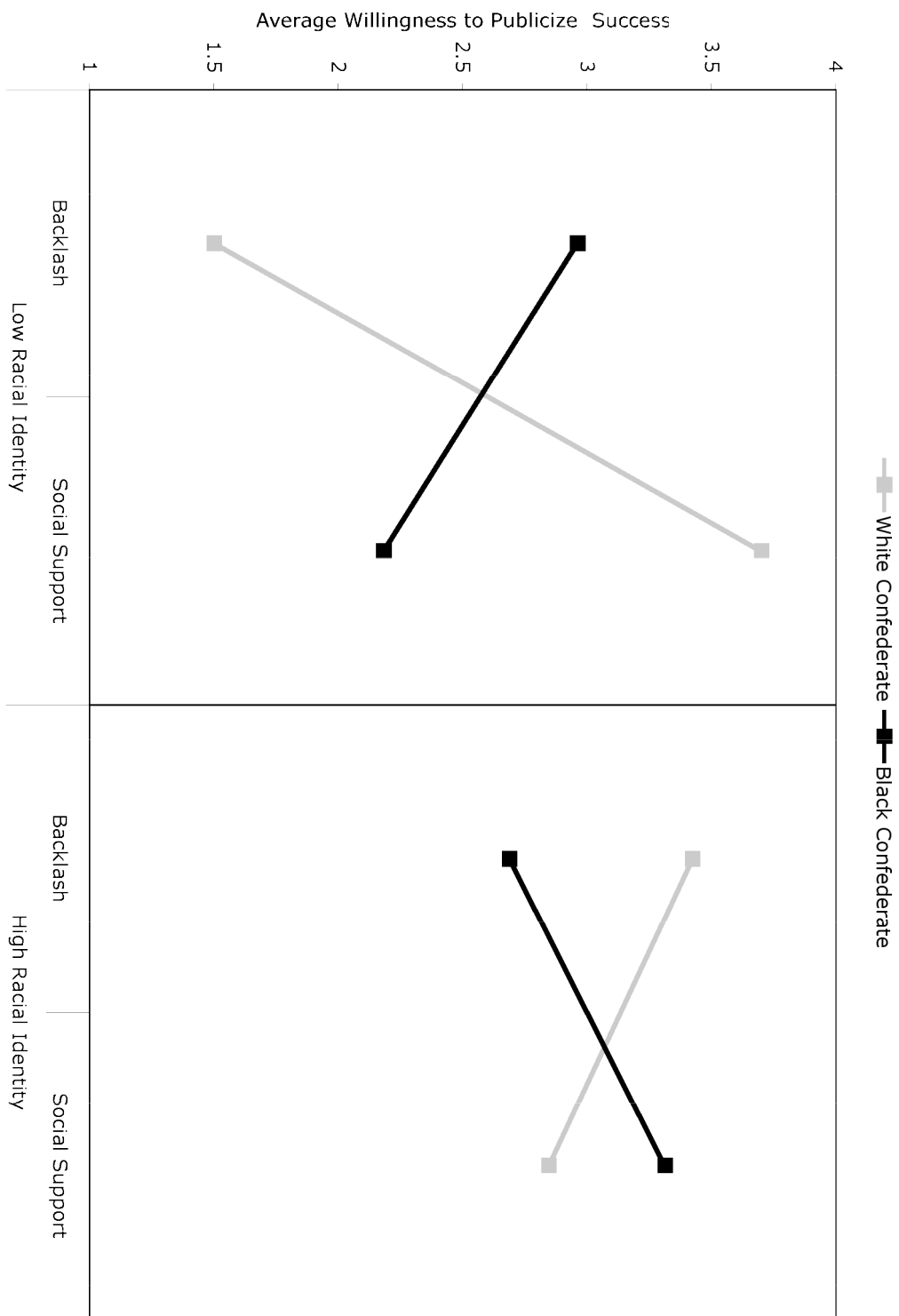
*Figure 2.* Regression lines predicting fear of backlash for low and high identifiers as a function of backlash condition and confederate race. Regression lines were estimated using unstandardized regression coefficients.

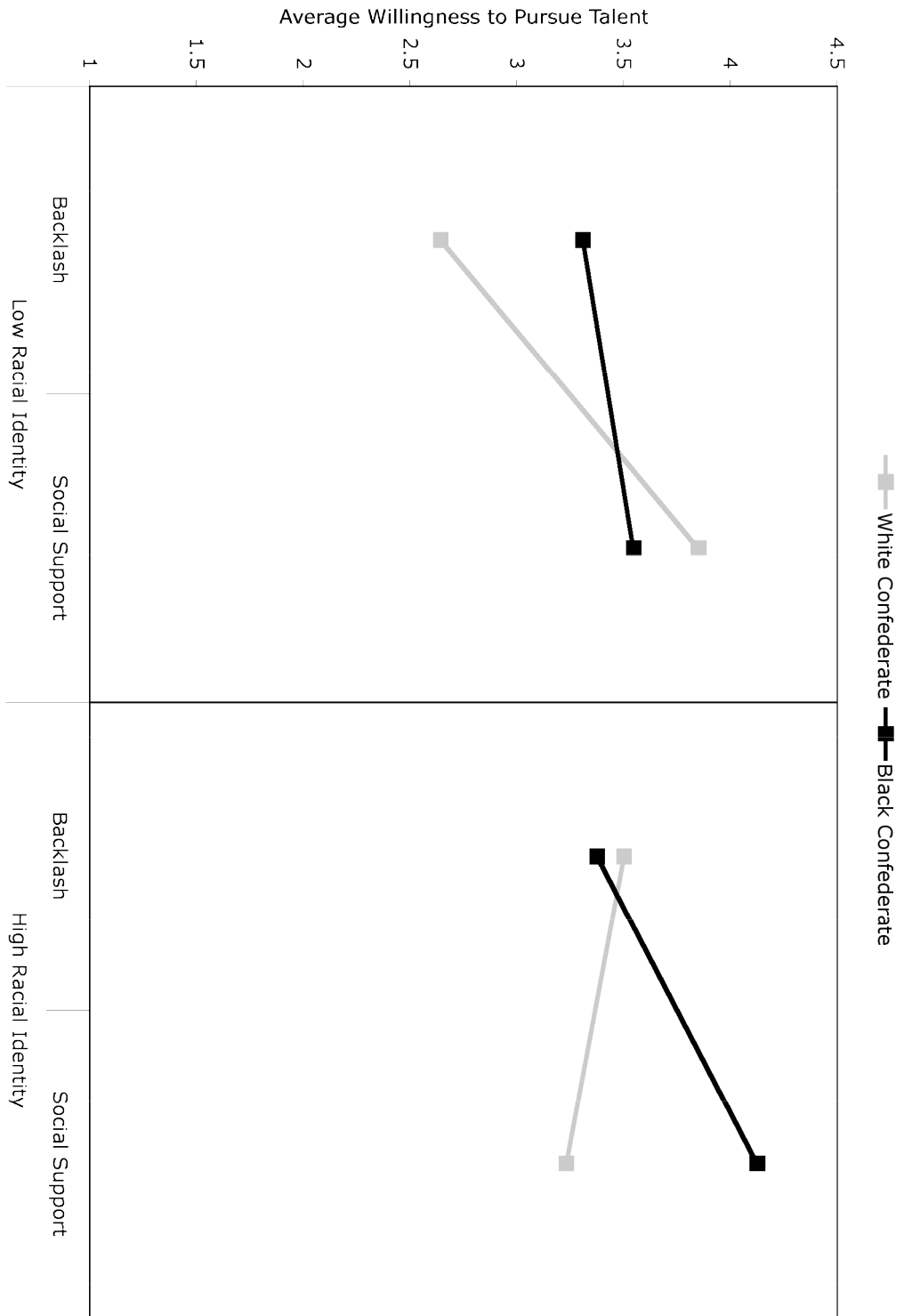
*Figure 3.* Regression lines predicting willingness to release audition tape for low and high identifiers as a function of backlash condition and confederate race. Regression lines were estimated using unstandardized regression coefficients.

*Figure 4.* Regression lines predicting willingness to pursue atypical talent by participating in a future research study for low and high identifiers as a function of backlash condition and confederate race. Regression lines were estimated using unstandardized regression coefficients.









## V. Appendix

### Audition Verse Lyrics:

The overall wearers, farmer tan tearers,

Down at the BFW hall. (Hot dog.)

Cake pan lickers, ripe tomato pickers,

Hay balers loadin' trailers in the Fall.

Fruit stand sellers, town square dwellers,

Who gather at The Dairy Queen at dawn.

Everybody knows him an' everybody loves him:

God, I'm gonna miss him if they're gone.



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