WHAT WOULD A LEADER DO? THE EFFECT OF LEADERSHIP TYPE ON DECISIONS TO CONFRONT PREJUDICE

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Confrontation is effective in reducing prejudice (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006), yet people often fail to take action when they witness discrimination (Swim & Hyers, 1999). The Confronting Prejudiced Responses Model (Ashburn-Nardo, Morris, & Goodwin, 2008) outlines obstacles people must overcome to confront prejudice; among them is taking responsibility for responding. Research in other domains indicates that leaders may be more willing to take on responsibility than average bystanders (Baumeister, Chesner, Senders, & Tice, 1988). Additionally, whether leaders are person-oriented or task-oriented (Fleishman, 1953) may have an effect on their confrontation goals. To investigate, 150 participants were assigned to one of three leadership conditions (person-oriented, task-oriented, or non-leader) and asked to provide feedback to a scripted chat conversation in which one of their (fictitious) fellow participants made a racist remark. Feedback was analyzed for evidence of confrontation. Participants also answered several questions about their goals and perceived responsibility for confronting. We hypothesized that participants in a leadership role would more readily take responsibility and confront prejudice than non-leaders. Additionally, we hypothesized that the confrontation goals for person-oriented leaders would focus on aiding the target member, while the confrontation goals for task-oriented leaders would focus on reprimanding the perpetrator of the remark. Initial results support our hypotheses, with a 59% confrontation rate for participants in the leadership conditions compared with a mere 45% confrontation rate for participants in the non-leader condition. Upon completion of data collection, additional analyses will be conducted to determine the effect of leadership type on confrontation goals.
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