Do Emotional Responses to Witnessing Discrimination Impair Anti-racist Action?

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METHOD

BACKGROUND

- Witnessing racial injustice has never been more accessible (e.g., social media, streams).
- These acts may be distressing for witnesses, which is likely to motivate individuals to seek comfort via emotion regulation.
- Although effective forms of emotion regulation (e.g., reappraisal, mentally reframing a situation to change its impact) may help individuals feel better, they may also reduce individuals’ motivation to take collective action against racism.

RQ: How does emotion regulation after witnessing discrimination impact anti-racist action?

Participants

- Identity (e.g., race, age, socio-economic status) impact how we interact with others
- Race of witness might influence what they feel, how they regulate it, and the action that they take
- Collected a racially diverse sample of U.S adults

Measures

- Disengagement Tactics: Reframing to disengage with problem
- Engagement Tactics: Reframing to engage with problem
  - Minimizing: Reframing situation as less severe
  - Low-Control: Reframing as not having control
- High-Control: Reframing as something changeable
- Benefit Finding: Reframing as giving benefits

Emotions:

- Hope, Moral Outrage, Empathy

Anti-Racist Action:

- Action Intentions (in next 6 months)
- Action Behaviours (in past 2 months)

Procedure

February 2020
Two samples recruited for longitudinal study

June 2020
Emotions, Reappraisal Tactics, Action Intentions

August 2020
Action Behaviours

DISCUSSION/APPLICATION

- People who use disengagement tactics: ↑ Emotional Benefits ↓ Anti-Racist Action
- People who use engagement tactics: ↑ Emotional Benefits ↑ Anti-Racist Action

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Engagement Tactics

- High Control: Reframing as something changeable
- Benefit Finding: Reframing as giving benefits

DISENGAGEMENT TACTICS

MINIMIZING

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<th>Action Behaviours</th>
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DISTRIBUTION IN POPULAR MEDIA, ANTI-OPPRESSION/EQUITY TRAINING, INFOGRAPHICS

ENGAGEMENT TACTICS

HIGH CONTROL

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Low Control

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Benefit Finding

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People who use disengagement tactics: ↑ Emotional Benefits ↓ Anti-Racist Action

People who use engagement tactics: ↑ Emotional Benefits ↑ Anti-Racist Action

- Engagement tactics can help relieve distress while promoting anti-racist action
- Opportunity for intervention in disengagement-thinking in daily life
- Distribution in popular media, anti-oppression/equity training, infographics
- Equipping activists and organizers with emotional tools to potentially decrease burnout